

FC in Counter Insurgency Role in Balochistan

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It was a surprise and a shock to hear that now Balochistan operation would be conducted by the Frontier Corps.

When I retired from the army in 1993 it was said that in Balochistan the people either feared the FC (Frontier Corps) or Allah! Jokes aside this meant that the FC being a force governed by law of jungle fired without restraint, killed without remorse and operated above all laws. It was common that the FC killed civilians and buried them unreported, as many other government functionaries do in Balochistan!

I asked an outstanding Sindhi Pashtun then serving in Intelligence Bureau as to what the Intelligence Bureaus role? He replied to make one tribe fight another or one ethnic group fear or distrust another and similarly in case of sects so that the state rules with ease !

The Frontier Corps (FC) was basically a cheap colonial force to control the difficult natives in NWFP and Balochistan Agency! Almost wholly Pashtun this force was deployed against rebellious Pashtun tribes as well as the Baloch and some international Islamic revolutionaries then known as Hindustani fanatics and Wahabis!

FC is divided into two types of corps i.e. Internal Security (IS) and Anti Smuggling.

Although initially a border force in Balochistan , FC Corps were raised in all parts of Balochistans interior and borders after 1947 and by 1985 nearly district of Balochistan had an FC Corps !

The FC was nearly 90 % if not 95 % Pashtun although Punjabi recruitment has been reportedly increased lately! It was traditionally more active in border areas while its IS corps were not employed in active policing!

Broadly following can or may be the implications of employment of FC in Balochistan:--

1. Politically a Machiavellian act letting loose a wholly Pashtun force on Baloch tribes or parties involved in fighting a political war of liberation against a successor state of British Empire. Seen in this context the exercise can very quickly deteriorate into ethnic cleansing!
2. Rendering the political government of Balochistan (although not truly representative thanks to boycott of elections by mainstream Baloch parties) nearly hundred percent powerless in matters of policing and internal security. This will happen because the FC is officered by the Pakistani military and nominally functions under Ministry of Interior while in reality it is controlled by the corps commander in Quetta !
3. While the military is to some extent multi ethnic the FC is a wholly or near wholly Pashtun force organized on tribal and sub tribal lines! This when enforced would be a very dangerous combination politically as well as ethnically!
4. This exercise would be the first step in imposing military rule in Balochistan alone! The spineless chief minister already despised by all ethnic groups will either become a figure head or will resign or a situation may arise where Balochistans assembly is dissolved leading to governors rule !

5. Escalation of the ongoing Balochistan war from a disorganized war into a full fledged war of Baloch with federal government thus leading to eventual induction of regular military and a full fledged military counter insurgency operation in Balochistan.

6. There is a school of thought in Pakistani establishment which thinks that physical elimination and disappearance should be the only strategy in Balochistan and is confident that because of less population the Baloch can be eliminated like Australia's aboriginals and USAs Red Indians. This is the Musharraf school of thought which actually initiated this genocide in Balochistan as early as 2002 further mixed with strategy of demographic change like Gwadar and Greater Kacchi Canal which would turn Balochistan into a Punjabi and Pashtun majority province !

7. The Balochistan strategy is being implemented in consonance with Afghanistan where the Pakistani establishment's military and civilian bureaucrats think that a Taliban victory is imminent in Afghanistan!

How to get out of this quagmire: ---

1. This is a regional issue and not a Pakistan alone issue! In Indo Pak unless there is a solution of the big state or the smaller states issue this conflict will go on! Plebiscite in Kashmir would lead to plebiscites in Balochistan and in many parts of India and Pakistan! The whole conflict is interlinked! All major insurgents whether Afghan Taliban, Kashmiris, Maoists, Naxalites or Baloch have genuine grievances as well as state sponsors!

2. The final issue if not decided politically will be decided by a final Indo Pak war which now seems imminent by 2012 or 2013.

History will not forgive nations which use genocide as a political weapon!

What I see ahead is more and more disorder and anarchy! We salute the age of perpetual strategic anarchy in Pakistan! Perhaps the whole edifice will come down!

Seen in the final analysis one feels sympathy with all those in top positions in Pakistan! We have an unfortunate president who may not enjoy his wealth or power after a few months! We have an unfortunate army chief struggling to lead the army and paying for the sins of Zia and Musharraf! We above all have an unfortunate nation of 180 million who will pay a harsh price for sins of Pakistan's elite who created this country so that only Muslims could exploit Muslims instead of Hindus and Sikhs exploiting the Muslims! What a farce! An undoubted failure!