

A Historical Analysis of Trends in Pakhtun Ethno-Nationalism

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Abstract

Although, historically, the first political manifestations of Pakhtun nationalism may be traced to Bayazid Ansari's (1525-85) Roshani movement (Gregorian, 1969 :43-45; and Mirdaq, 2006: 36-39) and Khushal Khan Khattak's (1513-89) rebellion against the Mughal rule, however, its ethno-nationalist roots are usually mapped out from the pre-partition mobilization of common Pakhtun masses by the Khudai Khidmatgar (servants of the God) movement of Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan. Starting off as a social reform society, the Khudai Khidmatgars metamorphosized into first an anti-colonial nationalist movement, evolving on the eve of partition of India, into one of ethnic nationalism. The post-independence period witnessed calls for attainment of either an independent Pakhtunistan or greater autonomy for the Pakhtun regions within a federal structure of the state. The irredentist trend in Pakhtun ethno-nationalist politics manifested itself in the controversial Pakhtunistan issue that strained relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistani state's growth and rise in ethnic Pakhtun share in the civil-military bureaucracy witnessed greater integration of Pakhtuns within the polity of Pakistan and a dampening of separatist tendencies in them. Renaming of NWFP as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and extension of provincial autonomy under the 18th Amendment further boosted Pakhtun ethnic integration into the state of Pakistan. More recently, however, Pakhtun ethno-nationalist movement is believed to be assuming a distinct fervor. The rise of Taliban phenomenon in the tribal belt and settled districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been labeled as a violent manifestation of Pakhtun ethno-nationalism manifested in an Islamist garb. The paper, besides analyzing the integrationist and the separatist (irredentist) trends in Pakhtun ethno-nationalist politics, also aims at exploring the more recent phenomena of its construction around the conceptual framework of 'ethnicizing Islam' in the Pakhtun context. It argues that the current Islamist manifestation of Pakhtun ethno-politics is a product of Pakistani state's attempts at subduing the irredentist Pakhtun strain (that bothered the state throughout the 1960s and the 1970s in Pakhtunistan issue) through support to the Islamist movement inside Afghanistan, especially in later half of 1970s and in the wake of Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. This paper analyzes the Pakhtun ethno-nationalist struggle, especially in the earlier decades as a

form of class struggle to attain political power in the state. As such, it primarily adopts a Marxist lens to the problem of ethnic nationalism among the Pakhtuns for the beginning phase of it. Most of the analyses are historical in a sense that the paper traces the history of Pakhtun ethno nationalism in Pakistan. Moreover, the paper does not claim to be a consummate effort, rather it proposes that there are alternative explanations as plausible as this one to understand the issue.

Key Words: ethno-nationalism, Pakhtun ethnic group, ethnicity, class struggle, ethnicizing Islam, irredentist, integrationist

Introduction

To the Marxists, the state arose as a result of class struggle between the pre-state kinship based social order characterized by low development of wealth and labour, with the new classes that resulted from a progression of growth in productivity of labour, private property and exchange. In this class struggle, which is a product of differences of wealth and control over the utilization of labour powers of others, old kinship based society withers away and gives way to the emergence of a new one based on control over the state. This materialistic explanation for state emergence through a class struggle is forwarded by the Marxists as the basis for the origin of the state throughout written history (Engels, 2004). The state is perceived as a tool of exploitation used for perpetuation of dominant ruling class's power. And therefore, the revolution by proletariat is supposed to do away with the state and create a basis for a classless, stateless society.

The Marxist and neo-Marxists consider all forms of national struggles as manifestations of class struggles. The emphasis on this position negates the concept of national struggle as emanating from a primordial entity of a 'nation,' or as a nationalism struggle rooted in human psyche. This strand also rejects modernization's theory's analysis of nationalism as an autonomous diffusionist modern and civilizing idea emanating as a corollary impact of Western colonialism (Blaut, 1987: 60-72). The Marxist ideology regards all national struggles as class struggles. Such struggles in colonial set-up assume the character of indigenous population struggling against foreign rule. In other cases, where there is no foreign rule, such struggle may assume the form of a culturally and territorially distinct minority group within a state struggling against suppression of its culture or resisting exploitation of its working population. In both cases, the state is controlled by another (or foreign) ruling group or class agents, who are engaged in a sort of class struggle in the garb of linguistic, racial, economic and social conflicts. Such class struggle may result in creation of separate states, or independence from foreign rule, or greater autonomy to the minority community within the existing state (Blaut, 1987: 8-17 & 57-69).

The Pakhtun ethno-nationalist struggle in its irredentist form may also be viewed as a form of class struggle against the dominant class or classes for attainment of control over state power. However, the class character of such

irredentist struggle was middle class bourgeoisie and the movement itself may be termed a reactionary struggle to protest the showering of privileges to the top-class Pakhtun bourgeoisie, first by the British masters and later after the creation of Pakistan by the Punjabi and Muhajir dominated state of Pakistan. The irredentist struggle by the Pakhtun ethno-nationalist class for an independent state raised its head twice in the history of Pakistan's existence, but for the majority period, such struggle has assumed the form of demands for greater provincial autonomy within the Federation. However, the irredentist movement as well as demands for greater autonomy has been more of struggle perpetuated by the elite classes of the Pakhtuns. The enthusiasm has not really been shared by either the Pakhtun proletariat or the peasant classes, whose class and economic interests have become too integrated with the rest of Pakistan. This reflects that ethno-national struggle may be termed as class struggle, but of very specific classes and the failure of such struggles may also be blamed on class differences within a single ethnicity and the perception of these classes on the future economic gains they may or may not accrue from an independent status.

What is Ethno-nationalism?

Ethno-nationalism combines two words, 'ethno' and 'nationalism'. Just as with other social terminologies, ethno, ethnicity, ethnic, and ethnic group as well as nationalism and nation are hard and tricky to define, though they are often used interchangeably. The word 'ethnic' is derived from the Latin word 'ethnos,' meaning nation, which is itself defined as a group of people belonging to a common blood or descent. An ethnic group is a human group that has a subjective belief in their common descent on the basis of either physical resemblance or common cultural practices or a shared history (Cornell and Hartmann, 1998: 15-21). Though subjective belief is crucial for ethnic identification, objective criteria of language, religion or common culture is also used to distinguish an ethnic group category (Inayatullah, 2002: 64). Hutchinson and Smith define an ethnic group or 'ethnie' as 'a named human population with myths of common ancestry, shared historical memories, one or more elements of common culture, a link with a homeland and a sense of solidarity among at least some of its members' (Hutchinson and Smith, 1996: 6). This definition stresses more the subjective category of an imagined ancestry or kinship. Some scholars prefer to place even race as a distinguishing objective variable of ethnicity or ethnic group. This is particularly true in cases such as the United States and South Africa, where the terms ethnicity and race are commonly interchanged (Ahmed, 2002: 32). Ethnic groups are often identified with distinct religions (though not always), for example, in during the Balkan crisis of 1990s, religious identifications were commonly used to describe the various ethnicities-Bosnians as primarily from Muslim faith, Serbs (including Bosnian ones) as Orthodox Catholics and Croats as Roman Catholics (Ahmed, 2002:32). Using religion to define ethnicities confused the conflict as a struggle between different faiths rather than ethnicities.

A nation is a group of distinct race or people, 'characterized by common descent, language, or history', who occupy a definite territory and are usually organized in a separate state (*The Oxford Universal Dictionary Illustrated, Volume Two, 1968: 1311*). And nationalism is the group feeling or feeling of belongingness which that particular people have towards each other. Connor, prefers to have no distinction between the terms nationalism and ethno-nationalism and defines both as signifying 'identification with and loyalty to one's nation' (Connor, 1993: xi). However others, such as Gellner, (quoted in Ahmed, 1996:11) define nationalism to be a political principle, which pre-supposes the congruence of political and national unit. If nationalism is taken in the sense of belongingness to a nation in a politically defined boundary, i.e., the state, ethno-nationalism may be interpreted to mean a desire on the part of a nation to have their own say over their socio-political and economic affairs and to pursue a statehood of their own. Such a desire is relevant only when an ethnicity becomes politicized; in other words, it 'starts making demands on the political system and begin participating in the political process as a group' (Inayatullah, 2002: 64). Politicization of ethnicity is believed to be responsible for giving rise to ethno-nationalist movement, which is launched by an underprivileged or separate (different than the ruling one) ethnic group, to either change the power distribution within the state or get an independent political entity or state (Inayatullah, 2002: 65).

The Irredentist vs. Integrationist Trend in Pakhtun Ethno-Nationalism

The Irredentist trends in Pakhtun ethno-nationalism seemed to gain popularity at least twice in the history of Pakistan. The first such separatist notion was witnessed in the immediate period preceding and following the creation of Pakistan in 1947. And the second wave of separatism gained traction in 1973 in the wake of dismissal of NAP government in Baluchistan by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's regime and the subsequent resignation of NAP government in the Frontier province. On both these occasions, domestic or internal factors were supplemented by regional developments, especially in Pakistan's Northern neighbor-Afghanistan. And In both cases, the demand for separation was followed by greater strides towards integration. What explains the rise of first separatist and later integrationist tendencies in Pakhtun ethno-nationalist movement? And what prevented the separatist trend to prevail in Pakhtun politics? This section will try to evaluate the two trends in the light of prominent discourse on Pakhtun ethno-nationalism, especially in the light of Pakhtun ethno-nationalism being a class struggle movement in its irredentist form and its failure emanating from consciousness among the proletariat, peasant and middle classes among the Pakhtuns of their economic integration and growth prospects in a united Pakistan.

Rise of Pakhtun Nationalism: From Anti-Colonialism to Pro-Pakhtunistan

Pakhtun ethno-nationalist struggle can be traced to the 1929 formation of the *Khudai Khidmatgar* Movement by a social reformer and landlord of Charsadda - Abdul Ghaffar Khan. The movement, which initially began as a social reformist movement soon turned into a struggle for social justice and unity among the Pakhtuns against British imperialism, gaining traction in the process among the Pakhtun peasants and other classes. Ghaffar Khan inspired by Gandhi's non-violent struggle and Congress Party's anti-imperialist stand sided his *Tehreek* (movement) with the largest party in India and worked tirelessly among the Pakhtuns to secure support for their cause of anti-colonialism. Some, such as Adeel Khan (2005) argue that the reason why Ghaffar Khan found it more convenient to side with the Congress was that besides ideological attachment to the call of anti-colonialism, Ghaffar Khan was practical enough to understand that Congress could not have succeeded in getting popularity in a Muslim majority province of NWFP. It was his relentless support and work that he was successful in getting Pakhtun votes for the Congress Party in the 1937 elections by getting them 17 out of 50 seats (Khan, 2005: 94).

Rise of ethno-nationalist politics at this stage and its popularity among the Pakhtun classes can be explained through the prism of economic changes brought in by the British ruler's of India, the resultant formation of different classes among the Pakhtuns and the grievances generated therein. The British land revenue system imposed through local khans and *pirs* (holy men) helped gave rise to land ownership and landlessness of local peasants. Market economy augmented a new class of Pakhtun merchants whose business interests flourished with the construction of roads and railways. State employment was provided through recruitment in the British military and bureaucracy. The state for maintaining the local power relationship started sponsoring the loyal and most powerful among Khans and *pirs*. Resultantly, a feeling of being left out made the small khans feel resentment against the British; their appeal to popular sentiments fell on willing ears among the peasants, the traders unhappy with the landlords influence, with educated young searching for jobs and state employees seeking promotion. The conflict of interest among local elites perpetuated by introduction of modern economy, education and state employment (process of social mobility) began to be translated by small khans into nationalist and anti-colonial sentiment (Khan, 2005: 88-91).

Around the same time, political developments in the Afghan state also influenced the rise of nationalistic sentiments among the Pakhtuns. There, Pakhtun nationalism also sprang from state's attempts at modernizing and building an Afghan nation, which beginning in Abdur Rehman's period reached a peak under Amanullah. Amanullah rode on a wave of popularity based on Afghan nationalistic uprising against the British control over Afghanistan's foreign policy, culminating in independence from British control in 1921 (Adamec, 1969: 109-66;

Saikal, 2006: 73-74; and Gregorian, 1969:239-54). Such nationalistic fervor was also gripping India in the wake of end of the First World War, led by India's National Congress Party. In the Frontier province of India, Ghaffar Khan's support to anti-colonial movement of the Congress antagonized the big landlords, who as beneficiaries of British patronage were weary of Ghaffar Khan's politics of mobilizing the peasants, joined the Muslim League, which was promoted by the British to stand in contrast to Congress' anti-colonial stand. The British and Muslim League leaders realized that the only manner in which popular support can be diverted from the Congress and its supporters Khudai Khitmatgars was to dub the Congress as a Hindu body; the service of Mullah's and pirs were also utilized for the propaganda. Despite the campaign "for the cause of Islam", Congress emerged as the majority party bagging 30 out of 50 seats in the 1946 elections (Khan, 2005: 95).

The ideal of an independent Pakhtunistan came to the Khudai Khitmatgar leaders as a perplexed reaction to the acceptance of partition of India by the Congress leadership. Adeel Khan (2005: 90-95) argues that the demand reflected that Pakhtuns wanted independence so that they would not be culturally dominated by the Punjabis, but paradoxically, did not want to become part of Afghanistan as well because it would make them give up the politics of Pakhtun nationalism as Afghanistan was already ruled by Pakhtuns. The *Khudai Khitmatgar* insistence that plebiscite in NWFP should include a question of whether Pakhtuns wanted to join Pakistan or they wanted an independent Pakhtunistan was not agreed to by British authorities. This resulted in their boycott of the 1947 plebiscite and a renewed call for independent Pakhtunistan. The *Khudai Khitmatgar's* stand on referendum stood on the premise of already securing people's support by winning the elections of 1946 legislative assembly from the Frontier province. And therefore, considered referendum a useless exercise in the face of acceptance of partition by both the Muslim League and the Congress Party (Khan, 2011: 253-260; and Lashari, 2012: 276-77). However, the vigorous anti Congress campaign by the Muslim League resulted in 99 % votes (of the around 51 out of the total voting) going in favour of Pakistan. The new political reality made the Khan brothers change their position from independence to greater autonomy for the Pakhtun region. Unfortunately arbitrary interference by the Central government in post independence Pakistan in dismissing Dr. Khan Sahab's ministry not only initiated centralized authoritarian rule in the country minus demands for provincial autonomy, but also hardened the *Khudai Khitmatgar's* stand on Pakhtunistan issue. A move as Adeel Khan (2005) argues more reflecting the sense of insecurity of the new state and an autocratic style of governance rather than any act of treason by the Pakhtun leadership. This is reflected in the fact that Dr. Khan Sahib had given assurances in private to Governor NWFP Cunningham that they would not indulge in any anti-Pakistan activity (Khan, 2005: 90-100). However, such demands for separatism could not enjoy considerable support among the Pakhtuns, not only because of nationalist leadership's ambivalence towards the matter, but

also because such threats were responded to by the state of Pakistan through stern measures. This resulted in persecution of *Khudai Khidmatgar* leadership to dissuade it from such claims for separation that was also receiving external support by India and Afghanistan, which even laid claim to the territory across the Durand Line till Attock after Pakistan's independence (Ghufraan, 2009: 1092-1102).

The period prior to 1970 reflects mixed trends in Pakhtun ethno-nationalist movement from demands for greater provincial autonomy and break up of the One-Unit system to efforts at integration in mainstream national politics. The state played a two-way role in fomenting and controlling ethno-nationalist sentiments among the Pakhtuns. On the one hand, the Frontier region remained disadvantaged in terms of resource allocation for development (both industrial and agricultural) in post independence period. According to 1961 census, Frontier province constituted 17 % of West Pakistan's population share but according to 1967 survey of manufacturing assets included only 7 % of fixed assets and 6 % of manufacturing production. The Green Revolution under Ayub Khan benefitted mostly Punjab landlords-the 1968 Planning Commission Survey's revealed only 5.4 % of West Pakistan tractors and 3.3 % of tubewells were in the Frontier (Ahmed, 1999: 195). On the other hand despite such deficiencies, Pakhtun ethno-leadership was accommodated by the state in the political setup in Pakistan. For example, Dr. Khan Sahib was made the first Chief Minister of the West Pakistan Province under the One Unit Scheme. This reflects a shrewd attempt by the state in subduing the separatist elements among the Pakhtuns by allowing them a significant political space within the centralized political administration. By this time, the economic integration of different classes of Pakhtuns with the national economy was further encouraging the integrationist trend among the Pakhtuns.

Post 1970 Period and the Strong Case for Integration vs. Separation among the Pakhtuns

Nationalistic sentiments intensified among Pakhtuns after state's (Z. A. Bhutto's regime) intrusive intervention in dismissing National Awami Party's government in Baluchistan and resignation by NAP government in protest in the Frontier province in 1973. Such nationalistic sentiments were further reflected in the armed struggle by NAP activists, who crossed over into Afghanistan and raised the banner of independent Pakhtunistan in 1973. This happened at a time, when Pakhtun ethno-nationalism had developed a definite stride towards integration through NAP's participation in parliamentary electoral process of 1970 and its coming into power as a result in Baluchistan and Frontier provinces. This fact of participation in electoral politics and later getting a chance to rule over the provinces where they were able to bag majority votes reflects that while democratic and electoral process provides an opportunity to the nationalists to achieve their goal of self rule peacefully on the power of ballot and thereby strengthen integration tendencies, the state's practice of extending coercive

centralized control (even in the garb of emergency) and dismissal of elected local governments can highlight tendencies of separatism. The state's intrusive involvement in Baluchistan through armed intervention in post 1973 period, on the other hand came across as a proof of centralized government's unwillingness to allow self government to the smaller nationalities (Ahmed, 1999). It is also important to remember that regional developments in Afghanistan once again helped to give support to Pakhtunistan sentiments among the NAP leadership. Sardar Daud, an ardent Pakhtun nationalist and a supporter of Pakhtunistan issue came into power around the same time, i.e in 1973 and stepped up the Afghan rhetoric over Pakhtunistan issue, besides giving shelter and help to NAP nationalists from the Frontier, such as Ajmal Khattak, who openly advocated Pakhtun nationalism based on Pakhtunistan issue and Abdul Ghaffar Khan (Bacha Khan) and Ayub Khan Achakzai (Guistozzi, 2008:16; Ahmed, 1999: 185-86). Hence besides internal factors, some external factors especially support and sponsorship by the neighbouring state of Afghanistan has been instrumental in keeping the Pakhtun nationalistic sentiment engaged in the issues of secession from Pakistan.

Besides the above two factors that rekindled demands for an independent Pakhtunistan in the Frontier, another domestic development that influenced such demands was the secession of East Pakistan in December 1971. The NAP Chapter of East Pakistan had during the crisis of 1971 openly supported the creation of Bangladesh and its leadership also impressed upon and advocated separation as an option for smaller provinces of Pakistan. However, East Pakistan's separation aroused inhibitions of smaller nationalities in Pakistan towards the issues of domination by larger and powerful nationalities of Punjabis and Muhajirs, because they were now denied the advantage of joint resistance helped in by the Bengalis (Ahmed, 1999: 187). This made the ethno-nationalist leadership very skeptical of the central government's policies towards smaller provinces and as soon as military operation and dismissal of Baluchistan's civilian government followed, their fears of domination seemed to come alive. Hence the supposedly dormant issue of an independent Pakhtunistan again raised its head.

After discussing the causes behind the resurgence of the idea of an independent Pakhtunistan, it is essential to discuss the reasons behind failure of the Pakhtunistan movement to gain traction among the wider segments of the Pakhtun population in the frontier. In other words, why the idea of independence or separation did not muster as much support as that of integration in ethno-nationalist politics in the Frontier province? Scholars have emphasized varied arguments in this regard which may be summarized in the following points.

First, from a Marxist perspective, it is important to understand the class feature of those groups who supported secession among the Pakhtuns. The demand for independent Pakhtunistan was supported primarily by medium class landlords or 'petty bourgeoisie,' who unlike the large bourgeoisie were left out of the race to become industrial capitalists and therefore raised the issue of Pakhtunistan as a

form of protest. The large bourgeoisie, though few in number but owning huge lands and monopoly industries (already had a history of patronage by the British rulers) had their economic fortunes too intertwined with the rest of Pakistan to be able to risk supporting secession. They had always remained integrationist in their approach of ethno-nationalism among the Pakhtuns. But unlike East Bengal and Baluchistan, where the urban educated petty bourgeoisie are aggrieved over under-representation in national army and bureaucracy, in the Frontier, these educated bourgeoisie are favourably represented. For example in the military their % age is around 15-20 % despite their share of population being 13.5 % and the region has a number of military academies (Ahmed, 1999: 197-98). Such percentage, according to Ahmed (1999: 46) in more recent times has grown to approximately 25 to 30 %. It is surpassed by only the Punjabi's, who are nearly 70 % of the military despite their share in the population being 48.2 % (excluding the Seraiki speaking 9.8 %). The 1981 census though placed Punjab's population at 56.2 % out of the total, including Seraiki population (Talbot: 2002, 58). Pakhtun share in over-all population is 14 % and in the NWFP, their share ranges between 70-80 % (Khan, 2005: 85). Also as argued by Ahmed (1999: 198), unlike the nationalist struggle in Sind and East Pakistan, where the petty bourgeoisie has used regional culture and language as a legitimizing agent for their nationalist struggle, in the Frontier, the Pakhtun petty bourgeoisie being mostly groomed in Aligarh and Punjab Universities have scarcely been devoted to the Pakhto language. The above reasons may be cited for NAP's failure to get a convincingly majority of Pakhtun votes in the 1970 elections in Frontier. Though one of their arguments for gaining Pakhtun ethno-nationalist appeal has been the uneven distribution of development resources, and per-capita income of the province vis a vis other provinces.

Second, the NAP failed to support its nationalistic rhetoric with its practical politics, reflected in for example, award of tickets and accommodation in governments of some known industrialists; making Urdu the official language; banning worker's strikes and suppressing peasants; and agreeing to a constitution (1973) that granted less provincial autonomy than even the 1935 Act. Ahmed (1999) attributes these contradictions to stem from failures of national petty bourgeoisie in post colonial states (he calls them pseudo-bourgeoisie and comprador bourgeoisie) to free themselves from economic submission to the dominating countries bourgeoisie, manifested in structural ties of trade and aid with global imperialism and misappropriation of development funds in contracts, job distribution, etc. This is recognized by Ahmed (1999: 200-204) as the vicious cycle of imperialism and underdevelopment, which can be broken only through national independence from injustices of such imperialist dominated structural relationship.

Third, the demand for an independent Pakhtunistan failed to muster large scale support from the Pakhtun proletariat (peasants/ workers). This reluctance results from fears of losing support from peasants in other parts of Pakistan and chances of settlement outside the Frontier in case of evictions, as happened under the Green Revolution. There was entrenchment of capitalist farming and eviction

of tenants as a side effect of the 'Green Revolution' under Ayub Regime (Zaidi, 2005: 28-36). The large number of peasant evicted from the Frontier in the 1960's migrated to Karachi and settled there as factory workers, construction labour etc, who remitted their income to their families in the Frontier province (Ahmed, 1999: 204-08). Thus economic integration among different regions of Pakistan helps the workers/ peasants in securing jobs and allows them to advance their struggle and broaden the support base for such struggle, militating in turn against Pakhtun secession movement to gain popularity among them.

Fourth, the political exigencies of post 1977 Pakistan, which made NAP under Wali Khan's leadership to join with anti- Bhutto campaign of Pakistan National Alliance (PNA) and the Zia-ul-Haq's Regime further shifted Pakhtun nationalist politics from nationalism based on separation. Wali Khan's attempts at siding with anti-Bhutto campaign is termed (Ahmed, 1999: 217-18) not a contradiction, but continuation of NAP's paradoxical politics, seen in history in their (*Khudai Khidmatgar's*) support of anti-imperialist movement, but no adoption of anti-feudal slogan. However, it needs to be remembered that such contradictory politics was more a result of the arbitrary treatment of NAP's governments in NWFP and Baluchistan by Z. A. Bhutto's regime, rather than any fears of 'Bhuttophobia.' Further, as history has demonstrated in the case of appointment of Dr. Khan sahib as the Chief Minister of One Unit in 1955, accommodation of the Central government towards smaller minorities has always subdued separatist nationalist fervor among them. This factor coupled with a qualitative change in the socio-economic fortunes of the Pakhtuns in post 1960 period, dampened the support for NAP's slogan of self determination/ independence. A continuous rise in Pakhtun share in military and bureaucracy of Pakistan were other contributory factors which made the Nap leadership realize the futility of following a nationalist/ separatist rhetoric. The economic factors of the land and resources of NWFP being in firm control of its own Pakhtun elite and the public sector in the province dominated by local officers, made the secessionism lose its appeal among the Pakhtuns. This integrationist trend made the result of 1970 elections firmly in favour of centralist parties, such as the PML, the PPP, the JUI and Jamaat-e-Islami, who managed to secure 69.4 % of the total votes polled (Khan, 2005: 102). Similar trend were witnessed in the 1993 and 1997 elections-PPP and PML winning the majority votes and NAP securing successes in Peshawar and Mardan, which are the traditional support base of its leadership. The process of integration among the Pakhtuns has been so fast paced that the newer generations actions/ decisions are more coloured by economic privileges rather than ethnicity (Khan, 2005: 100-105). One aspect of it was evident from Pakistan government's support to Afghan Mujahideen groups (1980s) and the Taliban (1990s), which stemmed not because these were Pakhtun groups, but because these were primarily Sunni Muslim parties (Khan, 2005). However, a study of historical facts reveals that Pakistan initially started supporting the Islamist parties in post 1975 period, which later became the major beneficiaries of Pakistan's Afghan policy because of putting a

damper on the issue of Pakhtunistan, which had long plagued relationship between the two neighbours. The trend of integration is further boosted by the fact that the long standing demand of Awami National Party to change the name of NWFP to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has also been conceded by the central government.

‘Ethnicizing Islam’ in the Pakhtun Context

Besides separatism and integration, a third and more recent trend explored by scholars (Der Veer, 1994; Shaikh, 2009; Vali R Nasr, 2002: 85-114; Verkaaik, 2007: 86-87) in explaining current trends in Pakhtun ethno-nationalism is the close and growing relationship between ethnicity and Islam in Pakistan. This argument currently is reshaped into the concept of ‘ethnicizing Islam’. Verkaaik (2007), for example, explains the spectacular success of Muttehida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) in October 2002 elections especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (at that time NWFP) as a case reflecting the connection between Islam and ethnicity as the two main principles of political identity, mobilization and protest in Pakistan. The MMA secured 29 out of a total of 45 seats in the NWFP provincial assembly, with a leadership and vote bank that was primarily Pakhtun (Verkaaik, 2007: 86-87). Verkaaik (2007) contends that that the various political movements in Pakistan have forged large popular following by using both ethnicity and Islam in order to put forward an ‘ethnicized form of Islam,’ in opposition to a political or military establishment propagating a modernist form of Islam. Various ethnicities have different identifications with Islam. While the Muhajirs are associated with modernist Islam, and the Sindhis with Sufism, the Pakhtuns are considered to be supporters of full implementation of Shariat. The process of identification goes back to 1960s when the Sindhis defined a unique Sindhi Islam on the basis of mystical or Sufi Islam. However, the Afghan Jihad of 1980s and the military establishment’s support to the Mujahideen as well as Zia’s Islamization, saw radical Sunni organizations and religious madrassah’s gaining new grounds in state support. The culmination point was rise of Taliban in Afghanistan and spread of Wahabi and militant form of Islam in the Frontier province (Verkaaik, 2007: 87).

Such identification took new meaning with the post 9/11 developments. In this period, though global and regional trends reinforced Islamic revivalism among the Pakhtuns, however, Verkaaik (2007) also emphasizes that such global Islamist influence has become intertwined with ethnic Pakhtun identity, especially the notion of Jihad has been interpreted as a war against infidels and been revived as a Pakhtun tradition. The recent transformations in the Pakhtun region have affected adversely the authority of Khans and Sayyids and traditional leadership categories of the Pakhtuns, but it has none the less kept intact the cultural institutions of Pakhtunwali and Jihad on which their authority was based. Both tribal honour and Jihad were used as slogans to mobilize fighters by non-traditional elite in the Afghan war of 1980s. Formerly based on the Pakhtunwali or tribal code of honour, Pakhtun ethnic identity has now become a mixture of refashioned traditions, such

as Pakhtunwali and Jihad and has been significantly influenced by global Islamism. These cultural traits have become popularized and are no longer primarily shaped by the landowning aristocracy and religious specialists (Verkaaik, 2007: 88-89 & 94-98).

However, the concept of ethnicizing Islam in the Pakhtun context is open to serious contestation. As argued by Shafqat (2002: 132-33), the religio-political groups are not confined to boundaries of interest or ethnicity but are 'groups or association, solidarity and belief' whose emphasis is doctrinal. Their goal is establishing supremacy of the Quran and Shariah over the society and though part of the society since 1947, have recently started displaying more political activism, which at times borders at militancy. The reasons for religious groups embarking on political and militant activism are not very difficult to analyze. These include official promotion of religion as state's ideology in all the three constitutions of Pakistan and state's proposed islamization of laws and policies, sometimes initiated as a give-in to popular demands by religious groups for seeking their support and avoiding conflict with them. The example was 1974 denouncing of Ahmadi's as non-Muslims under Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's regime. State's sponsorship of religious bodies reached a new height under Zia Regime. His regime saw a nexus developing between state's coercive apparatus and religious groups, together assisted the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to undertake a political and military war effort in Afghanistan against the Soviets. It was during this period that Jihad concept was propagated as a tool for achieving glory of Islam by waging war against the infidels. The institution for ideological training of the Jihadists was the Madrassah system, which proliferated rapidly through the sponsorship from West and Middle East (Shafqat, 2002: 134-40).

On the other end of spectrum, scholars, such as Ahmed (1999: 42-43) stress the 'religious homogenization' of the various ethnic groups in Pakistan as the state attempts to Islamize the society through mass media and the educational system. Although, this brand of Islam is more orthodox and strict on rituals as compared to the mystical Sufi version, once more common among the different ethnicities. He contends that capitalist growth, emphasis on national integration, education and modernization are making Sufism wither away in the face of gradual ascendancy of 'scholastic Islam, which is often associated with the so-called fundamentalist movements'. Therefore, it may be safe to assume that the process of modernization may be delinking ethnicities from the Sufi brand of Islam, but the influence of conflict and war in Afghanistan have nonetheless spread a more radicalized version of Islam among the locals, especially of the Frontier province and tribal regions.

Besides looking at ethno-nationalism through an Islamic lens, there are also scholars who term the recent uprising of militant Taliban in Pakistan as another manifestation of ethno-nationalism among the Pakhtuns. On the basis of the movement's stronghold in the tribal belt of FATA and its rank and file dominated by Pakhtun nationality, some term it as an expression of Pakhtun nationalism

(Totten, 2014). This assertion has been challenged by other scholars (Ghufran, 2009: 1108-112; and Taj, 2012), who maintain that in place of looking at Taliban phenomena as an outgrowth of ethno-nationalism among the Pakhtuns, it should be seen as an impact of Pakistan's interventionist Afghan policy in the Afghan War of 1980s and afterwards in the 1990s. Instead of being an extension of Pakhtun ethno-nationalism, it should be seen as a development that has deeply divided the Pakhtun ethno political identity along factionalist lines, i.e, between the nationalists, the traditionalist and the Islamists. The Taliban being more closely aligned to the Islamist Jamaat-e-Islami on ideological grounds. And the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan may be explained in the historical context of ulema's involvement in politics as a reaction to modernization attempts by various Afghan ruler's and in the more current context of their rise associated with connections to Pakistan's deeni (religious) madrassah's, its religio political parties and the state itself (Dorransoro, 2002: 161-78).

The Taliban rise is more relevantly explained by Roy (2002: 149-59) within the domain of fulfillment of Pakistan's strategic designs in the region, although their legitimacy grounds were more contradictory, i.e, Islamic shariah and Pakhtun nationalism. The rise of Taliban in Pakistan is an after effect of Pakistan's Afghan policy in the late 1970's onwards. Even the Taliban of Afghanistan (though dominated by the Pakhtun ethnicity), did not entertain ethnic overtures and never ascribed to establish an ethnic Pakhtun state (Glatzer, 1998: 171-72). Moreover, some recent ethnographic accounts from the region (Jan, 2010) propose that Pakhtuns do not necessarily identify with one particular sect or with the ideological movement (such as Taliban) associated with such a sect and that there is quite significant polarization among the Pakhtuns on the question of relationship between Pakhtun identity and Islam (propagated by these elements).

Nevertheless, there is a recent surge in literature that goes beyond this interrelationship relationship between ethnicity and religion and highlights the class aspect in the rise of Islamist militant organizations in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Lindisfarne, 2013: 119-33; and Nichols, 2013: 135-46). This literature emphasizes that Islamist militants in Swat draw support from the peasants who were disgruntled from their wealthy landlords and besides other things wanted to resist the feudal power. Similarly, Taliban in Afghanistan also draws support from the rural poor and has been resisting American Imperialism in Afghanistan.

Conclusions

The Pakhtun ethno-nationalist struggle in its irredentist shape may also be viewed as a form of class struggle against the dominant class or classes for attainment control over state power. But, such ethno-nationalism of was dominated by Pakhtun middle class bourgeoisie and came out as a reaction to the privileges enjoyed by the top class bourgeoisie among the Pakhtuns, bestowed on it in pre and post Pakistan period. The state's suppression of ethno-identity displayed in the

operation against the Baluchistan insurgency in 1970s and regional support by the Afghan government to the Pakhtunistan issue also played its part in strengthening the irredentist trends. However, in the post 1970 period, Pakhtun ethno-nationalism has concentrated more on issues of greater autonomy within the Federation of Pakistan; many of these demands have been fulfilled in the recent years, especially naming of the Frontier province as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, abandonment by the central government of the Kalabagh dam project and provincial autonomy under the 18th Amendment in the 1973 constitution. The emergence of the Taliban phenomena, first in Afghanistan and then in Pakistan may not be termed as a new trend in ethno-nationalism among the Pakhtuns. Though, the Taliban phenomenon, in popular discourse, is often associated with Pakhtun ethnicity. However, except for the argument of substantial Pakhtun numbers in Taliban organizations on both side of the border or geographical location in the North-West of Pakistan (for the Pakistani Taliban), no substantial argument can be advanced to term it as a purely Pakhtun phenomenon. The rise of Taliban may be attributed to the long term policy of the state of Pakistan towards Afghanistan. Pakistan's support to the Islamist groups since the 1970's emerged as a strategic move to counter the appeal of Pakhtunistan (more an ethnic demand) with the ideology of Islam and *Jihad* (holy war). This policy found a new impetus in the post 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, when a nexus of Pakistan's ISI, American CIA, religious political parties and the religious seminaries and the Mujahideen parties in Afghanistan developed to fight off the Soviets. The successes of Taliban movement in Afghanistan in the 1990s can also be explained within the paradigm of Pakistan's strategic drive in the region. Conflict, civil war and state failure in Afghanistan and Pakistan's role in the Afghan war led to a radicalization of the Pak-Afghan borderland. The Talibanization of the borderland may also be seen as an impact of such radicalization, rather than a manifestation of a militant Pakhtun ethno-nationalism. Moreover, these religious militant movements also have a conspicuous class factor, which gives them the look of resistance movements against forces of imperialism and feudalism in the region.

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South Asian Studies 30 (2)

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