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Baloch Student's Activism in Insurgency and State Response (2002-2015)

Abstract

The paper is aimed to focus the student activism in Baluchistan politics while considering Baloch Student Organization a nursery of Baloch leaders and the source of power for all political and militant groups, the paper argues that the intervention of nationalist political or militant groups and state in student activities with the passage of time has brought a notable shift in Baloch student politics (academic to strong/active political and militant). In this shift on the one hand and inconsistent political circumstances and ethnonational base economic grievances, provide them a cause and on the other hand, the absence of true representative political parties, provided them space to flourish, while state did not like this attribute and reacted strongly. In current scenario the electronic and social media have facilitated the activists in communicating and spreading their message to a larger audience with less effort and time. In short student along on-road politics are propagating and defending their cause on social media which has influenced the outcome a lot.

Key Words: Baloch Student Organization, Student Politics, Insurgency, Nationalism, Ethnic Identity.

Introduction

Pakistan since 9/11 is going through a deadly phase in which thousands of civilians and security men have lost their lives, while economic loss is out of the calculation. In these circumstances the terrorism, the Taliban and sectarian radicalism are getting the attention of many in Pakistan while a deadly secondary conflict is sparking in Baluchistan and very few are concerned with this conflict. This conflict in Baluchistan is not new, in fact, it is rooted in Pakistan's history and now it has turned into a conundrum. It is evident that soon after the independence of Pakistan, the national question of all ethnic groups (Sindhi, Baloch, Pashtun and Bengali) emerged despite the logic of two nation theory, as the state adopted colonial behavior from the first day and emphasized on central political and national system. Pakistan even faced dis-integration in 1971 because of its imperial attitude, and the remaining country is going through a deadly phase, in which Baluchistan is on top and has faced five revolts since its accession to Pakistan. The first revolt of 1948-50 was led by Prince Abdul Karim against the forced accession of Baluchistan with Pakistan. The second revolt is of two folds 1955-59 and 1963-69. The first was led by

Nauroz Khan to oppose the arrest of Khan and One unit system which later, after the arrest of Nauroz Khan flared into second wave 'Parari movement' in which the rebels opposed one unit system and the construction of military basis in Baluchistan mainly under the leadership of Sher Muhammad Marri. This movement became popular as more and more youngsters joined the rebels in the hills. The second insurgency ended with the abolition of One Unit system. The third insurgency 1973-77 was a result of dismissal of the provincial government of Baluchistan by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in 1973. After the dissolution of Balochistan assembly, most of its members were arrested, including Nawab Khair Bakhs Marri, Saradar Atta-ullah Mengal and Governor Ghous Bux Bizinjo which resulted a large scale confrontation between state and Baloch fighters.

In this insurgency, the Baloch students also participated actively from the platform of BSO which was formed in November 1967. BSO since 1967 has actively taken charge of Balochistan politics. The ongoing insurgency in Balochistan, which started soon after the termination of Nawaz government on 12 October 1999, with the announcement of various developmental projects and construction of military cantonments in the province is now led by the educated youth and students of Balochistan. Currently, students from different platforms, providing support and power to all political parties and insurgent groups of Baluchistan. This study is aimed to investigate causes of Baloch students' radicalization their involvement in ongoing conflict and response from state.

Balochistan since Musharraf Regime

Parvaiz Musharraf after taking the charge of Pakistan shifted his focus on Balochistan and initiated various developmental projects without the consent of local people and political elite which created chaos in Balochistan, the killing of nominated C. Justice Nawaz Marri of Baluchistan high court and arrest of Khair Buksh Marri on the charges of his murder fueled the sentiments of people. (Saleem:2013). Soon after the arrest of Nawab Khair Bux Marri, government instalments were attacked by insurgents. The scholars viewed these attacks as a response to state's policies aiming at attaining greater control of the province by initiating developmental activities and building military cantonments without the consent of Baloch natives. (Asim:2007). Adeel Khan argues that the incidents of violence increased steadily with the pace of construction in Gwadar, the expansion of cantonments, and the attainment of land for cantonments and military enterprises. (Adeel:2009) The Baloch youth and nationalists viewed it as an act of colonizing Balochistan while state viewed it as a matter of "Development' and 'writ of state'. State held Baloch Sardars particularly Nawab Akber Bugti, Nawab Khair Bux Marri and Sardar Atta Ullah Mengal responsible for the situation and blamed them to be against the development and backward due to their influential role in Balochistan politics. (Gazdar:2006) The conflict peaked in 2005 the situation with the rape incident of a Sindhi Dr. Shazia Khalid, who was working at Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL), for whom Nawab Akber Bugti demanded justice from the state as an army Officer was accused for the rape. The military establishment's support to the accused officer triggered a series of attacks against the security forces and the FC by the members of Bugti tribe and other insurgents' (Grare, 2006)

To overcome the situation peacefully the government announced formation of a parliamentary committee on Balochistan under the chairmanship of Ch. Shujahat Husaain the then Prime Minister of Pakistan. Apart from this, committee peace negotiations were also initiated between Government and Nawab Akber Bugti via Shujahat Hussain and Mushahid Hussain Syed. But all efforts went in vain when in March 2005 violence erupted again with firing of rockets and shelling between the security forces and the tribesmen in Dera Bugti which resulted in heavy loss

of human lives at both sides' (Maria 2023)The government launched a full military action in response to the attacks and intensified it with every passing day. In the same month of March some BSO members, including Dr. Allah Nazar, then a student of Bolan Medical College Quetta, were whisked away in the night from their flat, probably because of staging a protest rally in front of the Karachi Press Club to condemn the attack on Nawab Akbar Bugti's fort by the FC (Akber:2015)Later after his release he joined violent resistance and is now most active commander of the movement. The Military operation in Dera Bugti, the initiation of Development projects and enforced disappearance of Baloch youth including students further radicalized the Baloch youth, they realized the importance of united resistance. Consequently, they frequently started mobilizing and reacting to the anti-Baloch policies of state via protests and criticism on the social media.

The more state wanted to centralize Balochistan, the faster Baloch youth turned against the state.

But the state did not gave attention to this core change in Baloch youth and remained focused on maintaining 'writ of the state'. Parvaiz Musharf threatened the insurgents and Nawab Akber Bugti by saying " it is not 1970's where you can hit, and run in mountains, this time you won't even know what hit you" and it happened. Till today nobody knows exactly what hit Nawab Akber Bugti on 26 August 2006. The statement of Musharraf against Baloch is till day remembered and repeated by Baloch people, politicians and youth to keep their blood warm, as they consider it a humiliation.

The Killing of Nawab Akber Bugti enormously attracted the Baloch youth and other segments of society towards National movement and charged the entire Baloch resistance against the center. After hearing the news of Bugti's murder, hundreds of students from Balochistan University gathered on Sariab Road to protest against it. They turned violent and broke doors and windows of the university hostel and attacked the passing vehicles' (Shahid:2006)Bugti's murder changed the nature of student politics; after his murder students engaged themselves more on the roads than in campuses. The protests by students and other groups continued. On 29 August 2006 at Bugti's funeral hundreds of youth and students destroyed a portrait of Muhammad Ali Jinnah (Conflict and Insecurity in Baluchistan ,: January 2013). With every passing day the number of student activists increased due to effective anti-state propaganda of insurgents and nationalists and rude behavior of state.

Essa Nori while considering Bugti as a pillar of Balochistan politics along with Ata-Ulla Mengal, Mir Ghus Bux Bizinjo and Khair Bux Marri (tribes) argued that "Musharraf killed one pillar and the rest joined each other to defend themselves and their land. Bugti was most patriotic person in Balochistan; he campaigned among Baloch's to join Pakistan, and this way he got reward. This entire situation has changed Baloch mind, it is not a sudden revolution but a story of years, there was spark in Balochistan politics and Bugti's murder turned it into fire, this incident raised the national motivation among students and forced them to react^x." (Interview with Syed Essa Noori:2014)

After the Bugti killing to overcome violence the state opted an intensive repressive policy of arresting and even "disappearing" political activists, with a particular focus on BSO activists who were reputed to be among the major supporters of underground militant groups. Meanwhile the focus of the central government and military shifted from Balochistan to Waziristan and Swat due to the Taliban issue, while the "kill and dump", continued in Balochistan, worsening with time.

Baloch youth continued their activities in Balochistan their role in the current insurgency as compared to the past insurgencies is more influential and crucial. There are different reasons behind the rise of youth/student activism, but Harrison's account is much close to the current reality. He linked the student's activism with the developmental activities in Balochistan back in 1980's, the same thing happened in current conflict too. President General Pervez Musharraf launched a number of mega projects in Balochistan such as the construction of Gwadar deep sea port, highways, dams while envisioning Mega Projects as the only way in which the grievances of Balochistan could be compensated for decades of neglect. Parvaiz Musharf did not considered the opinion of Baloch people and imposed his decisions upon them while the Baloch considered the mega projects as exploitative in nature and opposed it actively. Student organizations in this period faced fast splits and merges on matters of policies and ideology. Militant organizations on the other hand started attacking government installations and attracted youth and provided them platform to show dissatisfaction over central imperial behavior. The current Baloch national movement has considerable support from educated masses. The insurgency is more intense in areas like Turbat and Makran where literacy rates compared to other Baloch majority areas are higher. Fradric Grare linked the Balochistan insurgency with the radicalization of youth 'the more youth was radicalized the fast slogan of independent Balochistan rose', various factors have radicalized Baloch youth and forced them to join politics with different motives while the policies of Musharraf government fueled their aggression. (Grare:2013) Some of the causes are as follows:

Educational Differences and Negation of Nationalism

Education and nationalism has played a vital role in radicalizing the Baloch students. We can link the education and nationalism together as radicalizing tool in today's Balochistan by looking into the syllabus of Balochistan board. Baloch nationalists from day one claim that the state is colonizing Balochistan by imposing its central policies. Education in Balochistan is structured in a way that negates Baloch Nationalism, History, culture, language, and imposes the religious-national identity. Such syllabus promotes the national heroes of Pakistan movement, Muslim emperors, and other martyrs of Muslim and Pakistan history while ignoring the centuries old culture of Balochistan and regional leaders. The Baloch mothers brought up their kids telling folktales of their regional heroes and leaders, and when they go to educational institutes they do not find their representation in books which leads them to feel occupied and humiliated. Nationalist groups and student organizations capitalize this approach of state to strengthen their argument that the state wants to sideline the Baloch and their separate identity. According to Jalal Faiz the biased syllabus is a potential cause to generate a retaliatory behavior among Baloch students and its effective use by nationalist groups is fueling their sentiments' (Faiz:2012) Apart from the negation of Baloch identity in syllabus, the educational conditions in Balochistan are also a reason for the youth radicalization. Educational institutions in Balochistan are either mostly closed or only partially functional because of the political crisis in the province; the education is heavily affected by Baloch militants, military operations, strikes, target-killings and sectarian violence. Balochistan has faced a marked loss of intelligentsia in last ten years as a large number of non-Baloch teachers left province for security reasons, while the others were killed or are on target according to Jalal Faiz out of total 200 faculty members in Balochistan university more than seventy members applied for transfer to other provinces in recent years. Baloch youth often feels educational differences when they visit or communicate with students of other parts of Pakistan. Educational infrastructure is not enough for increasing youth and is not in good condition lack of infrastructure is not the only problem but education provided to students in

Balochistan is of low quality. Balochistan has lowest literacy rate i.e. 29.81 percent as compared to the national average of 39.69 percent. According to National Education census 2005, out of a total of 245,682 educational institutions in Pakistan, only 11,706 (4.7%) were in Balochistan. (Conflict and Insecurity in Balochistan: January 2013) Lack of educational facilities and quality can be considered a core reason in radicalizing the Baloch youth.

Humiliation:

Baloch youth feels deprived when they visit Islamabad or Lahore, where they find sea-difference in terms of education standards as compared to Balochistan. They are being treated as ignorant according to many Baloch youngsters, people are surprised to learn that they can speak English as well and they can be as civilized as the rest of the country . Such behavior forces Baloch youth to adopt more radical approach when they go back in their homeland. Baloch youth frequently complains about the odd behavior of people with them in Punjab and other areas. This attitude makes them feel alienated. Baloch students in Islamabad based educational institutes are confined to their own ethnic community because they do not feel comfortable with others most of the time. One of the BSO members explains the situation in these words,

“we are equally talented and eager to learn new things if provided resources, unfortunately our resources are being used in Punjab and we are unable to protect them, our other fellows instead of cooperating with us treat us as aliens ”.

They do not feel humiliated only in Punjab but they often complain about the humiliation in their own land by the security forces in the disguise of checking and security measures. They find everyday checking of specifically Baloch people as the humiliation of Baloch Nation. For Baloch their self-respect and honor is very important and the security forces do not care about that. Every day humiliation from security forces in Balochistan and by fellows in different institutions has brought a psychological change in Baloch youth. They are now more sensitive and emotional towards their identity; they even pick minor friendly jokes from their non-Baloch fellows insulting because of which a communication gap has emerged between the Baloch and non-Baloch youth especially between Baloch and Punjabi students.

This Humiliating situation at both national and individual levels forces Baloch youth to turn against the existing system and respond with aggressive behavior.

Absences of Leadership:

Currently Baloch national movement is lacking charismatic leaders, both in the militant and political field. In the past, insurgencies were fought under strong political leadership and Guerrilla commanders. But presently Balochistan lacks solid and trusted leadership, which has contributed in radicalizing Baloch youth, as the youth wants to lead the movement themselves.

Sattar Baloch Sailani a Baloch writer says that the Baloch youth got involved in nationalist politics during 1977-88 period due to the absence of true Baloch leadership (Asap 10 march 2004) as in 1977 Baloch leadership, after getting freed from jail was divided into different groups which created space for Baloch youth to emerge in mainstream politics. In this comparatively calm period students organized themselves in a better way politically and ideologically. When the current insurgency started Baloch youth felt importance of their role, they united themselves on different platforms to safeguard Baloch rights. The emotional youth due to lack of guidance, chose more radical approach to achieve more goals in less time which only resulted in heavy loss. They do not trust the existing political and militant leadership. They blame the political leadership of Balochistan as corrupt and disloyal with Baloch. Because for them the beneficiaries of Parliamentary political system are not true representatives of Baloch people. They also criticize the leaders of militant groups for their long-term absence in Balochistan. The only leader

whom currently Baloch youth trusts is Allah Nazar. The wish of Baloch youth and students to lead Balochistan politics and absence of leadership is one of the causes of radicalizing Baloch youth.

Unemployment:

Unemployment is one of the major problems in Balochistan for both literate and illiterate youth. Most of the government jobs are occupied by the Pashtun's or non-Baloch even private daily wages jobs are given to Afghan refugees as they offer their services on fewer wages. According to estimates, 25,000 people graduate from Balochistan University every year and hardly 2,000 of them secure jobs. in Balochistan every house has 4 or five unemployed persons' (Amir:2015) The ratio of unemployment in Balochistan province is recorded at 33.4 percent as compared to 26.8 percent in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province, 19.1 percent in Punjab and 14.4 percent in Sindh According to Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) 52 percent people of Balochistan live below the poverty line. (Naveed:2012) Few months back, government of Oman announced 250 vacancies in its army to be filled by youth of Makran division in response 28,000 people submitted applications for those jobs including highly qualified students and more than one lac people applied for the 4,300 (Durrizai,:2015) cant posts of teachers in Balochistan through National Testing Service (Shah:2015) shows the intensity of unemployment in Balochistan which is inculcating frustration in youth.

The youth is concerned about their future and pessimistic about the current situation. They blame the state and bureaucracy for the backwardness of Balochistan and they do not see any development in future with existing system, they blame the current government and the past governments for the high corruption in job and scholarship distribution. Interestingly they blame the provincial government more than the central government on matters of corruption and job distribution in Balochistan. The decade's long unemployment and injustice has created a sense of frustration among capable and well-educated people of Balochistan and has urged them to react to the situation violently. The youth is up to take away their rights by any means.

Student's activism

According to a rough estimate presently there are 12 to 15 thousand members of different BSO organizations, with an average age range from 12 to 27 from various educational institutions, schools, colleges and Universities. BSO-A enjoys relatively more support among students than others. Some scholars and Baloch nationalists regard BSO as one of the leading nationalist group in Balochistan but Nawab Kahir Bux Muree rejects the role of BSO as vanguard but considers it a helpful group in underground movement others like Hasil Bizenjo, and Aslam Dashti consider BSO as a nursery of Baloch leaders. (Sabir: Nd) Baloch students are engaged in different activities broadly characterized into two categories Political and Educational activities.

1. Political Activities:

The Baloch student organizations particularly BSO-A believe that no one will come to save them, they have to protect their rights and identity themselves, they do not trust the political leadership of Balochistan, and the rulers of Pakistan. They view Pakistan as a colonial state which wants to eliminate Baloch from their land. To oppose the state, they have united themselves politically, and since 2006 they have intensified their political activities and are playing important role in Balochistan. Politically BSO factions are engaged in mobilizing the masses, training the students and supporting the cause of separatists by using different tactics. All the student organizations in Balochistan are engaged in awaking the Baloch masses by using different tactics. BSO-A is more active in this regard as compared to the other branches. These student organizations arrange

rallies, protests and do wall chalking to awake Baloch masses about the state atrocities and to promote and strengthen Baloch Nationalism. Regarding more important issue these organizations release their Press statements to keep their followers up-to date with the new agendas. They publish related literature, pamphlets and spread that among students and markets etc via their members. To meet the expenses of all such programs every member pays monthly membership fee to finance secretary of respective organization. Membership fee varies from area to area. In rural areas it ranges from 30 to 50 rupees while in urban it's 100 rupees per month. These organizations also get aid from philanthropists. BSO-P and BSO-M also get financial help from their ruling parties. Their respective parent-parties also arrange workshops to train BSO leadership politically and to familiarize them with new developments.

Apart from arranging their own programs students also participate in other programs arranged by humanitarian or political groups such as Voice for Baloch missing persons long march (VBMP). The VBMP was formed by families of missing persons on 27 September 2009 with the objective of 'raising voice for the safe release of their enforced disappeared family members'. VBMP got huge acceptance and support from the Baloch student organizations when it started protesting against human rights violations in Balochistan., with an only exception from Abdul Qadeer Baloch, fondly known as Mama Qadeer other member were all young ladies enrolled in different educational institutions and members of BSO-A. All student organizations participated in the long march wholeheartedly and supported it without any difference; which attracted the masses on large scale.

From arranging and participating in political gatherings and mass mobilization all the BSO factions and BRSO are actively training their members politically. For this purpose they arrange workshops and provide such environment to students where they can freely interact and exchange knowledge.

BSO-A and Pajar publishes their magazines Sagar and Pajar respectively while BSO-M and BRSO do not publish such literature due to less support among Baloch students. The literature of both factions is influenced by socialist concepts and the narrative of nationalists, their literature highly criticizes Punjabi dominant military-establishment for the Balochistan insurgency. Student organizations also hold regular 'study circles' and Lectures in which they impart the 'Baloch nationalist ideology and history' to Baloch students. In every session one student is given responsibility to prepare and deliver lecture on any issue which is followed by an Q and A session and debate session. By doing all such activities, Baloch student organizations are preparing new energetic and ideologically sound leadership for Balochistan.

Mostly students, with regard to their active role in Balochistan politics are also accused of supporting the insurgents and separatists, although BSO-P and Mohiudin are not believed to be involved into such activities due to their affiliated political parties' stance of favoring parliamentary politics. But BSO-A and BRSO are suspected to be supporting separatists because of such allegations BSO-A was banned by the state on 15 March 2013. Both organizations particularly BSO-A are facing repression from the state and they have lost a large number of their members including top leadership. Kareema Baloch in her interview rejected the involvement of BSO-A in militant activities and said:

"Our organization is struggling solely through peaceful political measures but the state, scared from our successful and effective methods, is involved in killing spree of our comrades. They can't even afford the 14 years old kid." (Veenagas,2013)

The Baloch youth is highly influenced by the Dr. Allah Nazar, Nawab Khair Bux Marri and Nawab Akber Bugti. After the death of Khari Bux Marri and Nawab Bugti, Dr. Allah Nazar has gained much popularity among the youth. BSO-A proudly relates itself with Allah Nazar as Allah Nazar is a product of BSO and BSO-A is Allah Nazar's product.

Before Allah Nazar joined the militant movement, the student organizations were more focused on the political progress and never supported the insurgents openly but after Allah Nazar became the forefront leader of the movement, the student organizations started supporting the militant organizations. Allah Nazar in his interview explained the BLF relation with BSO in these words, "BLF is fighting for Baluchistan's independence and all of its cadres as well as all the cadres of Balochistan National Front are trained under

Baloch Students Organisation (BSO)". (Nazar:2015)

It is believed that initial recruits for BLA were also drawn from the Baloch Student Organization (BSO), but the present BSO denies any connection to BLA, though they morally support the insurgent's agenda. According to a BSO-Azad's ex. central committee member, some members of BSO-A have joined BLF and BLA because of their high frustration and grievances but they do not have any affiliation with BSO-A now, as they have done with their student lives.

2. Educational Activities:

The first objective of every student organization is to promote and spread education in Balochistan to compete other provinces in education sector. BSO-A's central committee member while emphasizing on education argued:

"Our first and foremost need is education, Baloch students have everything; emotions, determination, intellect and courage, but they only lack education. The state wants to keep Baloch youth ignorant so that no one can question their colonial policies. To safeguard Baloch future we should focus on education first, for politics and other things we have long life, therefore the prime motive of every student organization should be on promoting education more and more."

All BSO factions are working to get as many Baloch youth educated as possible by launching different campaigns. They attract Baloch youth towards education by their encouraging and emotional mottos such as BSO-A's motto "Knowledge till victory". They facilitate Baloch students by launching information campaigns at the start of every new educational year and session to help Baloch students in selecting a field as well as in accessing relevant information about educational institutions and fields.

For this purpose, these organizations also have formed zones in cities of other provinces and their duty is to gather information about admissions, subjects and share it with Baloch students via pamphlets and Social media.

Apart from admissions campaigns these organizations are also engaged in providing maximum facilities to their members in all institutions particularly in hostels. Every faction tries to get maximum seats for its members in hostels by using various tools such as power or intercession.

Their political activities such as study circles, lectures, workshops are also helping in attracting Baloch youth towards education and their topics vary from Politics to Education.

Online Activism:

The introduction of modern communication and social media has brought significant changes in every field of life, politics is not an exception. For political activist's communication means and social media is not less than a blessing as accessing larger audience within minutes is not a problem now. Online activism can spread the information faster as compared to the traditional forms of information; it is used as a tool to mobilize masses by every political organization. Other

social, economic private or governmental institutions are also using these means effectively to get their targets. Online activism is playing a vital role in social movements, in recent past the wave of protests and riots which started in Tunisia spread in whole Arab world is believed to be result of effective use of social media and other communication means.

Realizing the importance of social media, BSO has equipped itself with this new technology to achieve their desired targets, and to influence public opinion and government decisions. It did not only improve their communication but it has helped them in sharing their point of view with the rest of the provinces as well as to the whole world. BSO-A member views social media as the strongest weapon today against enemy he added:

“We are living in the age of information and technology, like any other well planned organization we have also developed communication system on social media. We do not only use social media to connect each other and share information, but our motive is to internationalize the Balochistan issue with online activism.”

All BSO factions have developed their websites and are running various Facebook pages to share the latest news regarding their organizations and Balochistan conflict with people of whole Pakistan. The present insurgency is highly influenced by online activism of youth. Recently all important events related to Balochistan got attention of people because of the social media as the electronic and print media do not give much importance to the Balochistan news. For some unknown reason, Balochistan issues did not get importance in the mainstream electronic and print media, the media in Pakistan is independent but it's not independent when it comes to the Balochistan issue. The print, electronic and social media are biased when it comes to Balochistan related news.

In such an environment the social media has become so important for Balochistan national movement. BSO shares their programs on Facebook and Twitter and inform their followers as well as they use it as a platform to exchange their knowledge. BSO arranges its programs like protests, rallies, marches and later propagate it on social media which helps them get attention and fame. the more affective the campaign, the quicker are results. The state viewed online activism of Baloch students a threat to her legitimacy and responded with imposing ban on various pages and websites on charges of being anti-Pakistan and allegedly funded by RAW being run by Baloch separatists. Baloch students view the banning of such websites and pages as an attack on the freedom of speech, one of the students argued:

“The state has banned our various websites and pages because we were showing the atrocities of state by sharing pictures and videos. By banning our websites the state has attacked our freedom of speech but we will not stop showing the actual picture of Balochistan to the whole world. State will ban our one page, in response we will start four more pages, this is not 1977 when we only had gun to respond, this time we will fight from all platforms to inform the world about the atrocities of Pakistan state, and to secure our identity.”

The online activism of Baloch students is proving to be a challenge for state due to its easy availability to the youth in whole Pakistan. Even people outside Balochistan are now getting access to views of both parties which state does not like.

Facebook and Twitter are not only helpful in only communication but also helpful to understand the thinking of Baloch students and youth as they frequently exchange their opinion on social media. During research I explored 400 accounts of Baloch students on Facebook and twitter, out of which 27% of the students shared Che Guevara's¹ picture as display picture and cover photo.

Others 23% shared Nawab Khair Bux marri's picture and 21% shared Nawab Akber Bugti's picture while the rest shared the Flag of independent Balochistan, Kurd fighters or Allah Nazar's pictures. It is also noticed that student organizations are engaged in blame-game on social media, they criticize each other for the differences they have because of which some ex. BSO leaders criticized them for their online hostility.

State Policies in Current Insurgency:

After the crisis peaked in 2004-5 Musharraf regime on one hand used force to tackle it and on other hand he tried to solve it with Political reconciliation. Since then the state is dealing the insurgency from both fronts.

Political Response

His government formed a committee on 29 September 2004 to investigate the problem and suggest the solution led by Ch. Shujat Hussain. Comprising of 29 members sub divided into two committees to examine current situation in Balochistan and to recommend suggestions for inter provincial harmony. Recommendations of the committee were approved on 23rd June 2005. But the political reconciliation process was failed due to the murder of Bugti in 2006. After the end of Musharraf regime the new government of PPP looked promising in solving the Balochistan problem. Asif Ali Zardari at various occasions raised the issue of Balochistan and promised to bring the province equal to the other provinces. Asif Ali Zardari belongs to a Baloch tribe so he was better aware of the injustices faced by the Baloch people; Zardari stated that he will not abandon his brothers during these difficult times and apologized for past experiences and promised for a better tomorrow. The Government also announced a parliamentary committee on Balochistan headed by Raza Rabbani which later on presented his findings and the much awaited package Aghaz-i-Haqooq-i-Balochistan (AHB) on 24 November 2009, 18th amendment and 7th NFC awards were also important steps of government to calm the situation. AHB was a youth centric package, in which the government announced jobs, scholarships for Baloch youth to detach them from national movement and engage them in other activities.

Abdul Basit evaluated the AHB package as 'a well-conceived and well-structured' effort by the government. He appreciated three steps of previous government towards the Balochistan issue first the apology by President Asif Ali Zardari, secondly the promise of eliminating the Baloch grievances and announcement of package and third the NFC award. He argued that right package was wrongly implemented and after these steps no follow-up was given which further aggravated the situation. (Basit:2014). Baloch Nationalists, both Moderates and Radicals criticized the bill. After 2013 elections the newly formed government of Muslim League-Nawaz also continued its political policy of harmonizing with Balochistan by favoring a Baloch Middle Class political party in Balochistan Assembly to make government. Many scholars and politicians views this step of government as positive in overall situation, but the continuing repression is not letting the situation to calm down.

Repressive response:

The Pakistani state from the very first day has adopted the repressive approach to crush the national sentiment in Balochistan politics. In early 2000's when the insurgents reacted to the developmental activities of state and students showed their concern by launching campaign against mega projects the state responded with aggressive policy. State started threatening, abducting, and even killing selective people. According to Baloch students, the state has focused on influencing persons, those who can challenge the writ of state, or have ability the influence the thinking of people are on the hit list.

The human right situation became worse when state combined the policy of abduction with 'kill and dump' approach, whereby the bodies of these forcibly disappeared persons are frequently found on roadsides, bearing marks of torture.

Ahmed Saleem in his book writes that from 2000 to 2012 more than ten thousand people have been killed in Balochistan, which include a large number of political leaders, activist, workers, doctors, students, teachers, poets and writers, and thousands of people are missing. (Saleem:2013) Ironically kill and dump policy of mutilated bodies was started under a democratic government when in April 2009 Ghulam Muhamad Baloch (Leader of BNM and Ex-Chairmen of BSO) with his partners Lala Munir and Sher Muhamad, who were abducted from Turbat Chamber of on 5th April 2009 were found dead. Before 2009 the problem was of only abducting people but in new government of PPP the state took more repressive measures. According to Essa noori seventy percent of the active insurgents are educated people and they opted for the violence because of the repeated history of violence and injustice. And more than seventy percent of the dead people were either students or educated young people. the exact number of missing and killed students is not known till today, there are different numbers according to different sources. According to Kareema Baloch more than 150 BSO-A members have been killed in past few years and a large number of students are missing including its top leadership' (Interveiw with Kareema Baloch via Twitter and Yahooemail.2015)

According to Voice for Baloch Missing Persons figures the total number of missing persons is above than fourteen thousand and 435 people have gone missing in 2014 while 455 mutilated bodies have been recovered throughout Balochistan including mutilated bodies and discovered mass-graves in Tutak (Khuzdar) in present government. None of the institution has played its effective role in bringing the solution to Balochistan problem, Supreme Court of Pakistan to some extent has played its role in missing person's case and showed its concern about the issue. Supreme Court ordered the concerned agencies to present missing persons in front of court various times but the orders were overlooked by both past and present governments.

The repression is not only focused on Baloch activists but those who support the Baloch cause or play a role in bringing the issue in light are also targeted such as prominent Pakistani journalist Hamid Mir was attacked on April 19, human rights activist Sabeen Mahmood was attacked by unknown persons on On 24 April 2015 for arranging a seminar against the will of state although their attackers are not known till day but there's are substantial reasons to suspect the agencies involvement.

Conclusion

The current wave of Baloch national movement which started in 2002 and peaked in 2005 is now led by the educated youth of Balochistan. The history of Baloch Students Organization shows that it is more politicized than any other organization; various actors has affected the politics of BSO in Baluchistan, apart from state policies and grievances other include romance with nationalism and interaction with sardars, political parties/leaders and nationalists all influenced BSO's policies with the passage of time, and turned BSO a puppet in the hands of nationalist parties and insurgents. In the current wave, BSO revived itself in 2006 to fight for the rights of Baloch people. Currently Baloch students are united through BSO factions and BRSO. They are educated, energetic, brave and emotional; their struggle at first hand is aimed to achieve equality, dignity, and respect in Pakistan or in other case to get independence from Pakistan. The credit of politically awakening Baloch masses goes to BSO without any doubt. The student organizations are responsible for spreading the movement into urban areas and attracting larger masses including women and children, the credit of internationalizing the problem also goes to Baloch students

who are effectively running the online campaigns to inform Pakistani people and others about the state atrocities in Balochistan.

Baloch students while struggling for their national cause are left behind in Education. Political parties and insurgent groups considering Student organizations as 'Door to access larger Masses' are effectively attracting emotional Baloch youth towards radical politics. Apart from nationalists and insurgents the policies of central government are playing vital role in tilting Baloch youth towards radicalized politics which has caused severe damage to student politics and education in Balochistan. The Baloch youth is more involved in shutter down strikes, road blocking, protests, and rallies as compared to books, knowledge and debates, in future BSO and BRSO may achieve their targets but till then there will be a vacuum created in Balochistan education which is already behind education in other provinces. Currently Balochistan education, due to the radicalized politics of students, is facing serious issues such as long closure of educational institutions, rapid departure of non-Baloch qualified faculty members, threatening political environment in campuses, intolerant behavior of students towards other organizations and ethnic groups, lack of educational activities.

Political parties, insurgent groups, state all are equally responsible for de-tracking the youth from its main objective. The main culprit is state for not providing equal opportunities of education, sports, entertainment and jobs to Baloch students like rest of Pakistan. The nationalists capitalized the ignorance of state and attracted the students towards radicalized politics and militant activities on a larger scale. The state, instead of resolving the issue peacefully tried to eliminate national sentiment with repression and torture; which further radicalized students, most of the students give strength to the movement against the injustice and hate of the state. The situation is deteriorating with every passing day, BSO-A and BRSO have lost a large number of their activists due to their radical approach in current wave of national movement, and the members of BSO-M and Pajar are going through psychological torture. The state should at first hand stop the repressive policy against the Baloch youth and then it should work to solve their grievances. The Baloch youth frequently complains about the absence of Baloch people in all mainstream fields, apart from bureaucracy and military other fields also lacks Baloch representation, such as we do not have a single Baloch cricket player in our national team same is the case with hockey and other sports, in media very few Baloch are representing Balochistan. The state should better stop attempting to solve the problems with force; the problem should be resolved on immediate basis by providing basic necessities and jobs to Baloch youth to divert their attention from radicalized politics to other healthy activities. Schools, hospitals, sports stadiums and libraries should be built. We should not forget that we have already lost half of our country in 1971 and we cannot bear such event again, to save the left country the state and its administrative institutions should revise their policy of eliminating ethnic identities and their exploitative attitude towards Balochistan.

The Baloch students should also revise their policy of saying No to every developmental activity of state in Balochistan. They should reform their organization to avoid or limit radical politics in the student lives. The concept of student councils in Islamabad based institutions is a great idea to promote Baloch students for higher education. The council which is free from politics guides students coming from Balochistan to the capital for higher education, and engage them culturally. BSO and BRSO should also follow the methods of council system to bring close all the ethnic groups, which promote will love and peace, and will also help Baloch students to spread their cause country wide

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