

The Historical Political Relations Between Balochistan and Afghanistan

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Abstract:

This article discusses the historical relations between Balochistan and Afghanistan. Guided by two research questions, whether Balochistan was a vassal state of Afghanistan and whether the historical claim of Afghanistan on Balochistan is justified or not? This article by using secondary sources followed by analytical discussion finds that Balochistan nominally remained a part of Afghanistan for a short period of time (1747-1758) and it enjoyed a sovereign status vis-a-vis Afghanistan and historical claim of Afghanistan on Balochistan is unjustified as history bears testimony to the fact that maps are drawn and redrawn.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Balochistan, Politics, Durrani Empire, Khanate of Kalat, Treaty of Kalat, Ahmed Shah Abdali, Mir Naseer Khan Noori

Introduction

Balochistan literally means the land of Baloch. It is divided among the modern states of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. It is located at the convergence of Central, South and West Asia (Dashti, 2017, pp.29-30). Afghanistan means the land of Afghans which is located in West Asia. Comparing with Balochistan, it is much more diverse and inhabited by several ethnic groups and over 30 languages are spoken in Afghanistan

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(Miran, 1977). Some of the ethnic groups of Afghanistan have even their nation states. Tajiks have the nation state of Tajikistan, Uzbeks have the nation state of Uzbekistan and Turkmen have the nation state of Turkmenistan. This paper will attempt to throw light upon the historical political relations between Balochistan and Afghanistan. The main purpose is to find out whether Kalat State (Present Balochistan) was a vassal and tributary state of Afghanistan or whether it enjoyed complete independence?

There is no unanimity of opinions among the historians and scholars on this question. Some historians such as Mason, HennyPottinger, Ganda Singh, Elphinestone and AkhundMuhammedSiddique have acknowledged that Balochistan was independent and was not a vassal state. They have supported their views from the Treaty of Kalat (1758) signed between the Baloch monarch Naseer Khan Noori and Afghan monarch Ahmed Shah Abdali. However, majority of the Afghan historians have not accepted the importance of this treaty and have asserted that Kalat was under the influence of Durrani Empire (Baloch, 2016). This paper by using the works of various scholars, followed by an analytical discussion will try to answer this question.

Literature Review

Some work regarding the present study has been done by numerous historians. Inayatullah Baloch (1987) wrote a comprehensive book on Baloch nationalism and threw some light on the Baloch-Afghan relations. According to him, both Balochistan and Afghanistan in the 18th century were under the Iranian rule of Nadir Shah Afshar, however, after his death Ahmed Shah Abdali declared himself free and laid the foundation of modern Afghanistan in 1747. The author acknowledged that Kalat State

first accepted the suzerainty of Ahmed Shah Abdali. However, after a gap of 11 years in 1758, NooriNaseer Khan declared himself complete independent and this compelled Ahmed Shah Abdali to attack on Kalat. The Kalat fort was besieged by Afghan forces for 40 days, however, realizing the futility of the expedition, Ahmed Shah Abdalidecided to end the war by signing the Treaty of Kalat (p. 104, 105). The main features of the treaty of Kalat are;

1. Khan-e- Baloch Mir Naseer Khan will not pay any tribute to the Shah (King) of the Afghan in future.
2. Khan-e- Baloch will not supply san (military assistance) to Ahmed Shah. But provided he isat war against external enemies, the Khan will supply a military contingent as a token of help, on the condition that Afghan king provide annually Rs. 100,000, and military weapons, and provide for the expenditure of the army as a reward.
3. Khan-i-Baloch will not provide any help or asylum to rebel princes of Sadozai of Afghan chiefs. On the other hand, the Afghan king also will not give any help or refuge to princes of the royal family of Kalat-Ahmadzai.
4. Shah-i-Afghanistan in future will never interfere in the internal affairs, disputes and other matters of Balochistan.
5. All those areas of Khan-i-Baloch which are in the possession of the Shah-i-Afghanistan will be handed over today to the Khan-i-Baloch (p.105).

Janmahammed(1989), regarding the treaty, wrote that this treaty acknowledged the independent status of Balochistan and provided the basis for Khanate's subsequent relations with Afghanistan (p.163). In his book

Janmahmad also mentioned that Prince Kareem who revolted against the decision of accession of Balochistan into Pakistan, went to Afghanistan to seek help from the Afghan government to carry out his campaign for independent Balochistan, but he was not given any assistance by Afghanistan because Afghan government thought that any idea of independent Balochistan will negate the idea of Greater Pakhtunistan as the Afghan have a claim on entire Baloch land (p.287). Ghulam Farooq Baloch (n-d) in his research article discusses that Afghan historians have deliberately ignored the importance of Treaty of Kalat and have followed the State policy of their country, Afghanistan which have a claim on the Pakistani Pashtun territories of KPK, FATA and entire Pakistani Balochistan. Amir Wasim (2003) wrote an article for the largest English daily newspaper of Pakistan,(Dawn). He mentioned two Afghan websites (afghanland.com) and (afghanistans.com) in which some Afghan nationalists have laid the claimed on the territories of KPK and Balochistan. The website (afghanland.com) shows a map of greater Afghanistan where present Pakistani Balochistan was named as Southern Pashtunistan and Gwadar port was named as Baloch City. Both the websites are being run by civil society organizations. Dr. Mohammad Hassan Hosseinbor (2000) wrote a book which is extensively on the subject of Baloch nationalism in Iran, he also briefly discussed Afghanistan foreign policy on Balochistan. According to him, the landlocked Afghanistan has a desire to have access upto the sea of Balochistan and historically they justify this claim by the fact that Kalat State accepted the sovereignty of Afghanistan for a period of 11 years (1747-1758). He further writes Afghanistan ever since the emergence of Baloch insurgency in Pakistan has not officially own the claim of Afghanistan on Balochistan and provided

help to the Baloch nationalists, owing to its own uneasy relationship with Pakistan (pp.215-216).

A Pashtun historian, Aziz Luni (2003) wrote a book having the title, "British Balochistan, (1879-1947)". According to Luni, All the Khans of Kalat have accepted the suzerainty of Afghanistan and none of the Khan was complete independent. However, the arrival of British in the region changed the situation and Kalat State threw away the allegiance of their centuries old empire, Afghanistan and accepted the suzerainty of the British (pp.42-46-47). To justify his point that British were pro-Baloch and anti-Afghan, Luni (2003) quoted British A.G.G Major General James Browne who said while marking the boundary between Raisani and Panni Afghans;

The fact that the Pannis were theoretically as well as practically Afghan subjects, quasi-hostile to England before the signing of Gandamak Treaty whereas the Raisanis were theatrically as well as practically Kalat subjects and quasi-allied to England at the time of that Treaty, made it necessary to carefully guard against the slightest appearance of bad faith towards our allies as having stronger claim on us than our enemies. (p.20)

Most of the Afghan historians have shared similar points of view. A big bone of contention between the Baloch and Afghan historians are the treaties signed between the Kalat State and British. Former uses it to prove their point that Balochistan was not a part of Afghanistan and the latter denied these agreements and their point regarding the invalidity of these agreement is that Khan of Kalat contrived with the British to sign this agreement by being disloyal to his suzerain. Therefore, this article will not use the treaties signed between Kalat State and the British in answering the

research, instead, this study will do an analytical discussion based on reasoning.

Objective of the Study

To know the historical relations between Balochistan and Afghanistan.

Research Questions

The questions which will guide this study are;

Q.1 Was Kalat State (Balochistan) a tributary of Afghanistan?

Q.2 Does the claim of Afghanistan on Balochistan has any historical justification?

Data Collection Method

As this study is related to history, so only secondary sources such as books, research articles and newspaper articles have been used as the method of data collection.

Results

RQ.1

Regarding the tributary status of Balochistan, there is consensus among the historians that Balochistan for a period of 11 years (1747 to 1758) paid tribute to Afghan King, Ahmed Shah Abdali. However, Baloch historians claim that in 1758 Naseer Khan Noori raised the standard of revolts and declared himself complete independent. Explaining the causes of his revolt, GhulamFarooq Baloch (n.d) writes that continuous interference of Qandahar in the affairs of Kalat forced Naseer Khan Noori to declare Kalat complete independent. However, the immediate cause was that Naseer Khan

took a strict military action against his nephew Haji Khan; the son of Mohabbat Khan, the ex-ruler of Kalat and his allies the Shahwani tribe of Iskalko. Haji Khan went to Qandahar to seek help from Ahmed Shah Abdali for his nomination to the throne of Kalat. Ahmed Shah Abdali summoned Naseer Khan to his court and Naseer Khan reject to visit Qandahar. This led to the Baloch-Afghan war (1758) which ended by the the treaty of Kalat. The points of Treaty of Kalat have already been mentioned in this article. Some clauses of the treaty such as that Ahmed Shah Abdali agreed not to interfere in the internal matters of Kalat, not giving asylum to any member of royal family of Kalat and the Kalat further will not pay any tribute to Qandahar clearly suggest that Kalat after the 1758 war became free from Qandahar influence. It must be noted that after the Treaty of Kalat no Ahmedzai Prince or any other rebel never took asylum in Afghanistan like the way Haji Khan did. Only one clause which may create doubt that Kalat was still a vassal state is that Kalat agreed to render its troops to Qandahar in case of foreign aggression and for military expeditions of Qandahar, but clause also clearly mention that half of expenditure of the Baloch soldiers will be bear out by the Afghan monarch which can be summarized as that Kalat won its independence in exchange of military services and it suggests that Balochistan was a military ally not a vassal state of Afghanistan.

Apart from the Treaty of Kalat, there are other historical events which prove that Balochistan ceased to be a tributary state of Afghanistan after 1758. Normally, a ruler of a vassal state is not independent when it comes to making its foreign policies. However, Naseer Khan Noori was independent in forming policies.

In 1783, the town of Gwadar having a vast coastline was gifted to an asylum seeking Prince of Oman by NooriNaseer Khan on a condition that the fugitive Prince will return Gwadar to Khanate of Kalat, once he ascend the throne of Oman but the Prince never fulfilled his promise and Gwadar remained a part of Oman for almost a period of 173 years and it was purchased by the government of Pakistan in 1958 (Ahmed, 2015). It clearly shows that NooriNaseer was Independent of Afghanistan otherwise, the Gwadar would have gifted to the Prince of Oman by Timur Shah, the then ruler of Afghanistan and contemporary of NooriNaseer Khan. It is worth mentioning that that Khanate of Balochistan gave Gwadar to the rebel Prince at a time when Abdali or Durrani Empire was on its peak. It grew weaker after the demise of Timur Shah and it was replaced by Barakzai dynasty in 1826. The weakness of the Afghan Empire can be judged from the fact it lost a considerable portion of its territory to the Sikh Empire after the collapse of Durrani dynasty (Syed, 2007). So gifting of a territory to a foreign country can only be done by a ruler of a vassal state at a time when the paramount power is weak, not at a time when the paramount power was in its zenith. If NooriNaseer Khan gifted Gwadar during the reign of weak Barakzai ruler, then one would have doubt that Khanate of Balochistan have taken advantage of the weakness of the paramount power, but the period of giving possession of Gwadar to Oman leaves no doubt about the complete independence of Balochistan.

Therefore, the writing of Aziz Luni, that Khan of Kalat taking advantage of the advent of the mighty imperial power British threw away the allegiance of its sovereign Afghanistan by signing treaties with Afghanistan holds no water as there was no arrival of British in 1783 but Khanate of Balochistan acted independently.

RQ.2

The historical justification of Balochistan being a part of Afghanistan is the 11 years (1747-1758) rule of Ahmed Shah Abdali on Balochistan (Hosseinbor, 2000, p.215). Before 1747, both Afghanistan and Balochistan were ruled by Nader Shah Afshar of Iran. The founder of modern Afghanistan, Ahmed Shah Abdali was himself a subordinate of Nader Shah, if this claim of justification is legalized that NooriNaseer Khan accepted the suzerainty of Ahmed Shah for 11 years and it justifies that Balochistan was historically a part of Afghanistan then by this justification Iran can also claim on Afghanistan as being a part of Iran, as Ahmed Shah accepted Nader Shah of being his master and patron. Not only Iran, but many other countries can lay a claim to Afghanistan on this weak historical justification.

The concept of Afghanistan as a state is not older than 18th century, before this it was occupied by numerous dynasties. Historian Thomas Barfield has named Afghanistan as “Highway of Invaders” and “Cradle of Empires”. During the 700 BC, it was ruled by Persian rulers like Darius and Cyrus the Great. During the reign of latter, Zoroastrian became the dominant religion in Afghanistan. The Greek invader, Alexander conquered it in 4th Century and it remained under Greek influence for years. After Alexander, Afghanistan came under the influence of Indian Mauryan Empire and owing to the efforts of Ashoka, the Mauryan King, Buddhism spread in Afghanistan. When Arabs arrived in Afghanistan, many Afghans converted from Buddhism to Islam. Janjua Rajputs also ruled the Afghans and its last King Jaypal was defeated by Mahmood Ghaznavi of Turk origin. It was attacked by Central Asian invaders like Chengiz Khan and his grandson Timur, which left many cities of Afghanistan in ruins. Sharukh, the son of

Timur, moved his capital from Samarkand to Herat. Under the patronage of Shahrukh, Herat raised as one the most cultured cities of the world. It is still regarded as the cultural capital of Afghanistan, a legacy of foreign invader. In the 16th century Afghanistan had been a part of three empires, the northern portion was ruled by Bokhara Empire, western portion was ruled by the Shia Safavid and eastern was ruled by Sunni Mughals (Wazir, 2014).

Afghanistan has changed name and geography throughout the history, during the rule of Bactarian Greeks, it was known as Ariana, during the rule of Chandragupta Maurya, it was known as Arachosia and Arab invaders named it as Khorasan. Ahmed Shah Abdali was the first Pashtun leader who asserted his independence and his empire could be considered as the fore runner of modern Afghanistan (Wazir, 2014). Thus by the justification of 11 years rule of Afghanistan on Balochistan makes Balochistan historically a part of Afghanistan then by his justification Greece (Alexandra), India (Chandragupta Maurya), Iraq (During the rule of caliphate, Afghanistan was under the Arabs), Iran (Darius, Cyrus The Great, Safavi dynasty and Nader Shah), Uzbekistan (Mughal rule and Bokhara dynasty) can lay a claim to Afghanistan. Looking at the history of Afghanistan it is revealed that maps are drawn and redrawn and dynastic rules changed from one hand to another. Same is the case with all the countries. Iran once was occupied by Greeks during the invasion of Alexandra and once by Arabs. Does it justify the any historical claim Greece and Saudi Arabia on Iran? USA was once a part of British and Spanish empires, Canada was a part of French and British empires. So, 11 years nominal rule of first ever created Afghan empire on Balochistan is a very weak historical justification.

It also has to bear in mind that Baloch established their state before Afghans. As discussed earlier the concept of Afghanistan as a State is not older than 1747, whereas, the first harbinger of Baloch state was attained in the 16th century when Miro Khan Mirwani organized the Baloch tribes into a well disciplined unit and helped the Mughals in ending the Hindu Sewa rule in Kalat and Miro Khan accepted the suzerainty of Mughals. The son of Miro Khan, Mir Omar Khan taking advantage of the fraternal feud between Mughal Emperor Humayun and his rebellious brother Mirza Kamran, drove away the Mughals from Balochistan. However, the success of Mir Umer was temporary as he was attacked by Baloch tribal chiefs of Makran and Kirman (Rind and Lashar alliance) led by Mir Shahak and Mir Gwaram who then advanced from Kalat to Kachi (Khan, pp.70-71). Mir Chakar, the son of Shahak also annexed Kharan and Las Bela and made Sibi the capital of unified Baloch State in 1487. Soon after the establishment of a unified state of Balochistan, the two powerful factions Rind and Lashar entered into a civil war lasting from 20 to 30 years (Baloch, 1987, pp. 96- 97). It is interesting to note that during the Baloch civil war, Mir Chakar Khan asked for help from Arghuns of Kandahar (Janmahmad, p.158) not Afghan, which suggests that while Balochistan, was being ruled locally by Baloch tribes, Afghanistan was under the sway of foreign Arghun Turks. The civil war of the Rind-Lashar resulted in the resurgence of the tribes of Kalat and Mir Ahmed (1666-1695) of the Qambraniclan established a confederacy which was actually an improved version of Rind-Lashar tribal union and its continued its existence till the arrival of British in 1839 (Janmahmad, 1989, pp. 159-160). The Khanate of Kalat was the Baloch State that included most Baloch areas such as Makran, Iranian Balochistan, Derajat, Seistan and Las Bela. However, the attack of Nader Shah of Persia on Balochistan in 1736 changed the

situation, Balochs were defeated and Mohabbat Khan surrendered and accepted the sovereignty of Nader Shah which lasted until 1747. From 1747 to Khanate of Balochistan accepted the suzerainty of Ahmed Shah and in 1758 Naseer Khan I declared himself complete independent (Baloch, 1987, p.104). Balochistan regained its independence after a lapse of 21 years. Thus, comparing the history of Balochistan and Afghanistan it is concluded that Baloch were able to form a state or proto-state in 1487, almost 300 hundred years before Afghans. Referring to Khanate of Balochistan, GhausBakhshBizenjo said, “WeBaluch had created a state eighty years before Afghanistan is established” (as cited in Harrison,1981). 11 years rule of first ever Afghan Empire on Balochistan, prior to which no Afghan Empire had a just historical claim, as Balochistan existed long before the creation of Afghanistan and the claim of nationalist Pashtun historian that after the arrival of British, Khanate of Kalat, which always have been the subordinate of Afghan Empire threw away the allegiance of its centuries old sovereign (Afghanistan) is nothing but a mockery of history as British arrived in Balochistan in 1839 and concluded a treaty with Kalat State, whereas, Afghanistan itself was created in 1747, not even a century before, so one wonders which centuries old sovereign Aziz Luni (2003)is referring to as Afghanistan was ruled by numerous foreign powers before the rise of Ahmed Shah.

Another pertinent point which proved the fallacy of the Afghan nationalist historians is that during the reign of Naseer Khan who they consider as a subordinate of Ahmed Shah, the territory of Balochistan included Kharan, Derajat, part of modern day Baloch areas of Afghanistan, present Iranian Balochistan Jaccobbad, Makran, Chagai, Quetta and even Karachi (Baloch 1987, p.106: Janmahmad, 1989, p.162). But ironically, the map of Greater Afghanistan or Loy Afghanistan has only present day Pakistani Balochistan

up to Gwadar in the Arabian Sea. The map does not include Baloch areas of Dera Ghazi Khan, Rajanpur, Jocababad, Karachi and Iranian Balochistan. If the historical justification of the Afghan historian claim on Balochistan is that Naseer Khan was a subordinate of Ahmed Shah and during his tenure Balochistan was a vassal state of Afghanistan then they should also lay a claim on Iranian Balochistan, Baloch areas of modern Sindh and Punjab and even Karachi. Something more surprising is that Gwadar which ceased to be a part of Khanate of Balochistan since 1783 as discussed earlier in this paper that it was gifted to Oman by Naseer Khan, but Gwadar is included in the map of Greater Afghanistan and Karachi which remained a part of Khanate of Balochistan is not included in the map of Greater Afghanistan. It suggests that historical claim of Afghanistan is incorrect and it is the outcome of economic necessity of a landlocked state to have access to the sea.

Conclusion

It is concluded that Khanate of Balochistan only remained a vassal of Afghanistan for a short period of 11 years and Khanate of Balochistan won its freedom by concluding the, “Treaty of non-interference” with the mighty Afghan ruler Ahmed Shah Abdali in 1758. However, Kalat remained a military ally of Qandahar as long as Ahmed Shah was on the throne of Qandahar. The historical justification of Balochistan being a part of Afghanistan is the 11 years of the latter on the former is a weak justification. Afghanistan before 1747 was itself apart of various empires and history bear testimony to the fact that map are always drawn and redrawn. So the claim of Afghan nationalists on Balochistan is nothing but a dream of a landlocked state to extend its reach to the sea.

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