

## Theorizing the Hazara Prosecution in Quetta

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### **Abstract**

*The Hazara community of Pakistan has a long history of sufferings. The major chunk of Hazara community that is currently residing in Balochistan's district of Quetta, has faced massive violence and ethnic cleansing from the terrorist groups like Taliban and LEJ. It has been more than a decade since the brutal violence against Hazara community have been brought into the light. A lot of literature has been produced on the matter at hand, but a better theoretical explanation lacked. This paper aims at providing different theoretical explanations to develop a better understanding about the grievances of Hazara community. This paper strives to present a more rational explanation of ongoing violence through the lenses of different theories of ethnic & sectarian conflict. Furthermore, the role of state and its institutions in this regard has also been discussed. The possible causes behind the failure of state institutions in protecting Hazara community are also discussed in this paper.*

**Keywords:** Hazara, Community, Quetta, Pakistan.

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### **Introduction**

Hazara community has a history of racial discrimination and ethnic cleansing. The first settlers of Hazara community migrated to Baluchistan in 1878-91. The reason behind their migration was the first Anglo-Afghan war which caused massive unemployment and forced Hazaras to migrate. The second wave of Hazara immigrants took place when Amir Abdul Rehman the Afghan ruler, started persecution of Hazaras because of their linkages in 1891-901.

Ahmed (2011) states that Amir Habibullah the son of Amir Abdul Rehman became the leader and he stopped brutal violence against Hazaras and granted them amnesty. However, the promised economic stability remained an issue for Hazaras. In 1904, a separate regiment was formed by British for Hazaras, which offered better economic and security prospects for Hazara community. So, Hazaras migrated again to grab the opportunity.

Ahmed (2011) further explains that in 1933-98 due to dispersal of regiment a huge number of Hazaras migrated to Balochistan Another factor that caused Hazara migration to Baluchistan was the issue of

Pashtunistan between Daud government and Pakistan government. The Hazara town in Quetta was established in 1982 by Haji Ali Ahmad. The town consists of 9 blocs and people living there belong to middle and lower class. But this scheme lured the thousands of Hazaras because of the security measures. According to humans right watch (2014) almost half a million Hazaras are currently residing in Baluchistan and they perceive serious life threats. In October 06, 1999, the provincial education Minister Nisar Ali Hazara was killed and after that Hazara persecution accelerated. The violence against Hazara is deemed sectarian in nature and is traced back to General Zia's islamisation policies. The geographical competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran is also considered another cause of violence against Hazara. In 2013 nearly half of Shias that were killed in sectarian violence were belonged to Hazara community. This paper strives to find out the most probable causes of Hazara persecution in Pakistan by using different theoretical frameworks.

### **Methodology and Framework**

To answer the major question that why Hazara community has been subject to brutal violence? Two theories of ethnic conflict has been used for explanatory purpose. The two theories of ethnic conflict that are used in this paper are:

- Theory of Ethnic distance.
- Theory of Elite Instrumentalism.

Both the theories of ethnic conflict are interlinked with each other, but to get the better understanding of ethnic conflict these theories are used separately. The explanation of these theories will come in the later part of paper.

For the purpose of research and data collection qualitative interview method has been used in this paper. The interviews are conducted to get public opinion regarding their understanding of phenomena. This paper aggregated the information through conversations with the members of Hazara community. In this paper 10 semi structured interviews were conducted, in which two questions were asked by 10 respondents. Our first question was that "why Hazara community could not merge itself with other Shia community of Pakistan?" and second question that is related to the theory of elite instrumentalism was "On what basis do you cast your vote?"

Edwards and Holland (2013) express that in semi-structured interviews, researcher has list of questions that covers researcher's study variables in interviews. In these kinds of interviews, interviewees are asked about specific theme but they are allowed by researcher to go in detail to come up with some information about that particular theme.

During the interviews in order to know about the causes of ethnic and sectarian violence against hazara community, the questions related to the causes of violence were asked from the victims and the other members of Hazara community. Unstructured interviews were also conducted from public during survey, and the purpose of these unstructured interviews was to get public opinion on above explained possible causes of sectarian violence.

Edwards and Holland (2013) argue that during unstructured interviews, researcher just wants deep information about specific theme or topic and interviewees are asked about such theme and they respond in their own perspective using their own frame of references, thoughts and meaning that are recognizable to them.

For the purpose of data collection different questions that were to either lead towards the authentication of the both theories, or they were to lead towards the nullification of theories. If the respondents answer were to in coherence with the theoretical explanation then it means theories explained the causes successfully,

and in other case theoretical explanation were to nullify. These questions will be presented below in detailed discussion of the theories and their application.

### **Theory of Ethnic Distance**

According to Caselli & Coleman (2011) Ethnic distance is the cost to be born in one ethnic group and then successfully transfer himself or recognized as the member of another ethnic group. But this successful passing from one ethnic group to another ethnic group is not an easy task, and surely not without cost. Furthermore, the passing from one ethnic group to another varies among different ethnic groups. For example, for the members of such ethnic groups, who are distinct in their facial features from other ethnic groups, the passing will be much more difficult or at times it can be impossible. But for such ethnic groups who share similarity in the form of facial features and ideology, the passing from one ethnic group to another ethnic group would be easy.

Caselli & Coleman (2011) argues that if the ethnic distance is high, then the chances of passing will be low and sometimes ethnic passing will be low, and sometimes ethnic passing will be impossible, and in that case it would be nearly impossible for exploited group to pass into the winning group. So the reward of the conflict will for the winning group. As the resources are among the key factors behind a conflict. So such in cases the benefit of the conflict always goes to the major or exploiting group. The ethnic group in majority often gets the better of conflict, so that makes them the primary conflict seekers.

Posner (2005) is of the view that more often in such cases the exploited group is forced to leave their region and move to another region. Where they are now previously known, and hence start a new life under a new identity. While doing so, the exploited ethnic group leaves behind the assets or they are forced to sell their assets at cheap prices, and from that situation the main beneficiary is the exploiting or dominate ethnic group. According to many subsequent scholars there are so many examples where leaders favor their own ethnic group while allocating the resources. The central element of Horowitz (2000) is that the individuals of a certain ethnic group derive self-esteem from seeing members of their ethnic group succeed in business, and especially politics. He further explains that the benefits that are acquired from the conflict with other ethnic group are unequally distributed among the leaders and the masses of the exploiting or dominate group. According to Hardin (1997) there is hard evidence that suggests that individuals are inclined towards participating in the ethnic conflict because of the perceived benefits from that ethnic conflict or the individuals are compelled to perceive the rival ethnic group or sectarian group as a potential threat to their own interests.

Chandra (2007) is of the view that voters before voting try to find the collective information about the candidates, and their voting preferences depend upon that information. Generally, voters look for the background, intentions and most importantly ethnicity of the candidate or in many cases their religious or sectarian affiliations. Hence the candidate portray themselves as the member or sympathizer of the majority ethnic or sectarian group, and they successfully extract the vote on the expense of exploited ethnic or sectarian group.

As the first part of the theory of ethnic distance emphasizes that the passing from one ethnic group to another ethnic group is difficult and not without cost, moreover, for the ethnic group with distinct facial features from other ethnic groups, the passing would be much more difficult. So, Hazara community of Quetta is distinct in their facial features from the rest of the ethnic groups of Pakistan that is one of the reason behind their successful passing into another ethnic or sectarian group or ethnic or sectarian identity. As the Hazara community of Quetta belongs to the Shia sect of Islam, but comparatively with other Shia ethnic groups Hazara community was the main target of sectarian onslaught. So, here the question arises that why Hazara community is the focus of such brutal violence? And why the Hazara community, until now, could not diffuse themselves with other Shia ethnic groups, to escape the violence? Thus, in semi structured interviews with respondents our first question was that “why you could not diffuse yourselves among other Shia ethnic groups of Pakistan?” We asked this question from ten different respondents of

Hazara community, and the surprise was all of them gave almost similar explanation. They were of the view that to diffuse in other Shia ethnic groups one must develop strong relations, and that could happen through the intermarriages and living together. But no one from the Shia community actually offered us anything like that. Maybe the reason behind this is our distinct facial features from the rest of them. This provide us one of the reason that why Hazara remained unsuccessful in passing into another ethnic group. Now, we would move towards the second part of the theory that suggests the resources are among the key factors behind the conflict, and that the conflict is imposed by the majority ethnic group to capture the rival ethnic group's resources.

According to a report of National commission for human rights (2018) prior to their prosecution the Hazara community of Quetta were leading a prosperous life. Sonari market, Spinzar market, Liaqat market, Junction market, Baldia plaza, Abdul Sattar road and Liaqat road were among the major centers of business for Hazara community. But unfortunately the whole scenario changed after the constant attacks against them. The main target of Hazara prosecution remained the economically stabled members of Hazara community. The members of the community, who were running successful business were either shot dead or they were abducted by the rival ethnic groups. Hazara's are of the view that before the existing situation, the recruitments of the Hazara community in civil services and other government jobs were high, and they were successfully serving on different positions in Balochistan But the onslaught on the community deteriorated the situation and with the passage of time their representation in civil services and power structures has vanished. Now Hazara's are not in position to acquire jobs in Baluchistan, because of the fear of being killed.

One of the victims of Hazara community Mohammad Ali told us:

“My brother was abducted from Liaqat road Quetta, while he was coming back from work. I believe my brother was abducted by militants to force us to abandon our business. After the abduction of my brother, I was unable to leave my house; it was just like a jail for me. Our business remained closed for several months. I was forced by my family members to appoint a person for business who could run the business on my behalf. I avoid going outside of Marriabad because it is risky. Due to this reason, we suffer economically”.

Mohammad Ali was pointing about some militants who abducted his brother. Here, the rival ethnic group of Hazara will be discussed a little. As theory explains that the political leaders often portray themselves as the leaders of the majority ethnic group. In Quetta some religious political leaders have quite an influence in the city, particularly JUI-F has been a strong electoral candidate in Quetta. Furthermore, with the arrival of Afghan immigrants who were hostile towards Hazara in Afghanistan as well, were owned by JUI-F. The sectarian affiliations of the Afghan immigrants were same as the religious political leaders of Quetta. The next theory will explain in detail that how political leaders manipulate different ethnic groups for their own advantage.

### **Elite Instrumentalism**

Caselli & Coleman (2011) points out the society can be viewed as wealth creating assets, like land and mineral resources. Therefore, a society consisting on ethnic pluralism can be more prone to the conflict, as each ethnic group tries to hold on to those resources. When a society is formed along ethnic lines, then ethnic identity can be used as a marker to highlight potential infiltrators. In such society, when one ethnic/sectarian group hold on to the resources of a country or a particular area, then that group faces the task of exclusion of non-members.

The leaders of winning group, who are the main beneficiary of such a division, carve out the future differences between ethnic or sectarian groups to maintain their control over the resources. According to instrumentalist's identities are not innate and consistent, rather these identities are socially constructed. Ethnic identities are not only created but these identities are used by individual agency to pursue their own

gains. VP Gagon (1994) asserts that sectarian violence is caused by the agency of elites in the society, who manipulate identities to secure their own interests in society.

So, constructivist suggests that elite instrumentalism not only explain the identity manipulation, but it also explains the religious violence, because when these elites feel their power is threatened they purposefully manipulate the identities as an attempt to hold or acquire power. The theorist Paul Brass is also of the view that identities are not primordial because they are socially and politically constructed and that is why are changeable. According to Brass (1991) this competition and desire to appeal to an identity allows elites to manipulate the identity of a community.

In a multiethnic society, where religious political parties are more active, are more prone to the conflict or ethnic/sectarian cleansing. As the religious political parties attract the dominant ethnic or sectarian group on the expense of weaker ethnic or sectarian group. The campaign rhetorics used by religious political parties are mostly anti-minority, which exposes them to violence or threat of violence by the dominant ethnic or sectarian group. Wilkinson (2006) suggests that the challenge for the politicians is to try to ensure that the identity that favors their party is the one that is most salient in the mind of majority voters. So these political parties polarize the society by provoking a dispute on the basis of religious differences that will polarize the majority ethnic group behind the political party that has strongest anti minority identity.

Laitin (1996) is of the view that political elites construct hostile ethnic identities in order to strengthen their hold on power. Similarly, Hoeffler & Collier (1998) states that ethnic conflict does not arises directly from differences in ethnic identity, but ethnic conflict emerges when elites manipulate the identities to generate political and socio-economic advantages for one ethnic group at the expense of depriving other ethnic groups. According to Kiwuwa (2005) the genocide and ethnic cleansing in Rwanda happened because Hutu elite politicized ethnicity. Kiwuwa (2005) is of the view that the postcolonial Hutu regimes of Kayibanda and Habyarimana adopted the discriminatory and exclusionist policies against Tutsis and due to such policies Tutsis were forced into exile into the neighboring countries. These policies ended up giving birth to Tutsi-led Rwandan patriotic front (RPF).

The religious political parties have deep roots in Quetta. The JUI-F battles for the conservative Pashtun votes in the city. The provincial assembly seats of Quetta are often, evenly divided between JUI-F, BNP, PKMAP, It signifies the role of religious political parties like JUI-F, in Quetta (see the election results). The two waves of Afghan immigrants hit the Quetta. The first wave of immigration took place when soviet-union invaded Afghanistan, and second wave started after the US invasion of Afghanistan. Most of the immigrants settled in Quetta because of their kin origin.

Hasnat (2012) stresses that the dubious policies of the leaders have promoted the sectarian violence and allowed these trends. For example during PPP's government Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto nominated radical cleric Fazal-ur-Rehman as chair of the national assembly's standing committee on foreign affairs. As a result Maulana Fazal-ur-Rehman established his contacts with the Middle Eastern elites who wanted to promote such radical teachings of Islam in Pakistan. Maulana Fzal-ur-Rehman received financial aids ruling elites of Middle East and established a network of Madrassas in which such radical teachings are promoted.

During Afghan immigration into Pakistan, most of the Afghan Taliban with the extremist ideologies also took refuges in Pakistan. During Afghan immigration huge number of Afghan immigrants came into Quetta. So the religious political party JUI-F took advantage of the situation and used those immigrants for their own interests, as religious political parties get most of the votes on religious bases, so for such parties it is easier to polarize the society on religious basis. As Wilkinson (2004) says that the politicians try to ensure that identity group that favors their party. So they intend to polarize the vote along majority-minority lines to bring majority voters back into party. They intend to polarize the society by provoking a dispute on the basis of religious differences, so they will get the support of majority ethnic group that has strongest anti-minority identity.

As Isaac Kfir (2014) points out that in 2013 much of the attacks were carried out in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the parties like ANP which traditionally dominated these areas faced most threats and attacks.

The basic purpose of these attacks was to stop the door to door campaign of these political parties. But on other hand no threats were made to religious parties like JUI-F from TTP, which may explain that why other religious parties like Jamat-e-Islami were able to campaign. ANP was greatly eroded due to the attacks from TTP, Due to which Imran Khan was able to capitalize on this opportunity and extract much ANP votes and was able campaign by using his Pashtun background, while JUI-F was too close to the TTP that they face no threats.

During interview with Zafar Hassan who was among the leaders of Hazara community in Quetta the, he said that when Hazara community is targeted in Quetta, and one political leader talks in favor of TTP who attacked Shia community instead of condemning them, then the polarization in the society is created automatically.

Answering my basic question that to whom Shia community of Quetta vote he further said that the Hazara community of Quetta is left with very narrow list of options, because every political party looks at the ethnic group who is in majority, but in the past Shia community has been voting for the Pakistan People Party because this party is considered as Shia sympathizers. He said that many Shias vote for JUI-F and MMA because many Shia religious leaders are of the view that Shia community should vote them to avoid these attacks on Shia community. But in spite this most of Shia community vote for PPP. He further said that JUI-F not only helped the Afghan immigrants to settle down, he also provided them with Pakistani national identity cards.

JUI-F is one of the key actors who supported Mujahideen in 1980s. Through this party thousands of young men were enrolled in Jihad. According to experts, JUI-F was not just involved on an ideological level but also provided the networks and physical support in the form of graduates who would fight in Afghanistan. Many key leaders of TTP have been associated with JUI-F, because they were educated in the madrassa supported by JUI-F.

When we asked the respondents that to which party they vote, and what basis? 8 out of 10 respondents replied that they vote PPP because of their Shia outlook. While 2 respondents said that they voted JUI-F as a symbol of peace because they want this persecution to stop. About 80% of business of the Hazara community has been already in the hands of rival ethnic-groups. The massive onslaught have forced Hazara's to either sell their business at very cheap prices or abandon their business.

## **Conclusion**

Both the theories of ethnic conflict have presented the persecution of Hazara from a different perspective. The theory of social distance validly pointed out that the ethnic groups with distinct features do not or rarely pass into other ethnic groups to avoid the exploitation and violence from the dominant group. Which in case of Hazara proved valid, as they remained unsuccessful to pass into another ethnic group. Furthermore, the conflict inflicted upon them was due to the resources they had, which later were successfully captured by the dominant ethnic group.

The theory of Elite instrumentalism states that political elites or in this case religious political elites manipulate different identity groups for their own benefits, and they try to gain the support of major ethnic group. This also proved valid as JUI-F played a main role in escalating the conflict to use the majority sectarian group for their own benefits.

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