

**EMERGENCE OF BALOCH NATIONALISTS ORGANIZATIONS DURING  
70'S: CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES**

**Dr. Najeeb ur Rehman**

Assistant Professor, Department of History and Pakistan Studies, Government College  
University, Faisalabad

**Dr. Muhammad Azhar**

Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and IR, Government College  
University, Faisalabad

**Hamid Iqbal<sup>1</sup> (Corresponding Author)**

PhD Scholar, Department of History and Pakistan Studies, Government College  
University, Faisalabad

**Abstract**

*Balochistan witnessed uneven political upheavals during 70's. Emerging as federating unit on one hand and sacking of elected government on other hand affected the socio-political landscape of Balochistan in both ways. However, centrifugal forces succeeded to catch the space and catalyzed the sense of exclusion among youth. The state on the other hand did meaningful jobs to get these forces to mainstream adopting different channels. But still Baloch Nationalist organizations are struggling availing all means to get their claimed rights. This paper tries to examine the rise of militant organizations in Balochistan during insurgency between 1973- 1977. It also explores the aims and objectives for their formation and how these organizations operate. The study has explored the causes and genesis of Baloch Nationalist Organizations and how they become militants. Furthermore, an attempt has made to find whether or not these organizations become the mouth piece of foreign agencies*

**Keywords:** Baloch National Organizations, militancy, causes, consequences, state

**1. Introduction:**

The dismissal of provincial government in Balochistan on February 10, 1973 by Z .A Bhutto provoked affected political groups to take up arms against federal government (Yousaf, 1999). As a result Pakistan military started counter insurgency operation. In reaction different tribal guerrilla organizations came into existence with little program of action. These resistance organizations had lack of coordination among themselves about their definite targets and goals. There were at least seven separate guerrilla groups operated independently in hills under seven separate set of leaders. Following were the most important, such as Baluchistan Student Organization (BSO), Baluchistan People's Liberation Front, (BPLF) Baluchistan Liberation Front (BLF), Baluchistan Liberation Organization

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(BLO), Baluchistan People's Democratic Organization (BPDO), Baluchistan Revolutionary Democratic Front (BRDF) and Baluchistan liberation movement (BLM). Most of the Baloch nationalist leaders supported this struggle to a greater or lesser extent. The important fact was that except the Pararies all those groups hastily assembled at the outbreak of the conflict and all of them gradually disbanded after the ceasefire in 1977. The main political force National Awami Party (NAP) went into the background but these radical organizations like BSO and BPLF started to play a dominant role in resistance against central government.

## 2. Literature Review

**Selig S. Harrison** in his book *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baloch Nationalism and Soviet Temptation* New York: Carriage Endowment for International Peace, 1981 describes the depth in detail the Baloch Nationalist Movement in Pakistan and Iran. The author presents the attitude of Baloch leaders and political figures of Pakistan and Iran about regionalism in Balochistan. He claimed that Moscow had framed a policy to establish its hold on Balochistan during 70's. This is a good book to understand the problem of nationalism in Balochistan but it provides only American's view point on issue of nationalism in Balochistan. This is a big drawback in this book. It also instigates all Baloch throughout the world to form a greater Balochistan.

**Taj Muhammad Breseeg** in his book *Baloch Nationalism its origin and development*. Karachi: Royal book Company, 2004 provide useful information about Baloch nationalism in Pakistan and Iran. According to him Baloch nationalist's aspirations are directly challenge to the sovereignty of these countries. The author points out that Baloch are an independent nation and to get independence is their basic international right. He gives limited details about Gorilla organization working in Balochistan. He does not describe the role of super powers and their interest in Baloch nationalism. This book presents only one side of the picture and does not present the stance of federal government of Pakistan.

**Tahir Amin's book** *Ethno National Movements of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998) provides details about the ethno-national movements during 70's and early 80's. The book provides details about the ethnic movements in Balochistan, Sindh and Pashtoon movement in KPK. The author explains the causes of the Baloch resistance movement. The book gives details about foreign interests behind these movements.

## 3. Research Questions:

- What are the causes and genesis of Baloch Nationalist Organizations and how they become militants?
- Whether or not these organizations become the mouth piece of foreign agencies?

## 4. Research Methodology

The research is descriptive and qualitative in nature. The data regarding the topic has been collected through secondary resources including books, articles, newspapers and magazines. Collected data has been critically framed and analyzed to find the designated questions.

### 5. Baloch Student organization:-

The important nationalist force in the Baloch movement in Pakistani Balochistan (1970-77) was the “Baloch student organization” (Breseege, 2004). The Warna Waninda Gal was the predecessor of BSO (Muhammad, 1988). The Warna Waninda Gal was first established in 1961 at Quetta (Muhammad, 1988). Its main objective was to promote Balochi language and literature and to hold debates on the prevailing political condition of the country. This organization aligned with ‘National Awami Party’. In 60’s Karachi became the center for Baloch student’s activities because many students came to Karachi from every knock and corner of Baluchistan. In 1961 a meeting was held in Karachi. In this meeting many educated youths participated like Kadir Bux Baloch, Tahir Muhammad Khan, Abdul Gufar Nadeem, Dr. Namitullah Ghickhi, Ali Bux Talpur, Kadir Bux Nazmani, Rahim Jani, Fathi Muhammad Buzdar, Yousaf Naskindi, Yar Muhammad and Chengiz Aliat (Baluch, 2004). They discussed the problems of Balochi students and agreed upon the formation of an organization under the name of ‘Baloch Student Educational Organization. Its constitution was framed by Tahir Mohammad Khan. This organization had struggled hard to solve the problems of Balochi students in Karachi. The first president of this organization was Changiz Aliati and its secretary general was Rahim Jani (Noraiee, 2018). Many students were of the view that this organization should also be used for the political awakening of the Baloch youth. In this regard a meeting took place in 1965 at Karachi in which the word educational discarded from the name of this organization. Now its name was Baloch student organization (Baluch, 2004). In November 1967 a three days convention took place in which both these two organizations namely Warna Waninda Gal and Baloch student organization participated. After discussion Warna Waninda Gal was merged into Baluch student organization. Consequently a common organization was formed in the name of ‘Baloch student organization’ (BSO) on 26 November 1967 with the goal of promoting education in Baloch society and welfare of Baloch students (Titus, 1996). Later the BSO expanded its objectives and supported the Baloch right of self determination. BSO also issued a “Dastural Amal” (Manifesto). The important points of the manifesto were following.

1. Free and secular education
2. Promotion of Balochi language, literature and civilization
3. Break up of one unit and complete provincial autonomy for Balochistan.
4. In 1979 amendment was introduced in the manifesto; demanding the right of self determination for the Baloch people.

#### 5.1. Reorganization of Balochi as the official language.

Opposition to imperialism, new colonialism and national oppression in Asia Africa and the Latin American countries (Muhammad, 1988). The Oath of the membership of the BSO is as follows.

“I do swear solemnly in the name of Balochistan, the Baloch masses and in the name of all oppressed and working class people of the world; that I will abide myself to follow the manifesto of the BSO and its aim and objectives in letter and sprits; and that I will never hesitate to offer any sacrifices for the cause of the organization; and that I will not act in such a manner which may contravene the manifesto and aims and objectives of the organization” (Muhammad, 1988).

A Trana (National anthem) "Ma Chukkien Balochani" included in the manifesto. It is played in martial music. It was composed by Master Abdul Majeed Gwadri in early sixties. It is recited in all gatherings of the organization. An English rendering of its few lines is given below.

"We are sons of the Baloch,  
Free and sovereign,  
Master of our own destiny;  
The earth panics from our wrath castles shake in fear, we are tigers,  
fearless defenders (of those are seek our help).  
We are an encouragement to our fathers the pride and honour of our  
mother and support to our brothers;  
Our blood one day will be required by our nation.  
We will prove true to lullabies given by mothers;  
We have such the milk of honour, in the Shadow of swords.  
Red blood in our eyes shows descent from martyrs;  
We are the defenders of the helpless and the poor.  
We have destroyed the castle of terror  
The days of oppression have gone for ever".

In 1969 within few years of its creation BSO was transformed and polarized into two camps of moderates and revolutionaries known as BSO and BSO Awami or anti sardar respectively (Breseege, 2004). The early student leaders in BSO were NAP sympathizers (Harrison, 1981) because anti Sardars policy of NAP was appealing to youth (Muhammad, 1988). When Ayub Khan as a gesture of reconciliation towards Balochistan announced the restoration of Sardars, BSO opposed this move. NAP also condemned the government decision. The party came under severe criticism when these Sardars joined this party as members (Muhammad, 1988). The BSO rejected this allegation and claimed that all important Sardars opposed to the NAP due to its progressive stance (Baloch, 1998). It is interesting to note that BSO (Awami) later showed its inclination toward Pakistan People's Party of Zulfikar Ali Bhuto (Muhammad, 1988). Many of the group activists later on joined PPP When it came to power in 1971.

## 5.2. Organization

BSO was organized in forty six chapters, including thirteen in Sind. It has a national council of 200 members that meets twice a year and publishes a monthly news letter, Girukh (Lightning), A doctrinal monthly, Sanghat (Truth) and monthly literary journal Bam' (morning star) (Harrison, 1981). It is estimated that it has a membership of 4300 students (Baluch, 2004). BSO (Awami) has a smaller membership, slightly less than 2000. It has loosely knit organizational network that embraces all major campuses of colleges and universities in Balochistan. It has a national council of 110 members. It publishes a monthly news letter pajjar (Awakening) and monthly literary journal labzank (treasure of language) (Harrison, 1981). According to Harrison, "Between the 1967 and 1981, 25000 students had joined the two BSOs at one time or another" (Harrison, 1981). In this respect the BSO served as one of the most important recruiting grounds for nationalist organizations as well (Breseege, 2004).

### **5.3. Role of BSO in Politics**

Baloch Student's Organization (BSO) had played an appreciable role in Baloch politics. As early as in 1968 it was in the main stream of national politics. It has played a significant role in the dissolution of one unit. According to Jan Muhammad "the organization helped the NAP in the electoral process and in the armed struggle to shape events in this part of the country. In fact it played the role of watchdog over the Baloch politicians" (Muhammad, 1988). In 1970 Sardar Ataullah Mengal also praised the BSO for its historic role in achieving provincial status for Balochistan (DAWN, 1970). In 1970 election one of the leader of BSO, Abdul Hayee Baloch contested the election on NAP Ticket for National Assembly. He defeated the prince Yaya son of Ahmad Yar khan ex-ruler of Kalat. This was the recognition of BSO's sacrifices and its appreciable role in the Baloch political movement (Breseege, 2004).

Military action during Bhutto regime made the political situation worse in Balochistan. BSO actively participated in the armed struggle during this period. Its leaders Khair Jan, Hakim Lehri, Aslam Kurd, Khalid Jamaladini and many other participated in the movement. Khairjan led a group of really forty men and operated against the army (Muhammad, 1988). Hundreds of its members were put behind the bars and tortured by government authorities. Seligh Harrison also remarks that during the 1973-77 insurgencies, BSO president and other veterans organized a guerilla group (Harrison, 1981). In 12<sup>th</sup> August 1974 a BSO student named Abdul Majid died in a grenade explosion during a failed attempt to assassinate Bhutto in Quetta (Mazari, 2006).

It was later learnt that the Afghan had trained a team of Baloch extremists to kill Bhutto during his visit to Quetta. Majid was a member of that team (Mazari, 2006). It is already mentioned that BSO had two factions BSO and BSO Awami. The former faction was more moderate or unclear about the issue of secession and the latter faction was more radical and believed in the people's welfare. According to Tahir Amin BSO was not clear in its aim whether it wanted an independent Balochistan based national communism or largely autonomous Balochistan within the loosely federal socialist Pakistan (Amin, 1993).

### **6. Baloch people's Liberation Front: (BPLF)**

BPLF was formed in 1973. It was striving for an independent Balochistan under a socialist system (Zingal & Zingal, 1985). It was a successor organization of Parari Guerrilla Movement (founded by Sher Mohammad Marri in 1963) (Harrison, 1981). The BPLF adopted its name in 1973 (Ali, 1993). It commanded mainly the western front of the Marri territory (Talbot, 2010). BPLF decision making organ 'people's revolutionary command' was headed by Mir Hazar Ramkhani a disciple of Sher Mohammad Marri. S. (Talbot, 2010) Selligh Harrison rightly says "BPLF was a direct outgrowth of the parari guerrilla movement (Harrison, 1981). Government arrested Sher Mohammad Marri in 1973 and he spent the rest of the war years in Jail (Ali, 1993).

BPLF tried to create discipline in Guerrilla movement. It formed self sufficient fighting units of not more than fifty men each with mobile head quarter and a command structure of its own (Muhammad, 1988). BPLF urban wing also involved in bomb blast in Quetta and other cities. It also brought out many pamphlets and leaflets on the conflict (Muhammad, 1988). Jah Mohammad's point of view about the techniques of BPLF was that front was progressively adopting the techniques of modern guerrilla warfare and asked its members not

to get involved in pitched battle with the army but depend upon hit and run tactics (Muhammad, 1988). It was estimated that BPLF had 60,000 supporters. It had established its base camps at Khandar, Baghdad and in many parts of Balochistan (Talbot, 2010). Sardar Khair Buksh Marri unspoken support also enhanced the power of BPLF. So it was obvious that BPLF was dominated by Marxist-Leninist views and its tilt was towards Soviet ideologist (Muhammad, 1988).

Many non Baloch leftist elements joined the BPLF to pave the way for a communist revolution in Pakistan (Muhammad, 1988). A group of seventeen young non Balochi people joined the BPLF. They were educated from British universities. This group termed as a London group (Saleem, 1993). All of them were sons of prosperous business men and civil servants, most of them belong to Punjab (Saleem, 1993). The ring leader Muhammad Bhaba was a son of big importer and exporter of Karachi, two of the members of the group, Asad and Rashid Rehman were sons of late Justice S.A. Rehman. Another Najim Sethi was a son of multimillion Sahgal families (Harrison, 1981). After some time two sons of Mir Ali Ahmad Talpur (prominent politician of Sindh), joined the BPLF. Most of them adopted the Balochi names and won the trust of their Baloch comrades Muhammad Bhaba took the name of Murad Khan. Asad Khan called himself Chakkar Khan (Saleem, 1993). According to Selig Harrison Murad Khan was in contact with Georg Habash's popular front for liberation of Palestine and arranged the training for the forty odd Baloch guerrillas in Beirut in 1973 (Harrison, 1981). The non Balochi educated youth proved itself valuable to Mir Hazar in organizational and propaganda activities. It is difficult to estimate that how much numbers of non Marri and Marri were in BPLF. According to Seleig Harrison's estimate that BPLF organized combat units number at most 7500 men. More than 2700 were based in Afgan camps, while 1700 were scattered in different parts of Pakistani Balochistan and other 3000 mostly Marris were active reserves who worked in Karachi and other parts of Sindh. He also reported that some 1700 were encamped near Kalat-i-Gilzai camp deep in the Afghan hills (Harrison, 1981). Afghanistan and Iraq was supporting the activities of BPLF (Saleem, 1993). Mir Hazar Khan had received a subvention of \$32 monthly per person, totaling some \$ 875000 per year from Afghan government but under the pressure of Iran Daud refused to grant the guerrillas political asylum and gave them a status as refugees (Harrison, 1981).

### **6.1. Contradiction in Ideas:-**

The front had contradictory ideas about the independence of Balochistan and about the social set up of Balochistan. Differences of opinion and contradiction of view could be seen through pamphlets issued by the front. Some bulletins declared Balochistan the first zone of action against the military civilian autocracy in the country, asserting that the struggle would be joined ultimately by the people of the other provinces (Muhammad, 1988). It is very interesting to note that the news bulletins of the front were aimed especially towards the people of Punjab and Sind, never mentioned an independent Balochistan. While the pamphlets directed towards the Baloch youth usually demanded a Greater Balochistan. Many of the leaders of the movement believed that complete provincial autonomy would pave the way for the ultimate freedom of the Baloch (Muhammad, 1988). "Jabal" the mouth piece of BPLF emphasized in its December 1976 issue described, "Balochistan as a reliable base area for the struggle of other oppressed nationalities, classes and democratic forces in Pakistan"

(Harrison, 1981). The February 1977 issue maintains that “in the concrete circumstance of our country there is as yet no secessionist movement in Balochistan, to the extent that we are able to explain the nature of the struggle and its perspective to the people of Pakistan as a whole and win their moral, political and practical support to that extent we shall have laid the biases for the voluntary union of the nationalities in Pakistan” (Harrison, 1981). The manifesto of the front which was published in 1976 indicated that, “a struggle for greater Balochistan is not feasible in the face of the realities of the situation in that region” (Harrison, 1981). BPLF wanted a revolution in two ways, that revolution against the socio-economic condition prevailing in Pakistan and revolution in the social structure in Baloch society. According to the Jan Mohammad the contradiction in ideas was due to a simple fact that leadership of the front was not well aware of the socio cultural conditions of the region (Muhammad, 1988). According to Tahir Amin, “Different component within the front emphasized different aspects of the program. The hard core Marri, Mengal tribes emphasized the reorganization of national identity and right of nationality to secede within the multi nationalist frame work. A small middle class, educated hard-line Marxist emphasized the right to secession and argued for the liberation of other nations within Pakistan” (Amin, 1993). The view point of Feroz Ahmad is that BPLF never openly proclaimed independence to be its aim. But the confrontation in Balochistan had led to the total alienation of the nationalist element particularly the youth from Pakistan (Ahmad F. , 1998). In spite of all this soviet influence was also behind BPLF because Soviet Union encouraged the secessionist movements of Sindhu Desh, Pakhtoonistan, Azad (Independent) or Greater Baluchistan (Ahmad, 1992).

#### **7. Popular Front for Armed Resistance:-**

Popular Front for Armed Resistance (PFAR) against national oppression and exploitation emerged during the conflict, 1973-77. The origin of the front is not still known, nor can its relation with BPLF be determined (Kumar, 1978). This group also claimed to be organizing the struggle of men in the mountains. It declared its separate identity in its bulletins issued in May 1974. It proclaimed that we were fighting for our national rights (Muhammad, 1988). In July 1974 bulletin, PFAR claimed 100 successful raids against government forces in the two months ending 30 June 1974 (Baloch D. I., 2011). The PFAR did not claim any separate status for province. Its objectives were to get constitutional insurance against interference in the affairs of Balochistan by the central government. June 1974 Bulletin explained the objectives of the front that

- (1) They went to mountains against military action launched by Z.A.Bhutto regime.
- (2) They were fighting for democratic and national rights.
- (3) They claimed that idea of separation had never occurred to us but the Bhutto regime provoked us to take that road (Muhammad, 1988).

**8. Balochistan Revolutionary Democratic Front:-**

Another organization which came on the scene during military action was Balochistan Revolutionary Democratic Front (BRDF). Its mouth piece was “*Jiddojahad*”. Front issued its demands in November 1975.

1. End of military operation
2. Compensation for the people who had suffered during the army’s action.
3. Guarantee of complete autonomy for national entities in a federal set up. One thing was important that it did not mention a sovereign Balochistan outside Pakistan (Muhammad, 1988).

**9. Balochistan Exile Liberation Front:-**

Another organization which came to be known in Balochistan was Balochistan Exile Liberation Front. According to some sources it was formed on 20<sup>th</sup> June 1978 (Muhammad, 1988). Its slogan was Unity, Sacrifice and Revolution. The front issued objectives in one of its bulletin

1. Liberate the country from usurpers and oppressive agents of imperialism
2. Work selflessly for the liberation of Balochistan.
3. Unity in Baloch for great cause of liberating home land. The front boasted that soviet presence in Afghanistan changed the situation in favour of progressive forces (Muhammad, 1988).

**10. Baluchistan Liberation organization:-**

This organization led by Sardar Altaullah khan Mengal based in London (Inyat Ullah Baluch, *Pakistan in 80s*) Its month piece was “*Nida e Balochistan*” now replaced by “*Azad Balochistan*” published from London. Attaullah Mengal told a press conference in London in 1985, “he has not given up his demand for an independent Balochistan, he would reconsider his demand if the political rights of the Baloch are not guaranteed in the confederation demand by Sindh, Baloch and Pakhtoon Front (Muhammad, 1988). BLO aimed to create an independent sovereign Balochistan unify the Balochistan home land which now lies within Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. BLO paper “*Azad Balochistan*” was constantly advocating a free and sovereign state of Balochistan. The Paper claimed that this demand was not in reaction against the policies of Pakistani rulers but it was based on the international recognized principle of the right of national self determination for people. It further stated that this demand could not be modified or withdrawn in any circumstance. Attalla’s intention about Balochistan can be drawn from his statement given to the press in 1973. He said that both the federal and provincial governments have through consistent pressure tactics, intimidatory methods and repressive measures, pushed the people of Balochistan to the wall and forced them to struggle for their very existence (News, 1973). BLO manifesto declared equal socio economic opportunity for every ethnic group in the country and non-alignment policy in it relation with other countries (Muhammad, 1988).

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**Table No. 1: CHARACTERISTIC OF LIBERATION ORGANIZATIONS IN BALUCHISTAN**

ORGANIZATIONS	CLASS BASE	POLICY	SPECIAL CHARACTER
Baluchistan Peoples Liberation Front	Tribesman, lower middle class, educated people peasants	Autonomy/independence	Marxist Leninist
Baluchistan Student Organization (BSO) based in Pakistan	Lower middle class, educated people	Social change Anti Sardar, Independence	Marxist Leninist and Nationalist
Baluchistan Liberation Organization Lead by Sardar Aitau Ullah Mengal based in London	Middle class nomads and peasant of Southern Baluchistan	Independence	Nationalist anti Imperialist
Popular Front Formed Resistance (PFAR) based in Pakistan lead by unknown person	Middle class educated tribesmen	Autonomy	Communist
Baluchistan Revolutionary Democratic Front based in Pakistan	Mixed	Autonomy	Communist
Baluchistan Exile Liberation front based in London	Educated middle class	Independence	Socialist anti Imperialist

**Source:-** Anyat Ullah Baloch with some change's about facts by the authors.

The table clearly indicates that all organizations were under the influence of Marxist ideas. So the Baloch insurgency during 70's was actually the show of communist. The fighting was not for the independence of Baluchistan but for the tribal interests, and for the Communist revolutions.

### CONCLUSION

During armed confrontation in Baluchistan (1970-77) many militant organizations and groups emerged against oppression of government some organizations were prominent such as BSO and Paresis renamed BPLF etc. Some were working underground and came to be known through their pamphlets and bulletins. Many organizations had their base camps from

out side Pakistan e.g. BPLF had its camps in Afghanistan and Iraq. This shows that Afghanistan directly and Soviet Union indirectly was on the back of these militant organizations. Arms and ammunitions were supplied by Afghanistan. The leaders of the organizations were influenced by Leftist and Communist ideas. Many Communist elements gathered around these organizations for their political purposes. They wanted to create a socialist revolution in Pakistan and used Balochistan as base for this end. Socialist program was on the agenda of many organizations. This fact can be further supported by the statement given by Mir Ghous Baksh Bizenjo in 1972, students have been welcoming me with the cries of Baluchistan Sarkhhi (Baluchistan is red) but I would be happy if the centre simply let us modernize Baluchistan. "There is a plenty of time to make it red." In spite of the Communist objectives in their agenda, these organizations were confused about their aims and objectives about the independence of Balochistan. Did they wanted an independent Baluchistan outside the federation of Pakistan or only wanted restoration of democratic rights in Baluchistan? BPLF News bulletin, were full of these contradictions. Some shows that they were working for the independence of Baluchistan some pointed out that their aims were to liberate all the oppressed nationalities of Pakistan. According to Guerrilla Commander Mir Hazar Khan Ramkhani that the major Baloch revolts in the 1960's and early 1970's were initially provoked by the rulers they did not choose the time to fight, the fight was thrust upon them.

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