

Baloch Alienation, National Politics and Conflict Resolution in Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

Baloch civilization appears to be a sadistically protective to its ethnic identity in Pakistan. For the past 2000 years, the community has lucratively retained its distinctiveness and national pride. Although ecological isolation has played an imperative role to preserve their identity, yet most of the instrumentalists believe that it is the circumstances that shaped the 'Others'. After getting 'independence' in 1947 five major spells of insurgency, within 70 year history of Pakistan, endangered the integrity of the country. However, with the assassination of Sardar Akbar Bugti, a wave of insurgency badly affected the province. In fact, the incident created higher sense of Baloch alienation than ever before. This paper is an attempt to examine the historical evolution of the contemporary situation, incorporation of Baloch community into the mainstream politics and the course of conflict resolution in Pakistan.

Introduction

Pakistan, after getting independence, found itself detained with the problems of ethnicity and regionalism. Although being a multi-ethnic society regionalism was not being taken

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as major problem, however, its sturdy expansion is frequently upsetting the federalism. Balochistan, the largest, the most deserted and least populated province of the country, has also been the main obstacle in the way to greater political integration of the federation. Since independence, the Federal authorities faced the Baloch insurgency on five different occasions—1948, 1958, 1962, most tragic of 1973-77, and after the assassination of Sardar Akbar Bugti (Chief of the Bugti tribe) in 2004, when a growing armed insurrection ravaged the province. However, the Baloch communities who are fiercely protective of their ethnic identities and take great pride in their tribal affiliations have developed their common character over the past 2000 years. The present study is an attempt to provide answers to many questions i.e. how the Baloch community, after centuries old procedure, successfully developed a separate identity? How they remained a constant threat to the British colonial authorities and later on posed a threat to the integrity of Pakistani nation? Why a community which sacrificed so much for the freedom and security of Pakistan got alienated? What were its repercussions on the region? How was it seemed from the national viewpoint? These and many other similar questions are intriguing one's mind and in the present study an attempt has been made to answer, some of these, if not all, questions in a proper way.

Rise and Emergence of Baloch Ethno-nationalism

Balochistan, the western border province of the country, is geographically playing an important role in preserving Baloch identity. Unlike Sindh and the Punjab, which share international boundaries only with India, or the NWFP (presently known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) which only has one with Afghanistan, Balochistan has common borders with both Afghanistan and Iran. People of Baloch ethnic origin are primarily spreading in south-western Pakistan, in south-eastern Iran and in the southern strip of Afghanistan. Collectively, these areas are indistinguishable in their

topography or ecology as a single natural area; which appear “more Central Asian than Indian”.¹

Incorporation of the Baloch Ethnicity: Post-1947 Era

The incorporation of Balochistan into Pakistan came as an unpleasant blow to the nationalist leaders, who had campaigned for an independent Balochistan. Even before the partition, the principal secretary of the Khan pointed out, “for a cohesive and sovereign Baloch nation, Greater Balochistan is indispensable”.² In point of fact, Baloch tribal identity is always like a sacred trust to them. So, when the Government of Pakistan tried to break down the tribal social and political structure, it constituted a challenge to Baloch values. In their attempts to build ‘a strong-centralized state’ the ruling elite made it imperative to breakdown Baloch identity into a new Pakistani identity.

In 1948, the Kalat state and its various offshoots were dissolved and placed under the jurisdiction of Balochistan administration in Quetta. In a bid to impose a centralized state structure over Balochistan, the Federal Government gradually started to expand the area’s administration by bringing in bureaucrats from the Punjab. Similarly, with the approval of the Government of Pakistan, Balochistan State Union (BSU) was announced on April 9, 1952. The Khan of Kalat assumed the office of President and Agha Abdul Hamid, a civil servant, was appointed as Prime Minister of the Council of Rulers of the Union.

However, within two years, differences between the Centre and the Union arose; most of Pakistani leaders were convinced that the Khan was working for an independent and sovereign state of Balochistan.³ Consequently, on June

1 Syed Iqbal Ahmad, *Baluchistan: Its Strategic Importance* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 1992), 2.

2 Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *Baloch: A Nation* (Lahore: n.p., 1947), 205.

3 Breseeg, *Baloch Nationalism*, 261.

16, 1954, the Federal Government dismissed the Balochistan States Union's Assembly and an announcement was made on the same day about merging the Union into Balochistan.⁴ However, resistance movement in Balochistan started immediately after the formation of One Unit that seemed to bring about more grievances to the regional forces in Balochistan. The Baloch nationalists, like their Sindhi, Pashtoon and Bengali counterparts, started struggle to restore the old province in West Pakistan and to undo the parity between the country's western and eastern wings.

The Khan of Kalat invited the people to struggle against One Unit and for the restoration of state identity of Kalat. He undertook extensive tour of his state, addressed public and private meetings and bitterly criticized the Central Government.⁵ Besides the Khan, his brother Prince Abdul Karim, and Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo also remained equally unhappy and critical of the implantation of the One Unit. In the meantime, media reported about the desecration of the national flag and hosting of Khan's own flag on his residence in Kalat.⁶ The President Iskandar Mirza proclaimed an emergency in Balochistan and the armed forces were sent to Kalat. On the charge of treason, Khan was arrested by the government authorities and was taken to Lahore. The acts incited another enormous spell of Baloch insurgency which was followed by huge processions. Approximately 300 insurgents from different areas of Kalat and peripheries were arrested.⁷ In addition, through a presidential order all distinctions and immunities of Khan, including his Rs. 6,00,000 as a privy purse were taken back.⁸

In the meantime, Pakistan's first Martial Law was imposed by General Muhammad Ayub Khan in October 1958. He

4 *Dawn*, June 17, 1954.

5 Ahmad, *Baluchistan: Its Strategic Importance*, 167.

6 *Morning News*, October 4, 1958.

7 Harrison, *In the Shadow of Afghanistan*, 27.

8 Ahmad, *Baluchistan: Its Strategic Importance*, 168.

abrogated the constitution, dissolved the legislature and dismissed the democratic government. During his reign, there was a constant insurgency in Balochistan for provincial autonomy. According to Tahir Amin, "During the Ayub era, the military-bureaucratic elite attempted to dislodge the tribal system of Balochistan, however, three main tribes, the Marris under Khair Bakhsh Marri, the Mengals under Attaullah Mengal and the Bugtis under their leader Akbar Bugti resisted the regime's efforts".⁹ At the start of 1960, Marri and Jhalawan areas became a centre of guerrilla warfare activities.

There were many groups involved in a battle against the Centre. The Liberation Front was founded by Sher Muhammad Marri. During 1963, he developed close ties with Khair Bukhsh Marri and Mir Hazar Ramkhani, who headed the Pararies during the insurgency. The Balochistan Peoples Liberation Front (BPLF) called for the creation of a "Greater Balochistan", with the help of Baloch territories in Iran and Afghanistan also became stronger. Balochistan Student Organization (BSO) was also established in November 1967, which was a strong nationalist organization in the province.¹⁰ Although the organization was confined mainly to the colleges and schools, however, it played an important role in socializing the younger generation in terms of Baloch ethno-national symbols.

In the meantime, Prince Abdul Karim, after completing his imprisonment, along with his 700 followers, tried to move against the Centre, which charged that he and the Khan had been negotiating with Afghanistan to support Baloch militancy. Consequently, Khan and about 300 Baloch leaders arrested.¹¹ Although Pakistan army strengthened its

9 Amin, *Ethno-National Movements of Pakistan*, 96.

10 The primary objective of the Balochistan Students Organization (BSO), a secessionist movement of the Baloch, was the independence of Balochistan. It was influenced heavily by the Marxist-Leninist philosophy, particularly the models practiced in Cuba, Vietnam, China and North Africa.

11 Khan, *Inside Baluchistan*, 102.

position in the interior Balochistan, however, many prominent Baloch leaders like Sardar Attaullah Mengal, Akbar Bugti, Khair Bakhsh Marri, Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo and Sher Mohammad Marri started to organize and support the guerrilla warfare against Islamabad. Talking about their organizational structure under Sher Mohammad, Iqbal Ahmed says:

...Sher Mohammad Marri had an influential guerrilla force with two major command centers i.e. southern and the northern. He himself controlled the Marri-Bugti areas of northern command, whereas Ali Mohammad Mengal was in-charge of Jhalawan district under the southern command...the sector covered Khuzdar and Wad. Some 400 persons were mainly responsible to see and run the affairs of both headquarters.¹²

However, the authorities believed that this instalment of the disturbance was the instigation of the Marri and Bugti Sardars who wanted more political and economic incentives i.e. restoration of old privileges of Sardars, no police and revenue department interference and above all mineral resources in any particular area should be considered as a property of Sardars.¹³ Therefore, the military, which was already busy against the guerrilla forces, decided to take a more strict action against the extremists. Ultimately, in early 1968, under the leadership of General Tikka Khan, army launched a major operation against Sher Mohammad Marri.¹⁴ In the meantime, youth from different parts of Balochistan came and joined the guerrillas in the hilly areas of the province. However, the counter insurgency did nothing but further alienated the Baloch community.

This “bullet-versus-bullet” strategy continued till the Governor Amir Muhammad Khan remained in his office; however, a slight change occurred when General Musa

12 Ahmad, *Baluchistan: Its Strategic Importance*, 174-175.

13 A. B. Awan, *Baluchistan: Historical and Political Processes* (London: New Century Publishers, 1985), 232.

14 Mansoor Qadir Jonejo, *General Shrove, Balochistan ka Gorilla Rehnoma* [Urdu] (Lahore: Fiction House, 2010), 20-21.

Khan, a Baloch ex-commander-in-chief of Army, assumed the governorship of Balochistan. The new government announced to reinstate chieftainship, offered general amnesty to the regional forces and to release all Baloch leadership including 1,300 activists.¹⁵ The attitude of federal authorities, which expected that activists would lay their weapons in a public ceremony, proved a hindrance in mutual understanding. Hence, fighting began once again in eastern Balochistan and some places in adjoining Upper Sindh. In the meantime, situation took a new turn when President Ayub Khan left the office and handed over the power to General Yahya Khan. The new administration, soon after taking over the authority, withdrew the One Unit plan. Through Air Martial Noor Khan, the West Pakistani Governor, the government successfully signed an armistice with Pararis. Consequently, the guerrilla warfare in Balochistan ended in 1969. However, Balochistan, as a full-fledged province, appeared on the map of Pakistan in 1970.

Balochistan in the Mainstream Politics

The Elections of 1970 making it for the first time that Balochistan had ever participated in the direct elections for the national and provincial legislatures. However, it had lacked the presence of a commanding nationalist leader in the mould of NWFP's Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Similarly, people with nationalist credentials i.e. Abdus Samad Khan Achakzai were unable to exert their influence beyond the boundaries of a localized area. Moreover, the NAP in Balochistan received a severe blow when an old friend of Abdul Wali Khan, Abdus Samad Khan Achakzai, who wanted a Pashto-speaking province from Chaman to Quetta to Chitral in the North, withdrew from the party and formed Pashtoonkhwa National Awami Party (PNAP).

In Balochistan, the election campaign of NAP was controlled by Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, Khair Bakhsh Marri and Atallah

15 Ahmad, *Baluchistan: Its Strategic Importance*, 176.

Mengal, each operating at the local level, however, the man who came up from behind in the campaign was Sardar Akbar Bugti. After a successful campaign by the NAP, the elections had brought forth results that were not unexpected. Population-wise, the NAP had a strong base in two of the smaller provinces of West Pakistan—Balochistan and the NWFP. The party contested and won the elections in these two provinces over the issue of provincial autonomy.¹⁶ Balochistan had only four National Assembly seats out of which NAP got three seats. In the provincial assembly elections for Balochistan, the NAP again emerged as a majority party. The total number of seats in the Balochistan Assembly was 20, out of which the NAP won eight seats, the PML got three, the JUI got two and the rest went to the independent candidates. Thus, the elections of 1970 had finally given the people of Balochistan an opportunity to be represented within their own province.

The results of the elections clearly indicated some political change in Pakistan. The 'old guard' politics were badly routed. The founder party of Pakistan, the Muslim League, including its two breaking factions, had lost completely. In East Pakistan, the Awami League of Sheikh Mujibur Rehman successfully eliminated all other national, religious or leftist organizations. Similarly, the PPP led by Z. A. Bhutto emerged as a mainstream party from West Pakistan by winning almost two-third majority. However, the predominantly tribal structure of the NWFP and Balochistan has produced a pattern of voting behaviour dominated by the primary loyalties.¹⁷ The NAP and the JUI in the NWFP Assembly had 19 seats out of 42 and needed only three members for the formation of the provincial government. However, both parties had conflicting ideologies; the NAP got its mandate mainly on issue of maximum provincial autonomy and the JUI, on the other hand, was a

16 Shah, *The Foreign Policy of Pakistan*, 96-97.

17 Mohammad Waseem, *The 1993 Elections in Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard Books Pvt. Ltd., 1994), 24.

conservative Islamic party propagating strong religious beliefs. The NAP could enter into an alliance with Abdul Qaiyum Khan of the Muslim League. The NWFP provincial elections had led the NAP to win 13 seats against the Qaiyum Khan's Muslim League 10 seats¹⁸ but Qaiyum Khan's pro-establishment character withheld the NAP to join the Muslim League. He was quite blunt for his views regarding Pashtoon nationalism. Therefore, the only choice left with the NAP in NWFP politics was the JUI.

Regarding the situation in Balochistan, as pointed out earlier, the PPP did not score a single seat out of 20 seats in the Balochistan Assembly; on the other hand the NAP and the JUI were in commanding position in the province. The NAP and the JUI strived to appoint their candidates as governors in NWFP and Balochistan as Bhutto already did in Sindh and Punjab.¹⁹ However, as Satish Kumar points out, "Bhutto did not allow his trust in the NAP to be taken to its logical conclusion; in Balochistan a governor, who was not only a non-Balochi, but in whom the NAP had no trust".²⁰ The appointment of Ghaus Bakhsh Raisani, who had been returned on an independent ticket, as Governor of Balochistan on December 25, 1971, set a series of disturbances in the province.

In such circumstances, the NAP and the JUI retreated from their demand to appoint the governors after consulting them but Bhutto again let down the request.²¹ The incident also snowballed into a variable wall of suspicion between the

18 *Report on the General Elections in Pakistan 1970-71*, Vol. II (Karachi: Election Commission of Pakistan, 1972), 122-123.

19 Bhutto appointed his own partymen as governors in Punjab and Sindh, Ghulam Mustafa Khar taking over Punjab on December 23, 1971, and Mumtaz Bhutto took over Sindh on the 24th. See, *Jang*, December 24-25, 1971.

20 Satish Kumar, *The New Pakistan* (Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1978), 158.

21 Syed Mujawar Hussain Shah, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan, 1972-88* (Islamabad: National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, 1996), 142.

NAP and President Bhutto. The first consequence was the decision of NAP not to allow its two members to join the Central cabinet.²² Both the NAP and the JUI took the position, that the PPP had no seat in the Balochistan Provincial Assembly, and had, therefore, no right to participate in the government there.

In addition, they launched a campaign to lift the Martial Law and ending of emergency rule. Wali Khan and his colleagues, asserted that the cooperation would be available to the Centre, only if Martial Law was lifted immediately, undiluted democracy restored in the country, provincial autonomy granted and land reforms introduced.²³ The working committee of the Balochistan NAP went to the extent of passing a resolution, calling on its MNAs and MPAs, not to take part in the meetings of the committees or institutions set up by the local administration.

Bhutto could easily understand the situation where he was unable to neglect the desires of NWFP and Balochistan. Due to his minor representation in these provincial legislatures, the PPP was virtually absent. Obviously, he could not continue his rule with the help of Martial Law which simply means his dependency on military. He must have felt the need to exercise sturdier and sustainable constitutional foundation for his authority.²⁴ Hence, the entrance of the PPP, the NAP and the JUI into an alliance, despite having conflicting ideologies was not a surprising event.

22 In the National Assembly, the PPP could secure only one out of 18 seats in the NWFP, however, the NAP had 12 seats in the Provincial Assembly. It was in this background that Bhutto, after coming into power, offered two cabinet posts in the central government to the members of the NAP. This move was to provide a cordial atmosphere for centre-province co-operation. See, Syed Jaffar Ahmed, "Federal Crisis in Pakistan, 1972-77," in S. Akbar Ahmed (ed.), *Regional Imbalances and the National Question in Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard Books Ltd., 1992), 282.

23 Anwar Mazdaki, *Wali Khan ki Sayasat* [Urdu] (Lahore: Nawa-i-Waqat Printers, 1972), 70.

24 Sherbaz Khan Mazari, *A Journey to Disillusionment* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 229-231.

Bhutto, who was facing gigantic problems of rebuilding Pakistan after assuming authority, knew that secular approach of the NAP would be valuable for the PPP in federal and provincial legislatures of NWFP and Balochistan. Consequently, in order to meet the challenges, he decided to seek the cooperation from the NAP and the JUI in order to create a democratic coordination. He lifted the ban on the NAP which had a majority in the NWFP and Balochistan Provincial Assemblies. Bhutto's step was to normalize the political situation and to please the Russians and Afghans; the supporters of the NAP.²⁵ However, circumstances clearly indicated that the PPP had no option except to enter into an agreement with the NAP and the JUI in both the provincial legislatures of NWFP and Balochistan. Negotiations of the PPP-NAP-JUI were held during March 4-6, 1972 at Rawalpindi. Consequently, the delegates led by Bhutto, Wali Khan and Mufti Mahmud, respectively, concluded a tripartite agreement to share power. The NAP government in Balochistan represented the first elected government of the province since independence. The government of newly formed province had great expectations from the Centre. The government of People's Party had assured Balochistan to give provincial autonomy, however, with the PPP ruling in the Centre and the NAP-JUI in the two smaller provinces, sharp differences were not unexpected. When the alliance proceeded further differences arose.

Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo was appointed Governor on April 29, and Ataulah Mengal was elected the Chief Minister of NAP-JUI provincial government on May 1, 1972. This was the first time that these NAP leaders were the part of government because previously, as seen, the NAP leadership, drawing its support from regionalism and the demand for maximum provincial autonomy, had been at a distinct disadvantage with all its major leaders being constantly put out of action through their imprisonment. After assumption of authority,

25 Kumar, *The New Pakistan*, 160.

the NAP leadership announced the development of Balochistan as their foremost priority.²⁶ Unlike the coalition government of the NAP and the JUI in NWFP, the Balochistan province was run by a pure Baloch nationalist government of the NAP with the JUI as a junior partner. No effective role was left for JUI's representatives to implement their programme of Islamization, although they could announce Urdu as official language of the province. Governor Balochistan Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo clearly stated that there was no such desire on the part of NAP to introduce Islamic reforms in Balochistan, because the ultimate goal of the NAP and the PPP was the implementation of socialism.²⁷ It was said that although both Bhutto and Ataullah Mengal wanted to improve the standard of living, their different approaches intensified the bitter conflict.

However, Bhutto, an advocate of a strong Centre, urged modernization in Balochistan under the direction of the central government. He wanted all powers consolidated in his own hands. The independent NAP governments in Balochistan and the NWFP remained a complete anathema to him. His development programmes not only encompassed the economic sphere but also the social structure of the province.²⁸ He had diagnosed Balochistan's backwardness as essentially the result of the tribal structure existing in the province. He was determined to change this and it was this meddling in the provincial arena which caused the two governments to clash. Although the NAP government pledged to promote harmony, stability, tranquillity and respect for individual rights and the rule of law, however, it was of the view that in order to build up a Baloch middle class through the utilization of the province's mineral

26 Khan, *Constitutional and Political History of Pakistan*, 459-460.

27 *Pakistan Times*, October 6, 1972.

28 Muhammad Ali Khan Mahsood, "Provincial Governments in Balochistan and the NWFP" (M. Phil Dissertation, Department of History, Quaid-i-Azam University, 2002), 62.

possessions, it would have to eliminate competition with all non-Baloch elements in the province.²⁹

The provincial government argued that the channelling of finances had been mainly controlled by the Punjabi bureaucracy who was not much interested to initiate or continue the development activities in the province. It was estimated that out of approximately 40,000 civil employees in Balochistan, about 2000 were Baloch and most of them held inferior jobs. Governor Bizenjo, during the first phase, decided to sack around 6,000 non-Baloch government employees in contradiction to his assurance to Bhutto.³⁰

The provincial government, which sought to redress the Baloch grievances by giving a preferential treatment to the Balochis in the provincial services, made arrangements for the return of the Punjabi civil servants back to their province or so. This, however, was not the fault of the Federal Government because Balochistan being a backward province had the lowest per capita income in the country and the highest illiteracy rate was about 5 per cent.³¹ Balochistan had been the most impoverished province in Pakistan. Before partition, the British had provided almost no facilities to the province and after achieving independence, it has not had its due share of development.³²

The annual per capita income of Balochistan in year 1976 was recorded 54 US\$ against 80\$ for the Punjab, whereas Sindh contributed 78 dollars and NWFP could share 60 dollars. However, not only that development was deliberately neglected, but also the cost of development with no infrastructure available for such development was forbidden.

29 Shah, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan 1972-1988*, 144.

30 Shah, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan 1972-1988*, 144.

31 Shah, *Religion and Politics in Pakistan 1972-1988*, 143.

32 Mir Gul Khan Naseer, *Balochistan Qadeem aur Jadeed Tareekh ki Roshni Main* [Urdu] (Quetta: Nisa Traders, 1982), 349.

There was no infrastructure for development process.³³ The infrastructure had to be laid before development work could be taken in hand. The policies of Centre, it seems, were to develop the area rapidly where the infrastructure existed and in the meantime to make necessary preparations for the same elsewhere. The NAP government of the province, for the purpose of rectifying the imbalance, decided to relieve all the Punjabi, Sindhi and Pashtoon civil servants.

Bhutto although agreed to the proposal in principle wanted it to be phased out to avoid reaction from other provinces. However, in the meantime, the Muslim League (Qaiyum Khan) and the PPP entered into an alliance. Abdul Qaiyum Khan agreed to support the PPP in the Parliament and in the NWFP Provincial Assembly. In return, Bhutto appointed him as the Interior Minister in his cabinet.³⁴ Later on, Bhutto used him to take-on Attaullah Mengal ministry. Thus, the political situation in the Balochistan remained disturbed from the first day of NAP ministry. Within no time, the NAP began complaining of attempts by Islamabad to destabilize the Balochistan government. Although, the NAP leadership embarked upon their new career with considerable enthusiasm but they were not allowed to continue for long. Within days of coming to power, members of the NAP were complaining of attempts by the centre to destabilize the Balochistan government. The major surrogates to protect the Center's interests during this conflict were chief of Zehris Sardar Doda Khan Zarakzai, Jam Ghulam Qadir of Lasbela and the third man, perhaps the most powerful, was Akbar Bugti. He after developing differences³⁵ with the NAP

33 Surendra Singh, *Politics of Regionalism in Pakistan* (New Delhi: Shobi Offset, 2003), 52.

34 Ahmad, *Federal Crisis in Pakistan*, 284.

35 Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti did not belong to the NAP but had supported its election campaign in 1970. In March 1972, he accompanied Bhutto to Moscow and then visited London and a number of European and Middle Eastern capitals. When the NAP leaders made a settlement with Bhutto and formed the governments in the NWFP and Balochistan, Bugti felt isolated

leadership, worked against the interest of NAP government whenever opportunity arose making him the most favourite choice for Bhutto. The Center's continuous interference, with the help of these proxies, in the provincial affair created hindrances in its smooth functioning.

Tension between the Centre and the NAP government rose to a high pitch in winter of 1972. However, in the aftermath of a massive find of Iraqi arms in Islamabad, allegedly destined for Balochistan, and the internal disturbances in Lasbela, Bhutto finally decided to disband the Balochistan government on the night of February 14, 1973.³⁶ The NAP-JUI government in Frontier resigned in protest against the federal action in Balochistan. Bhutto justified the dismissal of the coalition ministry and accused the NAP of conspiring with Iran and Soviet Union to destabilize Pakistan and Iran.³⁷

The dismissal resulted in a severe confrontation between Bhutto and the NAP. Its leaders including Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, Khair Bakhsh Marri and Ataulah Mengal were put under house arrest and then sent to jail. The JUI, at this occasion, termed the dismissal of the NAP government in Balochistan 'unconstitutional and undemocratic'.³⁸ After the removal of NAP-JUI administration from Balochistan, Nawab Akbar Bugti and Jam Ghulam Qadir of Lasbela were appointed Governor and Chief Minister of the province, respectively. Consequently, this short-lived federalism came to an end. This situation led to a sharpening and deepening of the federal crisis in Pakistan once again after the tragic debacle in 1971.

and betrayed. He believed that, in proper gratitude for his assistance in the 1970 elections, the NAP leaders should have consulted him.

36 *White Paper on Balochistan*, 5.

37 Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 35.

38 Sayyid A. S. Pirzada, *The Politics of the Jamiat Ulema-i-Islam 1971-1977* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), 73.

Conflict Resolution in Balochistan

Right through his rule, Bhutto tried to assail the opposition by holding it responsible for disintegrating Pakistan as well as for non-implementation of his radical socio-economic programmes. Similarly, he tried to promote himself as a statesman who believed that 'politics as a discipline has a meaning for qualified only not for novices'. This attitude of Bhutto motivated the opposition forces to join hands in the beginning of March 1973, and constitute themselves into a United Democratic Front (UDF). Due to their consistent pressure, Bhutto sent for the NAP-JUI leaders and had a meeting with them at Murree on June 28, 1973. In the meeting Bhutto assured NAP-JUI leaders that their government in NWFP and Balochistan would be reinstated.³⁹ However, Bhutto did not fulfil his commitment. During the night, the President signed an amendment in the Interim Constitution which authorized the provincial Governors to authenticate the budget without calling the Legislature. So, in spite of having a clear majority, there was nothing that the NAP could do about it. Consequently, on July 20, 1973, the UDF observed "Balochistan Day" by way of protest.⁴⁰ The Opposition alliance, at this occasion, urged the federal government to restore constitutional rule, based on the majority, in the Balochistan Assembly.

Bhutto, no doubt, found the solution of the Balochistan problem in the military action. According to him: "The uprising in Balochistan was like a hard nut which took almost three deadly years to break. In order to combat the insurgency, it really became inevitable to indulge the armed forces into the situation with an expanding role".⁴¹ The new administration of the province wholeheartedly supported his policies. However, for a common Baloch, it was an insult

39 Statement of Mufti Mahmud in *Dawn*, June 29, 1973.

40 *The Jang*, July 21, 1973.

41 Bhutto, *My Dearest Daughter: A Letter from Death Cell*, p. 30.

required them to fight against the aggressor.⁴² Therefore, a variety of tribal guerrilla organizations came into existence with little programme of actions. They fought a reactive and defensive war against a strong army, which was using air technology as well. At the height of the armed struggle against the federation, it was costing the Pakistan Government about Rs. one million a day to crush the movement.⁴³

In the meantime, Nawab Akbar Bugti, the Balochistan Governor, resigned as it was now impossible for any party to have a clear-cut majority in the House. It is said that Bugti wanted a more leading place of the Chief Minister under an enduring constitution. He, therefore, recommended that Assembly should be dissolved and the new elections held under the new constitution.⁴⁴ However, the Federal Government did not show any positive sign and in his place, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan of Kalat was appointed as new Governor of Balochistan. Although the new Governor believed in the solidarity and integrity of the country but the trouble was strong enough to reconcile the Baloch. The government tried to settle the matter unilaterally by offering amnesty three times, but the situation did not improve.

No doubt, the federal government was anxious to restore normalcy in Balochistan, because the insurgency was spoiling its reputation in the world. However, despite its efforts, assertions and claims, the federal government did not succeed in bringing the situation under control. Like the year 1974, the whole of 1975 and 1976 were disturbed years. The situation had deteriorated considerably and posed a veritable challenge to Prime Minister Bhutto. The Balochistan administration was the worse in the province so far. It was incapable of handling the prevailing situation. As a

42 Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 36.

43 Baluch, "The Baluch Question in Pakistan", 365.

44 Surendra Nath Kaushik, *Pakistan Under Bhutto's Leadership* (New Delhi: Uppal Publishing House, 1985), 172.

result on December 31, 1975, the Federal Government announced to assume to functions of the Government of Balochistan.⁴⁵ In this way, the Federal Cabinet took over the powers of the Provincial Assembly.

Nevertheless, after six months of Federal Rule, through latest constitutional change, Governor Rule replaced direct President's Rule. In order to run the administration of the province, five-member cabinet consisting of Jam Ghulam Qadir, Ghaus Bakhsh Raisani, Muhammad Khan Barozai, Saifullah Khan and Taimur Shah Jomezai was established under the supervision of Governor Mir Ahmad Yar Khan. After consolidating his position in the province, Bhutto decided to take a bold step. On March 26, 1976, he visited Balochistan. Although he addressed at Sibbi and Khuzdar, however, he had something special for Quetta where he announced the abolition of the *Sardari System*⁴⁶ in Pakistan. During his address at the meeting he said, "...today I formally announce, of course with great courage, that Sardari System in Pakistan is legally came to an end. From now onward, no person will be able to enjoy the status of Sardar in this country".⁴⁷

Although the proclamation was widely welcomed in Pakistan, however, it was a great shock for the tribal leaders of Balochistan. The decision was taken as an attack on the traditional rights of the Sardars. According to Jaffar Ahmed, "The Sardari System was, no doubt, a medieval institution and was one of the main sources of Balochistan's social backwardness, but it had deep roots in the society. Without eliminating these roots and improving the general socio-

45 *Jang*, January 1, 1976.

46 *Sardari System* in Balochistan is about 400 years old institution which has passed through different phases still exist in its entrenched form in a number of Balochi and Brauhi areas of Balochistan. For details see, Mansoor Akbar Kundi, "Sardari System in Balochistan," in *Baluchistan through History*, ed., Ahmad Riaz (Islamabad: NIPS Quaid-i-Azam University, 2008), 22.

47 Quoted in Awan, *Baluchistan: Historical and Political Processes*, 292-93.

economic conditions of the people, a mere governmental decree could not result in an improvement of the situation".⁴⁸ As most of the prominent leaders were busy against the Federal Government, the announcement further deteriorated the already tense situation in the province. In addition, Bhutto who abolished the institution was also relying on the Baloch Sardars in order to strengthen his position in the province.

The policy of violent control affected their mutual relationship in the long run. The post-1970s period appeared to suggest increasing ethnic consolidation among the Baloch community against 'the Others'. The situation in Balochistan in the post-1970s period, as argued by the Federal Government, has been transformed in the last few years near normalcy and it was being projected as a 'model' where the Pakistani government has successfully overcome ethnic separatism. According to the official sources, by the end of 1976, almost all leading militants and their organizations had been eliminated, the moderates had been muzzled, and the Balochistan was being hailed as a successful example for combating separatism. It was claimed, that separatism has been defeated; government at the Centre created a window of opportunity through some political as well as economic concessions in order to legitimize the violent control. Although existence of representative democracy during 1990s have mainly subsided the separatist tendencies in Balochistan, however, not surprisingly, just after three decades, a condition of rebellion developed again. The then President General Pervez Musharraf in early 2003, like Bhutto, intended to reinstitute the Sardari System. He tried to reduce its effectiveness through reformation.

The edifice of the situation further deteriorated when the Federal Government decided to construct the Gwadar Port with Chinese assistance. However, the government started work without any participation of Baloch government or

48 Ahmad, *Federal Crisis in Pakistan*, 292.

people. Consequently, with the beginning of year 2005, large-scale demonstrations and protests started throughout the province. Finally, the military regime decided to take a bold step against Sardar Akbar Bugti, who was allegedly leading the separatist movement. During the last week of August 2006, Bugti was assassinated in a military operation which added fuel to the fire resulting Baloch alienation at an all-time high. Most of the moderate leadership, who often used to talk about the provincial autonomy, was looking in favour of complete independence. The violence affected every corner of the province; however, Dera Bugti and Kohlu were practically taken over by the insurgents. During that particular year alone, almost 300 bomb blasts, more than 2000 rockets fired and about 150 landmines claiming hundreds of civilians, deteriorated already worst situation of the province.

No doubt, along with the ongoing military action in Balochistan, efforts for conciliation remained intact.

Conclusion

By analyzing the whole situation, we come to know that the Balochistan problem is not going to fade away by itself. On the other hand, the Centre also incessantly adopted a policy of hegemonic control instead of participatory approach.

With the view towards achieving this objective, a high powered commission should be set up to recommend redistributing existing provinces on the basis of language, socio-economic characteristics and administrative requirements. In addition, as a trust building measure, the Centre's interference in provincial affairs must be reduced to the minimum level and the Federal Government should handover all powers to the federating units except defence, foreign affairs, currency and communication as a sign of decentralization. Above all, possible constitutional measures should be taken in order to safeguard the legislative, administrative and financial matters of the smaller provinces especially of Balochistan.