

27 March

Pakistani Invasion and The Baloch Resistance

Shahzain Baloch

Balochistan is renowned for its strategic location, which enticed colonizers to assert authority over it. Hammal-e-Jehand resisted against Portuguese incursion into Balochistan. Similarly, Baleh Nosh Buledhi opposed Mongol attempts at domination. Alexander the Great faced opposition when attempting to conquer Balochistan and failed to establish control. In 1835, Henry Pottinger and Robert Sandeman arrived in Balochistan as merchants, and in 1839, the British army invaded Kalat. Mehrab Khan, the Khan of Kalat, led a small band of his men to resist the British, knowing victory was unlikely. On November 13, 1839, Mehrab Khan along with his men embraced martyrdom, but sending a clear message to the British that the Baloch would never accept foreign rule in their land. After the invasion of Kalat the British imperialists had their own policy for Balochistan. They distorted Baloch history and depicted it from their own perspective. Another strategy employed by the British was the policy of divide and rule in Balochistan. The Goldsmith line served as a mechanism to partition Baloch land. The Goldsmith-line represents an unmarked international boundary between Iran and Afghanistan, now separating Balochistan (Pakistani occupied Balochistan) from Iran and Afghanistan. This line separates western Balochistan (Iranian occupied Balochistan) from Balochistan (Pakistani occupied Balochistan) and Afghanistan. Surveyed in 1871, delineated in 1872, and ratified in 1873. Another demarcation, known as the Durand line, which set a line putting some parts of Baloch land to Afghanistan boundary. Another tactic, known as the Sandeman system, was implemented. This approach disrupted the traditional Balochi tribal structure, which previously lacked a hereditary system. However, following the British invasion, they reorganized the Baloch tribal system, introducing hereditary principles and titles such as Chieftains. Under this system, Sardars were granted full authority under the banner of British empire.

Following their defeat in World War 2, British imperialists began to withdraw from their colonies, including Balochistan (now Pakistani occupied Balochistan). Viceroy Lord Mountbatten and Jinnah, serving as the president of the All-India Muslim League, met with the Khan of Kalat, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan, on 4 August 1947 and ratified a pact, acknowledging Kalat as an autonomous and sovereign entity with a unique status distinct from other states of India. The proclamation of this agreement was aired on all India radio's Delhi station on 11 August 1947, three days prior to the partition of Hindustan.

Following independence, two assemblies named Diwan-e-Khas and Diwan-e-Aam were established for the state of Balochistan. A total of 52 seats were designated for Diwan-e-Aam,

whose members would have been selected based on the consensus of tribal elders. Additionally, only hereditary chiefs, totaling 36, were eligible as candidates for Diwan-e-Khas. It was stipulated that both chambers would strive for the welfare, advancement, and prosperity of the state, and it was mandated for both assemblies to convene a parliamentary session annually. The Prime Minister was designated as the head of both assemblies. Furthermore, a seat was reserved for the Hindu community in the Diwan-e- Aam.

Following the implementation of the Partition Plan of India, the newly formed state of Pakistan reached out to the Baloch Parliament for integration. In response, the Baloch confederacy unequivocally declined the terms of integration, viewing it as a violation of the agreement made on 4th August. Despite all attempts at dialogue between the Khan of Kalat and Jinnah of Pakistan proving futile, in 27 march 1948 the Pakistani central government eventually dispatched the Pakistani military, which coerced Mir Ahmed Yar Khan into relinquishing his state.

However, a rebellion erupted in the Makkuran District led by Prince Agha Abdul Karim Khan, the sibling of the Khan, and the populace demanded internal political autonomy. Agha Abdul Karim had previously served as the commander of the Kalat state Army during the brief period of Kalat's independence. He declared Kalat's independence and continued armed operations until 1950 when an accord was reached with Pakistani Army officials, sworn upon the Quran near the Harboi Mountains. Nevertheless, the agreement was breached, leading to an ambush on Prince Agha Abdul Karim and the arrest of his 102 comrades in route to Kalat. Agha Karim and all his supporters were handed prison sentences, marking the temporary conclusion of the first Baloch insurgency that erupted shortly after the Pakistani annexation of Balochistan. This event was a pivotal chapter in the history of Balochistan, showcasing the Balochs' determination to preserve their resistance heritage against external incursions and denouncing Pakistan as an untrustworthy adversary.

On May 19, 1959, Another revolt in the face of Nawab Nouroz Khan and his faithful comrades also participated in the guerrilla campaign. During this rebellion, the Pakistani military bombed numerous villages in the region, labeling them as militant's hideout and several innocents Baloch lost their lives. Once again Pakistani military used the religious card and told them that they will accept their demands. Subsequently, the Pakistani Army breached the agreement, leading to the arrest of Nawab Nouroz and his associates, who were then transferred to Quetta Cantonment and tried by a special military tribunal. In July 1960, Nawab's eldest son Mir Battay Khan and seven of his companions were executed. Nawab himself received a life sentence and passed away in prison on December 25, 1965, becoming another martyr of the Baloch Nationalist Movement.

For the Baloch nation, Nawab Nuoroz khan and the other 7 martyrs compiled an important chapter in their struggle. It symbolizes the determination of the Baloch, not bowing to unjust and brutal assaults on their freedom and resisting regardless of the price they must pay on this honorable path. This second insurgency of Baloch history was followed by the Pakistani military establishing the cantonments in the interior Balochistan

Another rebellion and Baloch guerillas began assaulting Pakistani military outposts. This uprising was better coordinated than previous ones. Babu Sheeru Marri set up Ferrari camps with each hosting 200 fighters. These camps were situated in Marri and Mengal areas. This insurgency persisted until the reign of Ayub Khan's regime and shortly after Ayub, when Yahya took over, agreements were reached with Baloch fighters, leading to the withdrawal of the army from the operation zones.

The fourth uprising began in 1973 when Bhutto removed the NAP government in July 1973 and detained Baloch leaders like Atta Ullah Mengal and Nawab Khair Bux Marri. Army convoys and posts were attacked by Baloch Nationalist Militant groups, particularly the Baloch People Liberation Front led by Mir Hazar Khan Marri. During this rebellion, around 16,000 innocent Marri tribesmen were killed by the Pakistani Army through widespread bombing of Marri areas. The notorious General Tikka Khan, also known as the "Butcher of Bengal," spearheaded this military operation of the Pakistan Army to suppress the Baloch uprising and was consequently dubbed the "Butcher of Balochistan" for his brutal war crimes there. This uprising continued until the Bhutto government, but when Gen Zia took power, he imposed Martial law and reached agreements with Baloch leaders, offering Amnesty to Balochistan and withdrawing troops from operation zones. After the Zia regime, the insurgency temporarily ended, but Baloch Nationalists began to regroup.

The fifth and longest Baloch uprising, which is still ongoing, began after 2000 and has evolved into modern warfare, different political fronts whose scientific and ideological foundation is formed by Nawab Khair Bakash Marri. However, political schooling of fifth restoration movement of Baloch state began with Khair Bakash Marri and his ideological comrades in the Hak Tawar (echoes of liberation) Circle after a long period of preparation. Following Nawab Bugti's death in 2006, both civilian and militant unrest erupted across Balochistan. In this rebellion, Baloch Nationalists organized themselves systematically by raising political awareness among the masses. On the other hand, the Baloch militants had waged a massive war against the Pakistani occupation, which is still ongoing. Hence now, Pakistan responded in various ways, including the notorious "Kill and dump" strategy, which targeted thousands of Baloch students, political activists, and individuals from all walks of life. So far, thousands of Balochs have been killed and disposed of, with many discovered in mass graves, while thousands more remain missing. Numerous government-supported death squads were established in every part of Balochistan to combat Baloch Nationalists.

The Pakistani army still doesn't grasp the deep nationalist sentiment of the Baloch people and struggles to counter their guerrilla warfare tactics. Today, the Baloch insurgency is driven by the fundamental political belief in 'freedom above all else,' led by educated individuals from various economic backgrounds. What sets this independence movement apart from previous uprisings is the involvement of educated young men from middle-class families. So far, they have adeptly adapted their insurgency to conform to modern principles of independence movements. Despite facing limited resources and media blackout in the region, the Baloch Liberation

movement has garnered international attention and successfully conveyed their message to the world: they demand nothing short of complete independence, and they will persist in their struggle at any cost until victory.