

Pukhtoos are coming

Saturday 23 October 2010, by [HUSSAIN Khadim](#) (Date first published: 21 May 2010).

The North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) has been renamed as Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa, as the National Assembly and Senate of Pakistan both have passed the relevant section of the 18th Amendment. Pukhtoos are jubilant and celebrating the news while the Hindkuns and Siraikis are protesting and mourning. Pukhtoon nationalists have been demanding the change of name because, arguably, it was the creation of colonial government and name should be in accordance with the identity of the people. But, in the same breath they rejected the identity logic of Hindkuns and Siraikis whose areas were clubbed with the erstwhile NWFP by the same colonial administration. In fact they are thankful to the British colonialists who annexed the then Siraiki division of Dera Ismail Khan and Hindkun's division of Hazara to the frontier region in 1901.

Pukhtoos are seen firing in the air as per their traditional way of expressing their joy. Being overjoyous is not just because they are successful in claiming their identity - which is already established by their fighting power any way - it is mainly because their control over a large area and population of Hindkuns and Siraikis has been accepted as legal in accordance with the constitution of Pakistan. On the other hand, Hindkuns and Siraikis are reacting to this development because they know what Pukhtoos will do to them; this is based on their past experience. Although, under the name of NWFP these two nationalities - Hindkuns and Siraikis - couldn't resist the expansion of Pukhtoon population and lost a lot of area; but, now, they are legally enslaved and can clearly see the intense methods of subjugation in the future.

Nevertheless, Siraikis of NWFP who are populated along a 100 miles long belt, from Chashma to the border of NWFP-Punjab, are behaving differently than the Hindkuns of Hazara region. Under the Pukhtoon's rule for the last 62 years they exactly did what the Hindko-speakers of Peshawar city and Kohat area did for centuries, i.e. feeling suppressed but not expressing openly, afraid of Pukhtoon's characteristic violence, limiting their language only to be spoken inside houses and private gatherings, raising the voices for justice only in their drawing rooms and gradually surrendering their social /political space to the powerful Pukhtoon race. (Of course the wealthy and elite of such people protected their selfish interests by selling out to the dominant ruling groups.). In short, neither the Siraikis of D. I. Khan's region nor the Siraikis of Punjab came on the street; Siraikis of Punjab province themselves are already very weak and suppressed.

On the other side, the Hindkuns of Hazara came out to resist this move by the present power brokers of Pakistan. By all calculations, they stand to be defeated, as all the organs of the state are supporting the Pukhtoos to control the situation. This outburst will be handled in various ways; first they will be taking for a ride, then the leaders will be co-opted and finally the movement will be dumped.

What this change from de-facto supremacy of Pukhtoon race to de-jure handover of large non-Pukhtoon areas to Khyber Pukhtoonkhwa means? At this juncture of Pakistan's history it means a lot. First the consistent efforts of Pukhtoos (along with Afghans), coming down from the mountains, expanding to the plains and taking hold of a substantial portion of landmass has brought fruit. About a couple of thousands years ago, they captured Purushpuram (now Peshawar city), which was Hinko-speaking Hindu city. About a millennium ago they extensively raided the areas across Suleman range; the process was unfortunately interrupted by the Baloch conquest of Derajat (i.e. Trans-

Indus). Then, during 18th and 19th Century they conquered the area crossing the Indus and finally captured Multan and ruled for about 50 years. Now, all these efforts have been materialized.

Second, this signifies the most important development in the state of Pakistan, that the security-oriented state is now poised to draw its strength from the Pukhtoon nationalism. The state has already, successfully, unleashed violent tribal against India in Kashmir and against Afghanistan during the Soviet-led revolution there. The minds of this militarised state are convinced that in the era of globalisation, violence and sabotage the Pukhtoos are best suited. In the past the state had drawn its strength from Muhajirs during the first 15 years; then from Punjabis and now it is dependent on the Pukhtoon power and Pukhtoos' fighting spirit.

Third, it can be seen as manifestation of a change in the Pukhtoon nationalist project. Earlier nationalists were oriented to protect the interest and the livelihood of toiling Pukhtoon people, whether during migrations or settlement in various places of the Indian subcontinent. For instance, Abdul Ghaffar Khan's alliance with secular Indian National Congress was to ensure that Pukhtoon's routes to the destinations like Delhi, Bombay, Calcutta, Madrass, Lahore, Karachi, etc. remained safe and friendly for migrating and trading Pukhtoos. Hence he promoted the ideology of nonviolence, peace and secularism so that Pukhtoos could co-exist with the host communities all over the subcontinent. Today's nationalists realise that without grabbing land and establishing a base camp, migration and then the gradual assimilation of Pukhtoos in the hosting cultures (Hindkuns, Potohaaris, Siraikis, Kashmiris, Punjabis, Sindhis and others) was of no use. They are very determined and would dismiss any argument for the separate identity of non-Pukhtoon areas of Hazara region, Siraiki belt, Chitral, Kohistan and Gujjar's area, etc.

Fourth, Punjabis have always been aware that the rule over the Siraikis since the Sikh conquest could be jeopardised whenever the coming generations of Siraiki elite raised the level of bribe they get to stab in the back of their poor, weak and docile populations. The meek voices of Siraiki people during the last forty years are playing on their nerves and hence they decided to strike at the core of the problem. By agreeing to Pukhtoonkhwa and ditching their supporters in Hazara they established two principles for the constitution of Pakistan. One, it is justified that the name of a province goes by the name of the dominating ethnic group. Two, that a province can't be divided on ethno-nationalistic lines. Through this, they have given a clear signal to Potohaaris and Siraikis not to raise their head otherwise they will be crushed by the stick of Pakistan's constitution.

Fifth, the principle of might is right is vindicated in this part of the world. Pukhtoos barged into the lands of Gujjars, Hindkuns, Siraikis and Kashmiries and succeeded in claiming these areas as their own. Then the state of Pakistan facilitated them to take over the states of Swat, Dir and Chitral. Now they have legally walked over the Siraikis and Hindkuns of Hazara. This means that powerful MQM in Karachi, which shied away from claiming Karachi as a separate province on the basis of reasons and political sense, now it could do so, on the basis of political power and blackmail because precedence has already been set.

"What should have been done" was simple if Pakistan had developed a democratic culture based on reasonability, justice and equity. On the lines of what Indian National Congress did just after the independence, a state reorganisation commission could be formed. Through setting a criteria leading to research, testimonies and referendums, perceivably some nine provinces could be suggested on the historical-social-cultural basis-Pukhtoonistan or Pukhtoonkhwa, Hindko, Potohaar, Siraikistan, Punjab, Sindh, Baluchistan, Qaraqram, Kashmir and so on.

Now what is in store? Within a couple of years Chaman Pukhtoonkhwa will be carved out of Baluchistan. Pukhtoon's expansion might takeover the Indus Highway, which is crucial for their traffic from Karachi to the Pukhtoonkhwa. Pukhtoon's superiority will be recognized so that they

could play a role in Lahore, Karachi and other big cities where they have large populations. Against this, there may emerge some other trends, unlikely though. For instance Hindkuns of Hazara are not controlled, Siraikis gearing up the courage to block the Indus Highway and social boycott of Pukhtoons in every city of Pakistan may happen, temporarily though.

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* From Viewpoint Online Issue no. 1 : 21 May, 2010 (This piece was submitted to couple of mainstream dailies but it bounced back. Ed. Viewpoint):

<http://www.viewpointonline.net/Old/fullstory.php?t=Pukhtoons%20are%20coming&f=full-3-may-21.php&y=2010&m=may>

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