

BALUCH INSURGENCY IN PAKISTAN AND EXTERNAL SUPPORT: A CRITICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

External support play a significant role toward the success of an insurgency against any state or government. The conventional understanding is that the insurgents groups having the external support and bases in the neighbor's states have more chances of success than those who do not have external support. The insurgents when having the support of external powers give them the protection from the counterinsurgents easily. These external powers not only provide the insurgents with safe heavens but also assist them with material and financial support. The sanctuaries provided give the insurgents a chance to recruit, train and arm their supporter. The insurgents provided with external support increase the time period of insurgency when that assistance is diminished the insurgency decline. The insurgent use the external support for their propaganda also. Balochistan province of Pakistan is under insurgency from the Baloch people for almost two decade. Where they are targeting the security forces and government installation. It is believed that Baloch insurgents are supported by the foreign powers by providing sanctuaries, financial support and sophisticated weapons. This paper is to analyze the external support aspect of Baloch insurgency.

Key words: Balochistan, Insurgency, External Support, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of insurgency is a contested phenomenon and therefore has no generally agreed definition. However, the most appropriate and commonly used definition is given by *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, "the organized movement to overthrow a legitimate government using subversion and armed conflict". In the last twenty five years the number of inter-state warfare has declined while intra-state violence in the form of rebellion, insurgency and civil war has increased. This increase is a great threat to weak states and great powers. Almost 97 percent of conflicts, in the period from 1995 to 2010 have been intra-state rather than inter-state. Also from 1990 to 2007, 61 intra-state conflicts occurred while only 8 incidents of inter-state. Insurgencies represent perhaps the most potent threat within weak states—and from 1990 to 2012, they erupted in 49 countries across the globe. Just as inter-state war endangers the

interests of states across the globe, rebellion and insurgency do as well (Quick, 2017).

Insurgents uses different tactics to overthrow the contemporary governments and establish their own agenda or to move toward secession. However, the insurgents are always under the threat of attack from the security forces. In order to have safe places where they can organize their movement and plan better to give tough time their governments, they contact and appeal for external support. However, it is not necessary that the insurgent will appeal to foreign states for assistance, because sometime the external state want to fulfil their own agenda to destabilize the opponent state. Once the insurgents get the support from external financier and supporter they have more chances of success and to extend the duration of their insurgency movement.

Since 1945 internal conflicts in the state have been the most dominant and disturbing form of war (O'Loughlin, 2005). The insurgents groups some

time receives external support from other groups or governments directly or they are supported covertly. Whether the support is overt or covert, this enhance the capabilities of the insurgents. In both the cases the external states assist the insurgents with lethal resources such arms and ammunition, also support them with non-lethal resources such training, cash, intelligence and other logistical assistance (Jones, 2017). Another significant aspect of non-lethal assistance provided by external states is the shelter. By providing shelter solve all their other problems. Such as the problem of training, cash etc. and importantly allow the insurgents to remain safe from the counter insurgency measures taken by the rival governments (Salehyan, 2007). External support remained the main instrument during the cold war era. However, after the cold war state support remained a significant source of strength for many insurgencies around the world especially the developing states.

The insurgents recognize that they are always exposed to the threat from the government. To escape from such type of threats, insurgents goes across the border. This cross borders movement of the insurgents with the consent of the external government support gave a sign of relief to the insurgents. And thus insurgents are safe from the counter insurgent's forces. Because the insurgents may not be able to cross the border of a sovereign state to hunt the insurgents. If they do so then the counter insurgent forces faces two fold problem. On one side from the insurgents and on the other side from the other state who borders have been violated. According to the research of RAND Corporation, 73 percent of the insurgencies from 1990-2001 received foreign support (Byman, 2001). This means that the insurgents are using foreign bases more frequently to avoid their damages and get external support.

Since inception, Balochistan has been in conflict mood with Pakistan. Its accession with Pakistan has been always considered by the Baloch nationalist as annexation of Baloch land. Due to this Baloch people have raised weapon against the state. This has been alleged by central government the foreign countries are regularly supporting the Baloch insurgents. However, the Baloch nationalist completely deny this allegation from the federal government and consider it as their indigenous movement. This paper is to analyze the external support aspect of Baloch insurgency.

Historical Perspective of Baloch Insurgency

Balochistan is one of the four federating units of Pakistan, having the smallest population and largest size. Balochistan is almost 43 percent of the whole area of Pakistan bordering all other units of Pakistan. At the time of Independence of sub-continent from British rule, Balochistan included Quetta Municipality, British Balochistan and Kalat state. Quetta Municipality and British Balochistan joined Pakistan through referendum while the Kalat state decided to remain independent. However, Kalat State signed a standstill agreement with state of Pakistan through British mediation. According to this agreement Pakistan accepted the sovereignty of Kalat state (Malik, 2020). However, due to some reasons and especially the statement that Kalat state has decided to join India made Pakistan very uncomfortable. The statement was also announced through All India Radio by V.P. Menon that Kalat state has shown the consent to join India. However, the statement was later on denied (Janmahmad, 1988). This enhanced the reservation of Pakistan regarding the accession of Kalat state. Thus Pakistan decided to ask the Khan of Kalat to accede to Pakistan unconditionally. Thus accession document was signed on March 30, 1948. The people of Balochistan consider this accession as forcibly incorporation into the state of Pakistan (Harrison, 1981). This annexation of Kalat state lead to the series of insurgency movements which continue until now.

First insurgency was started by the Baloch people after the accession of Kalat state to Pakistan, as it was consider as illegal. Agha Abdul Karim Khan, the younger brother of Khan of Kalat initiated the first insurgency against Pakistan regarding the forcible accession of Kalat state. There were little skirmishes between the insurgents and security force. However, the Khan of Kalat persuaded his brother to stop fighting and come to the negotiation table. The rebels were guaranteed that if they stop fighting will be given general amnesty. However, when these insurgents came down the hills, they were arrested and imprisoned (Fani, 2011). Second insurgent movement was initiated by Nawab Nouroz Khan against the policy of federal government. The 'One Unit' policy was rejected by the small ethnic groups of West Pakistan particularly the Baloch people. At the same time the Khan of Kalat was also arrested on the basis of accusation that he is preparing Baloch people for a revolt against the state (Baloch, 1975).

Nawab Nouroz Khan and his almost 500 companion gave a very tough time to the security forces. However, he was convinced that his demands will be fulfilled if he and his companion stop attacking on security forces and come to the negotiating table. In order to settle the issue peacefully Nawab Nouroz Khan accepted the invitation. However, they were arrested on arrival and imprisoned. Five of his companion were hanged on charges of high treason in 1960. While Nawab Nouroz Khan died in prison in 1964. The third wave of insurgency remained from 1963 to 1969. The insurgency started with dismissal of Nawab Akbar Bughti, Attaullah Mengal and Khair Bakhsh Mari after winning election of Basic Democrats in 1962. This insurgency was led by Khair Bakhsh Mari. *Parari*, a guerrilla force played an important role in resisting the security forces. Sher Muhammad Mari established 200 based camp of these Parari which were available every time (Harrison, 1981). Fourth insurgency started after the dismissal of National Awami Party (NAP) government of Sardar Attaullah Mengal. This is considered as bloodiest insurgency in the history of Balochistan (Awan, 1985). Bhutto the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, met the insurgents with iron hand. In 1974, the air and ground attack on Chamalang was carried out which caused heavy human and livestock casualties. During this uprising about 5300 Baloch and 3300 military personnel lost their lives (Khan, 2003). The insurgency ended when General Zia ul haq took control of the government as Marshal Law administrator. The fifth/contemporary insurgency started after the murder of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti in 2006. After the Killing of Nawab Bugti, the situation in Balochistan has worsened. The attacks on security forces and government installation has increased. This increase in attack has also exacerbated the life and social life of Baloch people. The development projects and the construction of Gwadar port has also not changed the life of Baloch people. There has been attacks on the workers that involve in the developmental projects of Balochistan. Day by day the situation in the province is worsening.

Baloch Insurgency and External Support

External support plays a significant role in an insurgency. The insurgents which have foreign support have more chances of success as compared to the one without support. Jeffrey Record argues that other factors such as political will and right strategy

play their part, however, external support is the main and consistent contributor in any insurgency (Record, 2007). Most of the insurgents fail to overthrow the government on their own, which compels them to extend their hands to foreign support. The insurgents require external support regularly to defeat the security forces (Ellis, 1995). Balochistan being located on the confluence of South Asia, Middle East and Central Asia has increased its significance. Also the untidy relation between Pakistan and other states have increased the possibility of interference from these states. In words of Sleigh Harrison, "if it was not the strategic position of Balochistan, and the abundance of its natural resources such as oil, uranium etc., no one would have intended to fight for this desolate land" (Harrison, 1981). Balochistan is located at the center of competing and conflicting interests of local, regional and international powers. A wide array of issues and interest ranging from global strategic concerns of countries like the United States of America and China, to less ambitious regional security and economic concerns of India, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan as well as energy politics have affected the conflict in Balochistan in one way or other. The reincarnation of a new 'great game' in Afghanistan, border issues and the US led war on terror have made Balochistan all the more important. There is a conspiracy to make Balochistan secede from the federation. A large number of men are being trained for terrorism against the Pakistani state and the immediate motive is the huge oil reserves that are likely to be discovered in the province. External powers want these resources to be governed by an independent Balochistan rather than Pakistan (Mehmood, 2005). It is extensively alleged that the BLA is funded by external powers, who are much interested to have some type of share in the province. From the selection of their target and attacking the security forces indicates that they are properly trained and will be equipped. In the view of Sherin Mazari, former Director General of Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, "the availability of more sophisticated weapons with Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), shows that they have greater external support in the form of money and weapons. So external support and linkages of BLA cannot be denied" (Mazari, 2005).

In the past Afghanistan had provided protection to the Baloch insurgents. During the 1948 insurgency the brother of Khan of Kalat took refuge in

Afghanistan. Besides this in other insurgency movements the leader of Baloch insurgents groups whether they were their leaders such Attaullah Mengal, Khair Bakhsh Marri etc or their fighter were cordially received by Afghanistan. The Afghan government of Daud Khan in 1970s was fully providing support to the National Awami Party leaders including Baloch nationalists. Afghanistan has also established training camps for the Baloch insurgents where they were getting proper training (Haqqani, 2005). The recent killing Baloch insurgent Aslam Baloch in Kandahar (Afghanistan) show that Afghanistan is covertly support the insurgents (Shahid, 2018). Besides this another, Baloch Insurgent Mir Abdul Nabi Bangalzai was also shot dead by unknown assailants in Kandahar, Afghanistan (Khan, 2021). The killing of Baloch insurgents in Afghanistan shows that the insurgents are provided with safe places from where they attack the security forces in Balochistan. According to the Inspector General Frontier Corps, Major General Obaid Khattak, that “more thirty militant training are present in Afghanistan to properly train Baloch insurgents and create law and order situation in Balochistan”. He added that “the external power are destabilizing Balochistan because the future of Pakistan is related to Balochistan” (Shahid, 2012). The relation between Pakistan and India are not cordial after the getting independence from the British. India has been accusing Pakistan for involvement in Kashmir, in order to take the revenge, India is using Afghanistan to support the anti-state elements including Baloch insurgents. The relation between India and Afghanistan are getting close day by day after the US attack on Afghanistan to remove Taliban from the government. India has been accused supporting the Baloch insurgents generously. The arrest of Indian navy officer Kalbushan Jadhav, who was working for Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) from inside Balochistan has proven that India is actively involved in supporting the Baloch insurgents. Kalbushan Jadhav accepted himself that he was on mission to create disturbance in Balochistan and Karachi. According to his statement the purpose of visit to Balochistan was to engage with Baloch insurgents and collaborate with each other (Shah, 2016). Besides this, Major Gaurav Arya, an ex-Indian Army officer, openly said on TV that India is supporting the Baloch Insurgents for their independence. It is also reported that various Baloch

insurgent commanders including Aslam Baloch visited India for medical treatment (Ahmad, 2021). Generally, it is considered as helping the insurgents with arms and ammunition is external support, however, providing diplomatic assistance in the form of raising issue on various forum help the insurgents a lot. Considering the role of US in Balochistan may not be direct. However, raising the issue of Balochistan by the senator of US congress help the insurgent in Balochistan. The US congressmen i.e. Dana Rohrabacher, Louie Gohmert and Steve King introduced a bill in congress stating that “the Baloch had a historic right to self-determination and called for congress to recognize it” (Alamgir, 2012). After this a faction of US congressmen, minority Afghan groups, Baloch nationalist and supporters worked to change the US policy toward southwest Asia. Although there is no independent Balochistan policy of the US government. However, such type of events such as congressional hearing on Balochistan, Baloch self-determination bill and highly publicize meetings may receive more attention of the policy makers of the US in future. In a seminar, in Washington, Selig Harrison stated that “four million Baloch are struggling for independent Balochistan, because the accession of Balochistan with Pakistan was not legitimate and US should recognize free Balochistan because it serve her interests. Also the current government of Zardari have further ignited the insurgency movement” (Raja, 2012). A Central Asian website has reported the presence of Soviet-era agents previously involved in Baluchistan, running camps in Afghanistan and Balochistan in collusion with Indian and the USA (Bansali, 2008). Briefing the parliamentarian about the law and order situation in Balochistan Inter Service Intelligence (ISI) Chief Mr. Ahmad Shuja Pasha told that “Russian, India and UAE are involved in the insurgency in Balochistan. The India and UAE (reportedly just because of the construction of Gwadar port), were funding and arming the Baloch people” (Imtiaz, 2010). From this is clear that there is continuous support to the insurgents in Balochistan. They are supporting the insurgents to destabilize Pakistan and have access the natural resources of Balochistan. Pakistan and Iran have cordial relation since Pakistan came into being. Iran supported Pakistan on every movement even in wars with India. Iran provided not political support to Pakistan in fighting against Baloch insurgents in previous insurgencies but also

provided with material assistance. However, in recent time the relation between the two countries are not good as both are blaming each other for the support of their enemy (Khan, 2012). The then foreign minister of Pakistan Shah Mehmood Qureshi, after the killing of 14 security personnel in Ormara, Balochistan, stated in a press conference that “Baloch Rajio Aajio Sangar (BRAS), which is the combination of various insurgents group, is operating from Iran. Pakistan have provided evidence of their safe heaven, yet Iran have not taken action against them” (Nabeel, 2019). This was for the first time that a high official clearly accused Iran for facilitating insurgents. Before this Pakistan was showing restraint regarding the insurgency support from Iran because of the sensitive nature of relation between the two countries. However, Kalbushan case was taken up with the authorities as it was believe that he entered Pakistan from Iran. Pakistan claim Indian embassy in the city of Zahedan for supporting the insurgents. Kalbushan had accepted that he was a mission to meet Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) leaders to plan attacks against the security forces. It is also claim by Pakistani authorities that Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) have relations with Iranian intelligence Agencies and they have received medical treatment in Iran (Nabeel, 2019). The development of Chahbahar in Iran and Gwadar in Balochistan, Pakistan have negative impact on each other. Both these ports are competitors and almost 107 miles from each other. However, Gwadar faces some problems and most significant one is security. The situation in Balochistan compared to that in Iran is bad. Also, India has invested in Chahbahar to counter Pakistan port of Gwadar. This is point of great concern for Pakistan (Javaid, Jahangir, 2015).

Diaspora Support

It is estimated that around nine millions Baloch population exist, with largest in Pakistan i.e. almost six million. Besides this almost one million lives in Iran, approximately half million resides in Afghanistan and Oman and about thirty six thousands in Turkmenistan (Joshua Project, n.d.). The Baloch move across the Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan freely due to the porous nature of the border. The existence of Baloch population in Oman is because of the ruling elite of Oman sought refuge in Gwadar in 1784 with the permission of Khan of Kalat. The Gwadar remained part of Oman till 1958 when Pakistan purchased it. Oman consist of almost

20 percent of Baloch people (Samad, 2014). Oman ruling on the Makran coast facilitated the Baloch people to move to Oman for work. Thus many Baloch people settled in Oman and are concentrated alongside the al Batina coast, which stretches along the Gulf of Oman from Muscat to the United Arab Emirates. There are Baloch quarters in both Muscat and Muttrah (Peterson, 2004). The Baloch have been serving in Gulf armies. The first modern army of Oman was almost consist of Baloch people and demand increase during the Dhofar insurgency which occurred from 1965 to 1975. These Baloch are mostly belong to Pakistan. Almost 40 percent of ethnic Baloch serves in Oman army and several have served as ministers (Samad, 2014). The former head of intelligence of Dubai, Major General Sharafuddin Sharaf was an ethnic Baloch (Mustikhan, 2011). Diaspora is one of the main source of financing for rebellion and insurgencies. According to Collier-Hoeffler (2002) model bigger diaspora will easily fund the rebellion. The research has found that increasing the size of diaspora from smallest to the largest, result six fold increase in the chance of civil war (Collier & Sambanis, 2005). Diaspora not only assist in the initiation of the conflict but also increase the risk of renewal of the conflict. Also through the financial and diplomatic support in the form of arranging seminar, holding protest procession, diaspora support the insurgents. The involvement of Baloch diaspora in the homeland politics is impossible to detect because of ban on the political activities in gulf. There is also pressure from within the Baloch community so as not to damage their interest in Gulf. Creating a diplomatic problem may increase the miseries of Baloch diaspora. In the Wahad sub-urban area there are almost 5000 Baloch and are biweekly flights between Muscat and Gwadar. The writer of Baloch national anthem Mr. Abdul Majid Gawadari also resides there (Samad, 2014). Definitely, they will have the sympathies with the Baloch insurgents of Makran, where middle class Baloch are becoming a major cause of Baloch nationalism and resistance power (Jamali, 2012). It is clear that the Baloch diaspora is concerned about what is happening in Balochistan when they receive information of the miseries of common Baloch in Balochistan. A retire major of Muscat army, was quoted in press as that “the soldier of Pakistan army are like beasts and cannibals” (Mustikhan, 2011). Due to some compulsion in the Gulf, the support of the Baloch is covert. However, the support of Baloch

people in Europe, US, UK, Germany and Sweden is clearly visible. The Baloch exiled nationalist and the diaspora in these countries are lobbying with governments to pressurize Pakistan. Particularly they are more lobbying in Geneva and New York where there are UN representatives. Through internet they are giving their point of view. Different websites have been launched where they counter the narrative of Pakistani government. The separatist leaders present in these countries are trying to establish a Baloch political identity so that the state of Pakistan could be fully pressurized through international community. Thus it is quite clear that diaspora is providing oxygen to the insurgency in Balochistan.

Conclusion

In the current situation of Balochistan, it is evident that one cannot ignore the external support for the Baloch insurgents. The availability of sophisticated weapons to the insurgents prove that the insurgents are backed by some superior masters. Their training to fight against a well-equipped and professional army show that they are properly trained. The presence of Baloch insurgents in Kandahar and latter their killing show that Afghanistan is providing safe heaven to the insurgents. Besides this, the arrest of Kalbushen Jadhav on Baloch soil and latter his confessional statement clearly indicate the involvement of India intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

In this dire situation Pakistan need to improve the policing on the Pak-Afghan border in Balochistan. The porous nature of the border has given the insurgents the opportunity to hit the security forces and run to the safe haven in Afghanistan. Proper management of the border is the need of the time. The Pakistan initiative to fence the border between Pakistan and Afghanistan is good sign. This will stop the free movement of insurgents. Also Pakistan need to take in confidence the international community regarding the intervention of different countries especially India. It is also need to stop the financial access of insurgent whether it comes from the drug trafficker or diaspora. Proper regulation of the financial institution is also compulsory. This will stop the external support of the insurgent and some measure should be taken internally to improve the situation in the province.

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