

Pakhtun Movement in Pakistan: A Historical Perspective 1929-78

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Abstract: Colonization of the region of North West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P) also known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by the Government of Pakistan is responsible for the rise of Pakhtun movement in Pakistan. The movement was stimulated from Pakhtunwali (a code of conduct for all Pakhtuns) that calls to struggle for freedom. Pakhtuns saw Government of Pakistan dominated by Punjabis and Mohajirs. Hence they went against the Government of Pakistan.

Key words: Plebiscite, Autonomy, Pakhtunwali

Introduction: The paper focus on the argument put by Nasreen Gufran that leaders of the movement like Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan believed in Pakhtunwali and wanted to bring them in accordance with the modern democratic principle¹.As per Adeel Khan Pakhtuns wanted plebiscite so that it may be determined whether it would be independent Pakhtunistan or a part of Pakistan².Nasreen Gufran believes that Pakhtuns wanted semi autonomous state within Indian suzerainty³.Stephan Philip Cohen believes that North West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P) also known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa became part of Pakistan by giving certain degree of autonomy through referendum⁴. Adeel Khan believes that claim was made for plebiscite so that it might be determined that weather they would stay independent as Pakhtunistan or will be a part of Pakistan which was not put as a choice for plebiscite⁵.Thus my paper will look for the cause for the rise of the movement, development made in this movement and how this movement got transformed. My hypothesis will be Pakhtunwali being responsible for the rise of Pakhtun movement.

¹ Nasreen Ghufraan , “Pakhtun Ethno-nationalism and the Taliban Insurgency in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan”, *Asian Survey* (Berkeley), Vol.49, No.6, November –December 2009, p.1095, URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/pdfplus/10.1525/as.2009.49.6.1092.pdf?&acceptTC=true&jpdConfirm=true> (accessed on 24 September 2014).

² Adeel Khan, *Politics of Identity: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the State in Pakistan* (New Delhi: Sage Publication, 2005), p.97.

³ Ghufraan,“Pakhtun Ethno-nationalism and the Taliban Insurgency in the North West Frontier Province of Pakistan”, p.1098.

⁴ Stephen Philip Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Lahore: Vanguard, 2005), p.217.

⁵ Khan, *Politics of Identity: Ethnic Nationalism and the State in Pakistan*, p.97.

Methods used will be tools given by the new social movement theory where gender, sexuality and ethnicity hold importance as definers of identity, politics, ideology, and culture as the base of collective action⁶.

The study of this region is very of use for India as it holds the key to the scientific frontier of India. This happens to be the gate way of all invaders to India.

Methods:

The methods used in the paper are collecting secondary data through books and articles from J store. The interpretation of the data collected have been made according to the new social movement theory that lays emphasis on politics, ideology and culture as root cause of action. The use of qualitative data has been made by going from general to particular and hunting issues related to Pakhtuns.

Theoretical framework

The study of Pakhtun movement uses new social movement theory to give a new perspective. An effort has been made to understand Pakhtun movement through the lenses of new social movement theory to analyze the movement in new light. Hence this theory focuses on politics, ideology and culture as a cause for action. The pakhtun culture of which Pakhtunwali is fundamental part of teaches the Pakhtun to strive for the cause of freedom. A very good example of this is stiff resistance that Pakhtun put against the British in Anglo Afghan wars. The modes of communication like the newspapers and Pashto language have altered the movement and hence analyzing it through the lenses of new social movement is very important in order to explore the unexplored dimensions of the movement.

Result and discussion:

The Pakhtun Movement in Pakistan started as a movement demanding an independent Pakhtunistan. My hypothesis that Pakhtunwali asks Pakhtuns to strive hard for the Pakhtun cause that is freedom from foreign domination clearly defines their behavior.

Origins

The Pakhtun movement originated in the North West Frontier Province (N.W.F.P) that is located between parallel of 31.4 degree and 36.57 degree North latitude and 69.16 degree and 74.4 degree east longitude. The area of the province is thirty nine thousand nine hundred square kilometers. The area occupies immense strategic importance .Hence is very politically active region. The province occupies an area that has witnessed

⁶ Steven M. Buechler, "New Social Movement Theories" (Oxfordshire),Vol. 36, No. 3 (Summer, 1995),p.442. URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4120774> .(Accessed: 27-09-2017 05:50).

the campaigns of Muhammad Ghorī and Anglo-Afghan wars⁷. As topography of the region do not promote agriculture hence the inhabitants of the region have restored to loot and plunder and at the zenith of their civility they were dependent on transit economy⁸. History of the province clearly indicates the influence of the geography on the people of the province. As per historians like Sana Haroon the science of cartography was extensively used to mark the area and change the political land escape which bring the Pakhtuns under Maharaja of Kashmir⁹. The Pakhtuns were indirectly used by the British by keeping the Maliks in the middle for guarding the frontier. These policies were designed by the British keeping Russian threat in mind. The Pakhtuns are a dominant ethnic group of N.W.F.P also known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They that are the Pakhtun have love for their ethnicity and nation since the time of Khushal Khan Khattak¹⁰. Hence they have a very strong motivating factor that puts them on war path with anyone who tries to attack their freedom. The Government of Pakistan did the very same thing and faced a stiff resistance from the Pakhtuns who are now in garb of Taliban.

In 1929 Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan popularly known as Bacha Khan started Khudai Kiadmatgar Movement. During the seventies when Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (U.S.S.R) invaded Afghanistan, Pakistan was forced to incline towards United States of America (U.S.A) using Saudi money US made stinger missiles and arming the Pakhtuns with them Pakistan was able to defeat the Red Army of U.S.S.R. But still K.G.B of U.S.S.R and C.I.A of U.S.A are at proxy war against each other in Afghanistan. During recent times Pakistan has gained foot hold in the region by flushing out militants form Khyber Pakhtunkhwa under operation named as Zarb-e-Azb. Thus due to the above mentioned politics and militancy there has been heavy loss of life. Thus the Pakhtuns found themselves betrayed from the side of Government of Pakistan¹¹. Hence is forced to rebel against military that is dominated by Punjabi and Mohajir. Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan made a non violent effort by using Khudai Khidmatgars previously to resist the British and then the Government of Pakistan. He was portrayed as an Indian agent by state of Pakistan and its media. He fought for the autonomy of the Pakhtuns and peoples of other ethnicity by supporting National Awami Party (N.A.P) along with people from other ethnicity. The NAP was against centralization, pro autonomy and against use of Islam in state affairs. But later his son

⁷ Sayed Wiqar Ali Shah, *Ethnicity, Islam and Nationalism: Muslim Politics in North West Frontier Province 1937-47* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2000), p.1.

⁸ B. D. Hopkins, *The Making of Modern Afghanistan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p.10.

⁹ Sana Haroon, *Frontier of the Faith: Islam in the Indo Afghan Borderland* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2007), p.5.

¹⁰ Abubakar Siddique, *The Pashtuns: The unresolved key to the feature of Pakistan and Afghanistan* (Gurgaon: Random House Publishers, 2014), p.29.

¹¹ PTI, "490 Pakistan soldiers, 3,500 militants killed in Operation Zarb-e-Azb", *The Economics Times* (Internet edition) June 15, 2016, URL: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/490-pakistan-soldiers-3500-militants-killed-in-operation-zarb-e-azb/articleshow/52766005.cms> (Accessed on 23 October 2017).

Wali Khan initially supported NAP but later after being imprisoned by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto he abandoned NAP. After his release during the rule of Zia ul Haq he not only signed 1973 constitution but also formed Awami National Party (A.N.P) in 1986. This party supported centralization was against autonomy and supported use of Islam in state apparatus. Thus how this movement got integrated in Pakistan under the leadership of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan's son Wali Khan.

Development

On March 1949, a comment of Kabul Radio on the Pakistani air action against the Faqir of Ipi was sent to all foreign missions in Pakistan by the Afghan embassy as a press note. Despite the suggestions of support for Tribal Areas 'independence', Afghanistan's bellicosity suggested to the Pakistani government a fresh rivalry over ownership of the Tribal Areas¹². This added fuel to the fire in the Afghan Pakistan relations and provoked Afghans under Sardar Daud to help Pakhtuns in liberating themselves from the clutches of Pakistan.

The Pakhtun movement saw many developments in the region of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or NWFP. The major development by the Pakhtun movement was that it formed a coalition with Jamat-i-Ulemai-Islam in NWFP¹³. These parties were in favor of strong Prime Minister in 1973 and passed the 1973 constitution strengthening the PM and tightening the noose over the opposition of that time¹⁴. Seeing the growing influence of Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto General Zia ul Haq asserted his position and dismissed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto government in a coup.

The phase of the rule of Zia ul Haq saw Islamization by enforcing hudood ordinance in 1977¹⁵. He thoroughly Islamized the Pakistani society and used state apparatus to implement sharia law. Pakistan became extremely radicalize and took a tilt towards Islam during the days of Zia ul Haq. It is during his days in power the Taliban who were noticed as predominantly Pakhtuns came in to existence. It is these Taliban who were used by USA, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia against the Red Army of USSR. This lead to the dilution of the Pakhtun movement and emergence of radical Islamist in the society in NWFP. Wali Khan enched this opportunity by making a new party that was the Awami National Party (A.N.P) that was in favor of Islamization and was against autonomy¹⁶. This made Pakhtun nation builder that was quite contrary to the role played by them earlier in the 1950s and 60s. This led to the transformation of the movement to an integrationist one.

¹²Haroon, *Frontier of Faith: Islam in the Indo-Afghan Borderland*, p.189.

¹³ Mohammad Waseem, *Politics and the State in Pakistan* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1994) P, 314.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid,p.2.

¹⁶ Feroz Ahmed, *Ethnicity and politics in Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1999), p.226

Transformation:

The Pakhtun movement started as a separatist movement and ended as an integrationist movement¹⁷. In its initial phase the movement had a leftist tilt and advocated for autonomy under the guise of N.A.P¹⁸. But later on with the formation of A.N.P (Awami National Party) the movement took a diametrically opposite turn. The leaders of the movement started advocating for centralization and Islamization and not only this brought the merger of N.W.F.P into Pakistan and abandoned their agenda of leftist autonomy and decentralization and on the contrary supported Islamization and Centralization¹⁹. The party that is N.A.P signed the 1973 constitution of Pakistan that promoted the strength of Prime Minister and made him superior to judges. The matter was further sorted out by President Asaf Ali Zardari by naming the N.W.F.P as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2010²⁰. Later Wali Khan son of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan openly came out in support of centralizing tendencies of the Pakistani state and started towing the line of Islamic political parties of Pakistan by advocating Islam in active politics in 1986 and also formed A.N.P in the same year. Later we see Pakhtun movement losing its momentum and being integrated in the national mainstream of Pakistan showing Hindu dominated India as a threat.

Conclusion: Pakhtun movement in Pakistan has its source in the abuse and colonization of Pakhtuns and their culture by the Pakistani State that was dominated by the Punjabis and the Muhajirs. Many developments took place in the region that were responsible for catalyzing this movement. The Media of both the state (i.e. of Afghanistan and Pakistan) proved to be a major promoter of conflict, as it was comprehensively used as a tool for propaganda. The class of rulers of both the State tried to resolve the issue by negotiation but it failed. Later after the demise of the Afghan State Pakistan had strong claims on the North West Frontier Province and readily integrated the Pakhtuns in the mainstream through trade, economic policies, state patronage, and political means in the mainstream of Pakistan clearly giving indication of the geostrategic importance the region had for Pakistan. Thus it can be very well concluded that Pakhtun Movement in Pakistan had links with Afghan State and Pakistan integrated the Pakhtuns by diplomacy, and making them to participate in politics of Pakistan as well as extending state patronage towards them. The drawback of the study is that it is difficult to go to Pakistan to do research on such a sensitive issue. Secondly the study might lead to escalations of tension between India and Pakistan. The studies immensely contribute to the political knowhow of the N.W.F.P also known as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Further the study should be made about the political economy of the movement and also about the socio economic aspect of the movement.

¹⁷ Ibid, p.184

¹⁸ Ibid,p.186

¹⁹ Ibid, pp.226-227.

²⁰ Aashis Joshi(ed), *North West Frontier Province: Rising Nationalism* (New Delhi: Lenin Media, 2017), p.4.

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