

The British Diplomatic and Political Policy Regarding Balochistan-Punjab Border

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Abstract

Subcontinent had always been an attractive land for the invaders due its fertility during ancient time and the North western India was major route for this invasion. British advancement started after the victory of the battle of Palsy in 1757 and the forces excelled towards Delhi. British forces occupied Sindh and Punjab. With the annexation of united Punjab British abolished Derajat and they even moved to Baluchistan. With new diplomatic strategy they established peace in the tribal area of the surrounding border of Balochistan. As per Sandeman Policy the tribes of Dera Ghazi Khan were engaged by the British policy and now they were in position to occupy Balochistan and Kalat. It was very important for the British to establish their grip in this area so that may become easy and decrease the pressure of western border from Iran, Afghanistan and Russia. This paper primarily explores the British rule in tribal region of Derajat and Balochistan.

Keywords: Muslims, Rule, Decline, Mughal, Delhi, British, Derajat

Research Methodology

The Methodology of this system is based on Historic Method. It's a descriptive study and it tries to make use of all primary and secondary sources



available on the subject. The use of quantitative data has also been made to understand the point of discussions, where ever necessary.

Review of the Literature

Though much has not been written, however, the material available on the subject is mostly written by the British writers. Their accounts are available in forms of the administrative correspondence of the Deputy Commissioners to the Punjab Government. English Record Room in the Deputy Commissioner Office of Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur has been very useful in this regard as primary source. Since the British tried to tame the wild Balochs of the frontier through agriculture and by building canals, the record of irrigation and as well as the Revenue Department has also helped in writing this thesis. The district Gazetteers of Dera Ghazi Khan, Dera Ismail Khan, and Imperial Gazetteers of Balochistan which had been regularly maintained and updated by the British, were also of great help. However, these writings had an in-built bias against the natives; therefore, the writings of the native's writers have also been consulted. The Ballads of the Balochs which have been compiled by the British as well as the natives were also a rich source material for early history of Balochs when the Balochs have not been able to develop their manuscript. Along with Government records, contemporary works under this topic include the political biographies of Sir Robert Sandeman by Thomas Hennerly Thornton (1895) and, John Jacob of Jacobabad by H.T. Lambrick, both these figures played an important role in devising the British policies during those days. Mr. R.J. Bruce, Assistant Commissioner Rajanpur and a very close associate of Sandman has also written valuable books entitled, *The Forward Policy and its Results*, and *Notes on the Baloch Tribes of D.G. Khan* also helped in the accomplishment of this study. Similarly, Herbert Edward's, *A Year on the Punjab Frontier in 1848-49* in two volumes also helped a lot for understanding the contemporary situation of the time. Among the native writers Munshi Hukam Chands, *Tawareekh Zilla Dera Ghazi Khan* (1876) and Rai Hattu Ram's *Tareekh-e-Baluchistan* 1882, both of them served as Extra Assistant Commissioner (Settlement) respectively.

Discussion

The throne of Delhi had always been vulnerable to foreign invaders from its North-West borders since the dawn of history. British India also perceived the same security threats in the wake of rising Russian expansion to these borders through Central Asia. Afghanistan became the arena of their struggle for power since the time of Peter the Great (1672-1725). The Russians were desperately looking for access to warm water. After the humiliating defeat in the first Afghan War (1839-42), the British felt the strategic importance of Sind and Baluchistan and the adjoining tribal areas of Dera Ghazi Khan District, predominantly inhabited by Baloch tribes in terms of logistics.¹ The British consolidated their influence in Balochistan by concluding treaties with rulers of Kalat in different occasions.² They annexed Sind in 1843 and Punjab in 1849. Traditionally the limits of North Western borders of the British India had been the river Indus. However, there were strong feelings among the British strategists to move forward beyond the trans-Indus regions. Thus, in subsequent years two strategic schools of thought competed to define British India's Imperial Policy in its North West frontier including Kalat. The close borders policy school argued against British expansion in the North West Whereas the Forward Policy School, in turn, urged active engagement in establishing a network of friendly tribes in the North West of sub-continent.³ Eventually both policies were deployed alternatively to the plains of Derajat during the 19th century. This is an attempt to study the main contours of the British policy. The geographical focus of this study is the middle Indus region, an area stretching 200 miles along the right bank of the Indus from the Derajat to upper Sind. Though an area of mixed population, when the British arrived, the people of the region were predominantly Baloch and Pukhtoons. The Baloch predominating in the hills to the south (upper Sind and Dera Ghazi Khan District) which is the primary focus of this study.⁴The British devised and experienced a new kind of Administration in this region which is known as political administration. The success and failures of this system has been analyzed in this study at a greater length. Looking back to the main contours and characteristics of political control of the British through special laws sometimes, totally opposite to

ordinary laws of administration in the middle of the 19th century till the establishment of the North-West Frontier Province in 1901, with special reference to the Baloch tribes of D.G. Khan. The short term and long term implications of this system of administration which later on was known as the political administration, has also been discussed.⁵ It seems that history is repeating its self. Our tribal borders had become a flash point for our internal as well as international security. Can we learn some lessons from the British experience? Or is it because of the political vacuum which the British left in these areas? In this study an attempt will be made to answer the questions of that kind. While the system practiced by the British in these areas has highly is praised as the success story among British as well as their admirers. The British extended this kind of experience to the North Western areas inhabited by Pathan tribes with little variations, which has become flash points of terror and war even today. Similarly, this system was extended to Balochistan also. The implication of this kind of administration to the people administered was far reaching. This system has its success and failures too. A critical reappraisal and evaluation of this system is extremely useful for our understanding of this phenomenon. The system of dual government introduced by Lord Clive, the first British Governor General, remained the principle guidance for the subsequent administrators of India. According to the system, the actual administration remained in Indian hands but for 'Superintendence purposes', Clive appointed a person of his own confidence, in Darbar, who was called 'Dewan' or 'the Nawab's Deputy'. The East India Company by practicing the same principle in Mughal Darbar acted in the name of the Emperor and using Indian personnel of their own confidence as 'Naibs'. Thus the resulting system of administration remained largely Indian in pattern but turned British in character in subsequent years. It was paternalistic and hierarchical.⁶ The Emperor was replaced by the "Mystical Entity", the Governor General in centre, governors in provinces, Deputy Commissioners in districts and Political Agents or Assistant Political Agents in semi autonomous 'Princely States' as Residents. The working of the state apparatus was therefore increasingly based on the collective administrative

wisdom gathered in years and even in generations. The officers in the districts performed excellent feedback function through network of friendship with each other and with those with the secretariat, much in the tradition of Lord Wellesley's Kindergarten of the early 19th century.⁷Expert opinions about various regions evolved into concepts such as Oudh Construct, Punjab Creed, and Sandeman System. Thus the system of administration practiced by the British in India in early 19th century was the same around all territories of British India in one hand but, on the other hand it was much more complex and diverse in culturally different and diverse regions of India.⁸In the early 19th century, a great debate went on in Britain about the nature of the government of India. The East India Company wanted India to be regarded as a field for British commercial exploitation, with the company holding the administrative whip with one hand and exploiting with the other as an extension of this, the new regime introduced in India could be regarded as a law and order of police state. However, there was a school of thought in England who believed that Britain was responsible for India's moral and spiritual welfare as well, they were mostly Evangelist. They were reinforced in this way by the rising group of free thinking utilitarian's, followers of the Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, who were influential in the companies service and who wished to use India as a laboratory for their theories. There was another group who were called 'Radical Rationalists' who had borrowed the doctrine of Human Rights from France and wished to introduce them into India. ⁹When British India expanded beyond its Company borders both to the North West and the North East during this initial phase of Crown Rule, the turbulent tribal frontier to the North West remained a continuing source of harassment to the settled British rule. Pathan raiders served as a constant lure and justification to champions of the 'Forward School of Imperialism' in Calcutta, Shimla and Whitehall. Russian expansion into Central Asia in the 1860's provided even greater anxiety and incentive to the British Rulers in India, as well as at the Foreign Office in London. They decided to advance the frontier of the Indian empire beyond the Hindu Kush and even up to Afghanistan's own Northern border along the axis. Lord

Cannings (1856-1862) however was far too occupied to restore peace and order in India itself. As Viceroy Lawrence continued (1863-68) continued the same border pacification policy and resolutely refused to be pushed in to the Afghan politics.¹⁰ The relevance of the vast territory of Balochistan and the area's connecting Balochistan to the British Empire became manifest during the first Afghan War (1839-42) which was apparently fought to protect Afghanistan from the Russian influence. Since Balochistan provided easy access to Kandhar and Herat, the geo-strategic significance of the Balochistan and the Indus plains of Derajat increased. Thus, the prime interest of the British in these areas was strategic rather than colonial. The British officials in India proposed to identify independent buffer states in the extreme North West of continent that will serve to protect the British Indian Empire from foreign invasion. By the conquest of Sindh in 1843 and the annexation of Punjab in 1849 the North West frontier of British India expanded beyond its company borders. India was advanced across the river Indus to the foot of the rocky mountain ranges which separates the plains of the Indus valley from the higher plateaus of Afghanistan and Kalat.¹¹ These mountain ranges-together with an offshoot of the western Himalaya on the east side of the Indus (known as the Black mountain)-formed a vast irregular of belt on independent or semi independent territory, extending from the Khagan Glen, immediately west of Kashmir, round the British district of Peshawar Kohat and Bannu and then in a long stretch southward down the Indus valley to the Sindh seaboard near Karachi, measuring including the deflections of about 1200 miles. The belt of territory above described was inhabited by the fierce marauding tribes, amounting in all too nearly 200,000 fighting men armed with buckler, sword and matchlock, often at war with each other, hounding the plains of the Punjab and Sindh. They create the constant terror of the trade caravans and for the plains of settled districts of British India.¹²

In order to manage these tribes the British evolved and adopted a kind of administration with little variations in Sind, and the Derajat of Punjab. This administration is pure militaristic in nature in Sind, whereas in plains of Indus and tribal areas of Punjab it was partially militarist, partially civilian. In

subsequent years, the political system evolved by Sir Sandeman in D.G. Khan District is called Sandeman System, which even expanded to Balochistan. This kind of administration has its success and its failures. The British hailed this kind of administration as a big success for their colonial and geo-strategic interests. However, there were others who considered this system as retrogressive and backward.¹³

When the British came into D.G. Khan the area was in a state of mess and confusion because of the internal strife of different Baloch tribes. The Khan of Kalat was also struggling to tame the Baloch Sardars in the neighboring Kalat State, which has its fallout on Sind and the plains of D.G. Khan. The British successfully restored peace and order in this area which were welcomed by the tribes of D. G. Khan. The British Policy directly dealing with the Sardars changed the internal power structure of the tribal organization. Though The Chief or The Tumandars of different tribes used to enjoy this status by descent, but it was conditional on their innovative methods to protect their tribes from outside threats and to extend their means of livelihood. The chief who failed to perform his duties was sometimes deseated by the Mokadams of that tribe. The British made this institution so powerful that it almost assumed the hereditary status. Their political position were now guaranteed by an over arching power, and therefore no longer dependant on tribal allegiance. The British liberated them from their dependence on their tribe and thus created the pre-requisite for a quasy-feudal system which was largely unknown to the tribes of Dera Ghazi Khan. The Political and Economical increase in the Sardari power by outside assistance resulted in conflict and opposition. Which the British made it sure to remain at the level not to convert in wars. Thus, Sandeman Policy produced a politically fragmented tribal organization.¹⁴

The British constructed roads and railway lines for purely strategic reasons, in order to secure the logistic support for military in the whole length of Afghan Frontier. They did not correspond with the population requirements nor did they connect the traditional population centers of the mountain territory. Thus the socio economic development was accordingly, asymmetric one. The

decline in Caravan transportation meant the loss of significant source of income for numerous tribes. There was a rise in Sedentarization. Many new villages were founded and the number of nomadic and semi nomadic tribes declined. The population in the urban centers rose at the cost of peripheral areas.

In the minds of the British, images of the tribal Baloch associate him with Pastoralism and raids in Indus plains. When the British established their control along the Indus frontier in the 1840's and 1850's, their approach reflected a vision shaped largely by their self image as colonial rulers and their image of the pastoral Baloch. They view the frontier as a moral divide separating the advance of civilization from the turbulant part of Baloch "marauding". They decided to transform the wild tribal Baloch by settling him in to the Indus Basin. Thus, the transformative vision of agriculture settlement increasingly played an important role in the British Frontier Policy. For John Jacob of Sindh, the demarcation of clear moral frontier between civilization and the roving cattle keepers of the hills was important not only to controlling the frontier, but in defining the legitimacy of British power. Thus, the water and agriculture became the main instrument of political control of the wild Baloch tribes. For the British both in physical and moral sense, only the complete immersion of formally hill Baloch in irrigated agricultures could achieve and assure their absorption into the British political order. Thus the British tried to subvert the Baloch from their distinctive ethnicity and identity, whereas the Baloch considered irrigation as a critical field of political negotiation with the British about their identity.

The absence of extensive kinship or tribal organization favored the development of nation states in Western Europe. But in parts of the third world states face societies that maintain 'the persistence' of tribal structure the crucial importance of kinship and the limited individualization of property rights and land. Both Ibne Khuldoon and traditional anthropologists have seen tribes as prior to state or as a lower form of development. Tribes and states are best thought of as two opposed modes of thought or models of

organization that form a single system. As a basis for identity, political allegiance, and behaviour, tribe gives primacy to ties of kinship and Patrilineal descent, whereas state insists on the loyalty of all persons to a central authority, whatever their relation to each other. The tribal mode is socially homogenous, egalitarian, and segmentary; the state is heterogeneous, stratified, and hierarchical. Tribe is within the individual; state is external. This view grants to tribes people power to choose between tribal and non tribal mode of interaction, allowing for the possibility of a political transformation in which they act rather than only being acted upon. However, the strength of tribes or local strongmen (Tribal Chiefs) were often created or mobilized as agents of control by colonial states such as British. In our case study, the British tried to impose a kind of administration which was paternalistic in nature and was heavily biased in favor of 'so called' collective wisdom. This strategy gave rise to a special kind of thinking at the cost of individual dynamism. Thus, it can be concluded that 'the imposed' state engendered the imposed chief.¹⁶

Conclusion

The encounter of the modern state, though colonial in nature, with the tribal system in our case study makes an interesting phenomenon. The stages of social development given by the inter play of the historical forces were denied to the people of this area by the overwhelming nature of the colonial state in spite of the fact that tradition of Lord Wellesley's Kindergarten of the early 19th century. The British introduced the concept of modern state such as, rule of law, order, responsibility, discipline, to the natives. Since they were out-siders, they didn't interfere in the lives of the natives, which their local rulers used to enjoy. Relative peace and order increased trade and agriculture in the area which resulted in the prosperity. The British tried to inculcate modern values through their educational institutions and facilitate the natives with dispensaries and hospitals. On the other hand, the British used these facilities as a political control to the natives. They strengthened the crumbling 'Sardari System' used public funds as a bribe in this regard.

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