



RESEARCH PAPER

Balochistan during Musharraf Era: A Political Perspective

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ABSTRACT

Balochistan had a troublesome start with the federal state of Pakistan. It is a secular tribal society where tribal laws are dominant over the state jurisprudence. General Musharraf who imposed martial law in year of 1999 held general elections in 2002 to gain legitimacy. As a result, PML-Q won the majority and formed provincial government in the region. Peace environment is hard to witness in this province as first insurgency broke out between Baloch rebels and government of Pakistan in 1948 soon after independence over the issue of Kalat state annexation followed by others in 1955, 1973 and 2005. To address the Baloch grievances parliamentary committee on Balochistan was established in 2004 but its efforts proved in vain. Historic and descriptive methods of research were used as well as secondary and primary data were incorporated by support arguments to write this piece of research.

Introduction

Starting from the eve of independence from British Raj, Balochistan has had a troubled history viz-a-viz the state of Pakistan. The very first Baloch Insurgency came about as early as in 1948, i.e. almost immediately after the creation of Pakistan. This insurgency was rooted in the issue of accession of the State of Kalat to Pakistan. The second Insurgency came up in 1955 as a fall out of the One-Unit formula. Third Baloch insurgency took place when, in 1973, Mr. Bhutto, the then Prime Minister dissolved Balochistan Provincial Assembly. This insurgency proved to be the longest and the most devastating of all Baloch up-risings. Zia's era witnessed another type of unrest in Balochistan owing to the outburst of Afghan war against Soviet Union. In the democratic eras of Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, center-province relations remained generally peaceful but the province faced inter-tribal conflicts. Nawaz Sharif's second government was over thrown by Musharraf on 12th of October 1999 and that gave rise to a new chapter in the history of Balochistan.

The province of Balochistan had hardly any say in main stream political decision making. Even the decisions on purely provincial subject were taken at the federal level. Due to inadequate political representation, vital decisions about the fate of the local people were taken by the military top-brass and the civil bureaucracy sitting in faraway Islamabad. Balochistan being a tribal society had a different political cultural then the rest of Pakistan, where role of tribal leaders is dominant and is duly acknowledged. They are the real administrators and decision-makers for their respective areas. This extensive role of tribal leaders in their domestic affairs compels central government representatives to consult tribal heads before framing any policy for the tribal areas. All politicians of Pakistan used these tribal leaders for their own interest and never encouraged introduction of reforms in these areas. These tribal leaders formed their own states within the State of Pakistan, where only their own tribal law was applied, while the central government does not have any writ in these areas. This system seems to continue till eternity, as there seems to be no awareness among tribal people, nor any desire to change it. This province holds strategic importance during British era and continues to be so even after the creation of Pakistan.

Political Development in Balochistan

Musharraf's take over in 1999

The year 1999 saw Musharraf toppling the elected government of the then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, when latter tried to replace the former, with another general, while he was away from the country on an official tour. The constitutional validity of the Musharraf government was ratified by the Supreme Court in May 2000 under the cover of "Doctrine of Necessity". Musharraf was of the view that Pakistani Politicians were responsible for tarnishing Pakistan's international image. He showed his intension to bring young blood in politics from "the people" to change the old patterns of politics.

Pursing his desire, he conducted the local bodies election in 2000 for the selection of nazims and mayors. These elected persons were directly funded by the central government under the institution of National Reconstruction Bureau (NRB). This setup was designed to reduce the monopoly of bureaucracy and politicians and to boost grass root development and poverty-alleviation. Musharraf's however, soon felt the need for political legitimacy in the wake of mounting international criticism of his despotic regime. He announced a program called "road map to democracy" to restore democracy in Pakistan (Synnott, 2009).

General Elections 2002 under Musharraf

The eighth general elections were held in the country under the General Musharraf, in 2002. The major factors which had deep impact on the election process in Balochistan were the tribal/sardari system, ideological and the ethnic bases. The candidates who filled the provincial assembly seats were either from major tribes or

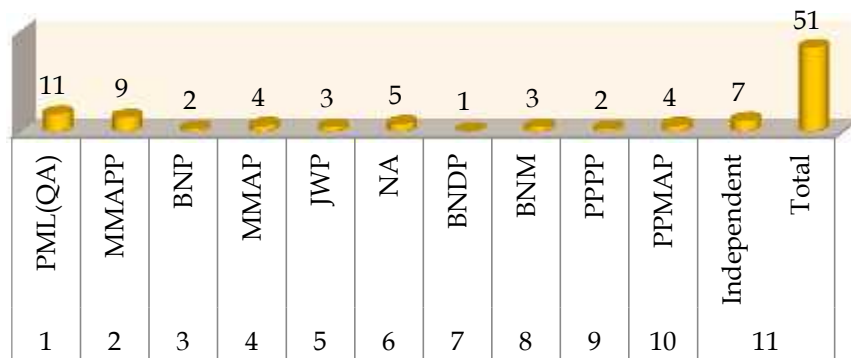
were affiliated with some ideology or had some ethnic origin. The important fact to mention is that, after 1973 all the chief ministers of the Balochistan province were either some tribal sardars or nawabs.

The voting turn out in 2002 election was 30% according to the election commission. The factors which can improve voting turn outs are means of communication, education and the political parties but Balochistan lacks in first two factors. The highest voting turnout was in the area of Dera Bugti has been 76.28 % out of the total registered voters. No political party secured absolute majority in the provincial assembly in the 2002 elections, hence coalition government was the only choice left in Balochistan. The election of 2002 also marked a shift in the public opinion. The nationalist political parties were rejected by the people and the right wing secured more seats in the assembly. Selection of the new candidates was possibly the awareness among people or graduation criteria laid down by the Election Commission of Pakistan. In 2002 elections 41 new faces filled the 65 seats of the assembly. Women seats were reserved in all elections but Musharraf raised the number of seats as part of his agenda of modernization. The total number of women seats in Balochistan assembly was 11 (Kundi, 2003).

The election results of 2002 elections of Balochistan Assembly is depicted through figure below (Ecp, 2002).

Balochistan Assembly Election Results 2002

■ Total Seats in Balochistan Assembly



The factors which affected the voting process of Balochistan were the numerical strength of the tribal group i.e. the Rind tribe of Balochistan - the largest one. Bugti tribe is one of sub-tribe of Rinds and their vote percentage was numerically second. Another factor which affected the voting process was the development and the literacy rate of the area which off course helps to determine the election results. In the absence of any national political party as mobilizing force, tribal top notches in the area dominate the political scene. The one and the old way to win elections was the support of the ruling elites or establishment of the country. Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-QA) in the provincial elections of Balochistan and on general seats Zubaida Jalal was the examples. The grand alliance

of Muthahida Majlis Amal (MMA), which consisted of six religious political parties formed in 2002 election. The main party was Jameeat-e- Ulama-e- Islam (JUI) which secured 18 seats. The JUI-F (Fazal-ur-Rehman) was a political party with Islamic formed coalition government with PML-Q. JUI-F acted as a pressure group and considered being the all catch party (Kundi, 2003).

Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan 2004

Balochistan's situation started deteriorating in January 2000 with the murder of High Court Justice Nawaz Marri (Isa, 2005). Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri was the suspected for his involvement in Nawaz's murder and was arrested on such charges. Nawab's arrest instigated reaction from Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), a militant organization. In 2002 federal government asked Bugti to surrender before a given dead-line. Bugti was alleged to be supporting anti-state activities and for master-minding attacks on gas pipelines, in Balochistan. As the dead line passed, federal government deployed army in Dera Bugti surrounded the whole area and enforced complete blockade. Another parallel development was the arrest and release of BSO members, who were holding protests in Karachi against the ongoing army operations in Balochistan. Other issues were those of the Gwadar port project, building of new cantonments in Balochistan, torture of Bloch activists and the issue of missing persons in Balochistan. However, the most significant event among all these was the kidnapping of Chinese technicians in 2004, and then the attack on the Chief Minister Balochistan Jam Muhammad Yousaf. It was at this point that the military top-brass ran out of patience.

The then interim Prime Minister Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, who had personal contacts with Akbar Bugti was involved in the process of negotiations with Bugti on behalf of the parliamentary committee. Nawab Bugti escaped to hide into the area of the Marri tribe (Gazdar, 2006). The Parliamentary committee was further divided into two sub committees. One committee worked under Senator Wasim Sajjad with the task "to promote inter provincial harmony and protect the rights of the provinces with a view to strengthen the federation". The second committee under Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, was assigned the function "to examine the current situation in Balochistan and make recommendation thereon".

Reportedly committee reached an agreement but Musharraf receded to some of the demands of the Baloch leaders. The chief issues were Gwadar port acquisition rights and the issue of building of new cantonments in Balochistan. While the talks were still on way military operation against the 'Baloch rebels' was launched by central government. Balochistan National Party (BNP) walked out of the talks as a protest. The government wanted the Baloch leaders to engage in dialogue on one hand and on the other hand launched operation against them, which severely annoyed Balochies. Mushahid Hussain' sub-committee submitted its report, within 90 days, as mandated. Wasim Sajjad's sub-committee however failed to put-up its report even after 90 days.

Efforts of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan

Subcommittee on current issue took their job seriously and came up with number of suggestions after holding several meetings. The committee also met Baloch political party leaders to learn of their views. The committee submitted its report with the number of recommendations addressed the main grievances of the Baloch people (Senate of Pakistan, 2005). A reduction in the respective roles of FC & Coast-guards was recommended, with the exception of narcotics, arms and border patrol. Training of levies to maintain law and order was also proposed. Report suggested the government to reconsider building of new cantonments in Balochistan and to increase gas royalties for Balochistan. Shifting of Gwadar port office from Karachi to Gwadar was also recommended. NFC formula on underdevelopment lines, strictly follow the decided quota of jobs i.e. 5.4 % in federal ministries, equity between Baloch and Pashtuns should be observed and launch programs to improve the health, education, drinking water and other necessities of life in the province (ICG, 2006). The report only carried recommendations, but unable to provide the amicable formula to address the immediate issues of law and order in Balochistan.

Baloch Insurgency 2005

Musharraf sent a delegate to Akbar Bugti early in 2001 to fix his meeting with Bugti, later Musharraf canceled the meeting at eleventh hour. Early in 2003-04 Musharraf government announced the creation of additional cantonments in Gwadar, Dera Bugti and Kohlu. Baloch nationalists and Akbar Bugti viewed cantonment building as a check on their activities. During 2003-04, civil and military installations in Balochistan came under frequent and massive attacks from BLA. The Chinese engineers along with Pakistani counter parts were specifically targeted by the insurgents causing huge embarrassment for the Government of Pakistan (Jetly, 2009). Out of these BLF, LB and BLA insurgent organizations BRA is the most prominent one who took the responsibility of number of sabotage activities carried out in Balochistan (Iqbal, 2008, Muzaffar, et. al. 2021).

Balochistan experienced its fourth insurgency in 2005; immediate cause was the rape of Dr. Shazia. She was serving in Pakistan Petroleum Limited hospital (PPL) in Sui gas field as a doctor. Reportedly she was raped by a military officer. The accused captain was given full opportunity to clear his position. Musharraf himself took side of the accused captain on the National TV (Mukand, 2008). The incident added fuel to the fire, as Nawab Bugti was already having very tense relationship with the central government. The areas of conflict were the Sui area which was the hub of Bugti tribe, Gwadar as it was gaining international importance with every passing day and Kohlu district which was center of insurgent's camps. The concerns of Bugti related to the growing influence of Pakistani state in these areas were not beyond doubts. Bugti did not allow further drilling of gas to the Chinese company and claim that the central authorities were supporting the opponents of the Bugti tribe. The rape incident was human rights violation on one hand, but also an attack on Baloch traditional setup. This was right time for Bugti to cash the situation and turn the tables in his favor, Akbar Bugti took the side of doctor. Central government

dealt with the situation in a very casual manner which further aggravated the situation. The incident was followed by frequent attacks on gas installation in Sui area. Akbar Bugti stated that these attacks were the reaction by tribal society and has nothing to do with their nationalist movement.

The statement of Akbar Bugti was political one, as authorities believed that Akbar Bugti had joined hands with the Balach Marri, the leader of Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). The BLA is a militant organization involved in anti-state activities. BLA was in fact a new name of People's Liberation Front (BPLF) which was a nationalist political party created in 1962. This party was following Marxist ideology and worked for Baloch rights. The party did not demand independence at its earlier stage. It confined itself for provincial autonomy and for the rights of Baloch till 1973 clash. In 1991, Khair Bux Marri returned to Pakistan from Afghanistan and reportedly created a militant organization named BLA. BLA was involved in militant activities such as target killing, sabotage state machinery and for this purpose they were running guerrilla camps near Dera Bugti. The objectives of BLA were to create Greater Balochistan, consisting of areas taken from Pakistan (Balochistan) Iran and Afghanistan (Grare, 2006).

This was the one side of the picture sources says that Akbar Bugti had differences with the central government over royalty issues which he wanted to be increased by the government. According to the report Bugti received 120 million Rs annually in terms of land "rent" from Pakistan Petroleum Private Limited (PPL). Bugti also charge two million Rs for the security of the gas field. One million paid to Bugti for the transportation provided to the PPL by Bugti. One of the views was that the real issue between Bugti and the government was the payment to the Bugti (Syed, 2005). According to the article 172 of the constitution of Pakistan the property with no exact owner, belongs to the province in which it's located. In another article of the constitution clarifies the owner ship of the natural resources, federal state or the provincial government have right over the owner ship of the resources and if it belongs to the individual compensation will be paid to him (Constitution of Pakistan, 2010). The ownership of natural resources clarified by the constitution the other argument which is right to put, the first right over the resources belongs to the province itself where the resource belongs. This is the right argue of the province and political leaders to claim and must be listened to the authorities.

Early in January 2005 the rebels attack on Sui plant caused heavy damage to the plant. To deal with the deteriorating law and order situation federal government announced to use force against rebels and warned insurgents to surrender. As law-and-order situation slipped out of the hands of the provincial government, it called up for central government help to protect the Gas plant and other state assets in the province. The central government deputed a division of army to protect the sites. Akbar Bugti showed his reservations and said that there was no need for a division of the army as they were protecting Gas site since its installation. The rebels,

however, kept on targeting government sites i.e. Frontier corps camps, electricity towers and Sui pipe lines (Kazim, 2005).

The claim of Baloch insurgents that government wanted them to vacate the Sui area was right and supported by the District Coordination Officer (DCO) of Dera Bugti Mr. Abdul Samad Lasi. He showed the paper plans to Human Rights Commission of Pakistan(HRCP) team who visited Dera Bugti. Authorities planned to resettle the thirty thousand inhabitant of Sibi in Tilli Mat and named as Sohriabad. The government allocate Rs 1 billion to construct cantonment in Sibi and half of money was already released. The local population left the place and those who did not leave the area were residents of cantonments and the employee of PPL (HRCP, 2006).

Musharraf repeatedly showed his commitment to defend the state, even with the use of force. He ordered the army to crush the rebels, which gave rise to the fourth insurgency in Balochistan. The insurgency of 2005 was somewhat different from last three ones. First the tactics applied on first three insurgencies were to force the opponents to give up and to surrender before the state forces, they would then be trailed in courts and punished, though some of them took political asylum in Afghanistan. Second difference was the engagement of Baloch middle class in the insurgency. Third one is role of BLA an organized guerilla organization which provides a militant platform to the local insurgents.

Demands of the Insurgents

- Provincial Autonomy
- Royalties over natural resources
- End of exploitation of Balochistan's resources by Punjabis
- Revenue generation and its spending
- Revision of NFC award distribution formula
- Parity principal should be followed in recruitment of civil and military service (Harrison ,2006).

In the year 2005 insurgents launched an attack on paramilitary camp at Kohlu, while Musharraf was visiting the place, became the turning point in Balochistan situation. Military launched an operation ranging areas of Kohlu, Dera Bugti, Jaffarabad up to Naseerabad. These areas are mostly resided by Marri and Bugti tribes. A report says that six army brigades along with paramilitary forces were involved in operations against rebels. The whole operation was conducted with cobra gunship helicopters; and four squadrons of fighter planes along with US supplied F16 fighter planes. The operation saw indiscriminate bombardment on rebel's hideouts leaving hundreds of civilian's dead (Jetly, 2009).

This military operation forced thousands of inhabitants to leave their houses and seek shelter in other places. The population of Sui was angry with military presence as they were unable to carry out their routine business out of threat from

FC. The DCO portrayed other side of the picture that Bugti militants were responsible to spread terror in the area and forced people to shut down their shops just to show HRCF team (HRCF, 2006). HRCF fact finding team interviewed the local population who confirmed the causalities by FC firing and shelling in the area. The HRCF team met Nawab Akbar Bugti at anonymous place. He showed his faith over political dialogue to end the disputes. The Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP) of Akbar Bugti provided a list of human rights violation to the team. Locals confirmed that rocket launchers and bombs were deployed on civilian area which killed almost 150 civilians.

Murder of Akbar Bugti

Jetly (2009), mentioned Musharraf's statement regarding Bugti "I do not consider him Nawab (baron) any more, he and two other tribal chieftains are indulging in anti-state activities with the help of foreign money and weapons. We will soon sort them out." (p. 216).

A military operation was launched against rebels; Akbar Bugti left his house and hid out in the Kohlu district. Akbar Bugti was murdered in bombardment over his hide-out on 26 August 2006. His death was announced by Government of Pakistan, wherein government tried to establish, that whole incident was an accident (Laif & Hamza, 2009). Reasons of Akbar Bugti murder were somewhat personal according to the Baloch. The attack on Musharraf helicopter in 2005 at Kohlu, where he went to meet the tribal elders, was taken as a personal affront by him. He decided to take revenge, despite of the fact that intelligence agency; politicians and military personnel advised him to find not military but a political solution of the Baloch problem (Javaid, 2010). The angry Baloch argued that Musharraf should also take similar revenge from Punjabis and Sindhi's too, since he had been attacked in these provinces too. This is the one view the other side of picture is bit different from this. The other view was that, gas companies found him a hurdle in the way of further exploring gas reserves. Gas reserve of 22 trillion cubic feet found in Kohlu, these reserves have commercial value of \$110 billion and are sufficient to meet Pakistan's needs for the next 100 years. Oil and Gas Development Corporation Limited (OGDCL) was given the license to explore Gas in 2004. Akbar Bugti was not allowing the gas companies to drill further to explore the gas resources. To remove him from the scene they believed to get the exploration facilities (ICG, 2007).

Why Akbar Bugti was murdered in such a brutal way? Why his dead body was not handed over to his legal heirs? Why contradictory statements were released about his death i.e. whether he was killed during negotiation with the officials, or died when the cave he was hiding came down? Government released another statement according to which government had no intentions to kill Bugti and it was accidental. His dead body was discovered after five days which increased doubts in the minds (Bansal, 2006). Bugti was the head of Bugti tribe. He was an old man of 80, a veteran politician, a respected sardar and chief of his tribe. He was the ex-governor and chief minister of the province. The murder of one man makes no difference to

the state but when man was an ideology then it did not end with one man murder. The murder of Bugti accelerated anti state sentiments in the large section of society, it was kind of backfire.

Balochi opposition headed by three families

Musharraf targeted three Sardars out of 77, for unrest in Balochistan. Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, Sardar Ataullah Mengal and Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri. He announced them as anti democratic and anti-development figures in Balochistan. Bugti was murdered; the two others were also trailed by government on different charges. Bugti legacy is transferred to his grandson Barhamdagh Bugti who was with Akbar Bugti in 2006 operation but survived and escaped. It is reported that he is leading insurgency after the death of his grandfather. The son of Akbar Bugti Jamil Bugti was arrested on the charges of speaking against state and army. Ataullah Mengal and Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri are no longer active in politics. His heir Balach Marri leads the movement at present. Akhtar Jan Mengal son of Ataullah Mengal is the leader of Balochistan National Party (BNP). He was arrested on the charges of kidnapping and trailed in anti-terrorist court in Karachi. After first hearing on 8th January 2007 the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan official debarred to attend the next hearing. This means open trail did not applied in their cases. Pakistan constitution of 1973 also ensures that illegal detention should not be practiced in Pakistan (Muzaffar, et. al. 2018).

Musharraf claimed that only three Baloch sardars were acting against the state and rest of them were on his side proved to be wrong in the end, as the Baloch leaders called grand Baloch jirga at the death of Akbar Bugti, which was attended by 380 Baloch leader including 85 sardars. They condemned Bugti's murder and filed a case in International Court of Justice (ICJ). The ICJ has no jurisdiction over such cases hence petition was rejected by ICJ. The petition was rejected but Baloch were able to drag international attention. The troika of Bugtis, Marris and Mengals may have been broken down but the Baloch movement flared up (ICG, 2007).

Marri, Bugti and Mengals Agenda

S. No.	Sardars\Nawab	Hires	Political Parties	Agenda
1	Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti	i Brahmadagh Bugti ii Talal Bugti	JWP	Nationalist Nationalist
2	Sardar Ataullah Mengal	Akhtar Jan Mengal	BNP	Nationalist
3	Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri	Balach Marri	BHTP	Secessionist

Divide and Rule Politics of Musharraf

The policy of divide and rule to govern Balochistan had always worked in the past and the Musharraf era was no exception; he too followed the footprints of his predecessors.

The alliance of four Baloch parties was broken by the government. NP of Abdul Hayee Baloch, BNP of Sardar Akhtar Mengal, JWP of Akbar Bugti, BHT party of Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri are the four major Baloch parties. JWP splits into different factions in the life of Akbar Bugti. The nephew of Akbar Bugti member of National Assembly Mir Ghulam Haider Khan Bugti cut himself from JWP activities and supported the government developmental projects in Balochistan. Hajji Juma Khan JWP leader in Balochistan assembly attended the government sponsored Jirga to remove Akbar Bugti from party leadership. The JWP members, who supported the government, admitted that they had either been bribed or coerced/blackmailed into cooperation by the state intelligence agencies. Intelligence agencies supported Talal Bugti for leading JWP for their purpose. Talal called a convention and became party leader himself. Talal announced his aim to achieve autonomy of Balochistan within constitutional parameter. Jamil Bugti denounced Talal's leadership and supported his nephew Brahmadagh, instead as an heir to his father legacy and party command.

BNP won majority seats in the last provincial elections and could pose threat to the PML-Q and MMA. BNP of Akhtar Mengal stays safe from government tactics. Akhtar Mengal was imprisoned and other party members were also arrested while protesting against disappearances, displacement, killing and military operations. BNP Secretary General Habib Jalib Baloch said we are punished as we are protesting against Punjabi colonialism, mega projects and cantonments. NP of Dr. Abdul Hayee Baloch also showed this commitment to fight against the dictator government. The NP however did not resign from government seats as did BNP on the death of Akbar Bugti. NP believes in democratic system and has faith in the ballot. Khair Bakhsh Marri's Baloch Haq Talwar party is now headed by his son Mir Balach Marri. Balach Marri has lost faith in the parliamentary system and has taken up arms against the military rule (ICG, 2007).

Conclusion

The writ of the state which was supposed to be enforced by Musharraf limited him from becoming involved in a dialogue process. He did not convince and engage the opposition parties constructively in negotiation. Whereas democratic governments can convince the exasperated leaders by engaging them into discussions. Time has proved that handling Balochistan issue with force never ends the problems of Baloch people rather it adds into more grievances towards the federal government. There is no replacement of dialogue and discussion for peaceful and long-term political solution of the Baloch problem. Parliamentary committee report was the good initiate and its high time to execute those measures on ground but it could not implement in the real spirit.

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