Tribal politics as a family business and the question of national leadership in Balochistan

Reza Hossein Borr

Introduction

Tribalism is the earliest form of political parties. It is the association of a group of people who get together to protect themselves against others. Their cohesion lasts as long as there are threat to individual members and the group. Individuals need protection. Nobody can defend himself alone in a world where aggression is the norm of the day. Never mind how one person is strong there is always someone stronger than him and therefore, the strong person will be humiliated by somebody who is stronger. The average and weak individuals need to be protected. Since they do not have sufficient and adequate resources to protect individually themselves, they need an association in which they could merge their resources and forces together to lead a normal life and survive at the times of conflicts.

Tribal structure emerged first among the individuals who were not protected by a social system or political government. The tribe was the first form of government. It was the first organization that offered voluntary security and safety and welfare to its members. Its social structure was organised in a way that when people were born in that social set up, they received automatic membership. The tribe virtually evolved and created its code of honour and code of conduct. It created a culture that acted as the core value system for all. The application of this culture became compulsory by all. Its culture acted as its constitution. Like any other organization, it had to generate its own leadership and organizational structure. All the members of the tribe had to accept, recognize and implement the constitution.

The chief objective of the tribe was the provision of protection and security. As it is today, the neighbours have been always fighting each other. And when a dispute begins the members of the two tribes usually try to resolve it cordially according to their culture; and if the dispute turns into a war, again the leadership of the tribe has to go to war and has the responsibility to minimise the casualties and find a peaceful solution as soon as it is possible.

Virtually as the tribes became larger and larger they transformed into nations and nations found a new leadership structure which was a kind form of government. As the governments evolved, they introduced laws, rules and regulations and provided protection for the members of the nation. A large number of the governments were not able to protect the members and therefore, the main purpose of the tribe was enforced. When the government became the source of insecurity, where the ordinary people could not seek justice from a reliable source, the necessity for the preservation of tribalism became recognized.

If the governments are capable of providing welfare, security, safety and a cultural and a political system in which the individuals do not see any necessity for preserving the membership of the tribe, the tribal structure usually gets eroded and fades away gradually. In countries like Iran and Pakistan where the governments are the main enemies of the people, the political and judiciary systems do not provide justice equally for all. The administration and delivery of justice in such countries are not seen as fair and reasonable and therefore, the people cannot rely completely on the government for receiving protection, security and justice and therefore, the preservation of tribal structure continues to play a great role in the preservation of its community and its collective survival.

The main purpose of tribalism is provision of protection. We have seen a lot of members of a tribe that separated from their tribe when they were not protected. When we talk about protection we talk about several vital elements that give meaning to life. An individual or its group survives on: life protection, interest protection, property protection, land protection, culture protection, language protection and identity protection. The tribal organisations provide protection for all of these different issues. The tribe requires an organizational structure to provide management and protection

The case of Baluchistan Tribally-based political parties.

The Baluch people in Pakistan and Iran consider their governments as their enemies. The Baluch people in Pakistan believe that their land has been occupied illegally and therefore, their resources have been exploited illegally, their land has been used against them and their demands for the restoration of their sovereignty has been crashed. In such circumstances, the governments of Pakistan see the Baluch people as a threat to its integrity and the Baluch people see the governments of Pakistan as an oppressive occupier. When the government of Pakistan fails to provide an acceptable level of welfare, security, safety, and political participation, in a way, it proves that it has not been able to respond effectively and positively to the legal demands of its people. When the legal demands of the people are not met but crashed by force, the individuals seek to find organizations in which they can put their sources and resources together to defend themselves. This is how so many political organizations have been formed in Baluchistan. But since the political organizations have not been guite effective in defending the rights of the people and achieving the desired outcomes, the original tribes of Baluchistan turned into political organizations which have the capability of fighting the government.

Numerous Baluch tribes have been involved in various wars with the Pakistani governments. These tribes have strong political and social structures that can mobilise the people very quickly. The members of a tribe are loyal to their tribe and leadership and they are ready to respond to the call of the leadership to go for war instantly. As the modern day and time requires the formation of political parties, the tribal leaders formed political organizations. These political parties were based on the tribal culture, values and structures. The tribes were politicised and found new organizational structures with political missions. The politicised tribes were driven to have two missions: the traditional mission which was the managing of social, economic and

political affairs of the tribe and protecting them against invaders and the new political mission who was seeking actively the national rights of the Baluch people.

Tribally-based political campgains

Since the ruling families of different Baluch tribes in Pakistan were well-educated people, they automatically assumed the responsibility of leadership of tribally-based political parties. Among different tribal chiefs, few of them got involved actively and seriously in politics. As chiefs of their own tribes, they had to seek justice for their own tribes as their traditional duty in particular and lead their tribes politically along other Baluch leaders in general.

Prince Abdul Karim was the first Baluch leader who used his tribe as a political organization to challenge Pakistan authorities. Several other prominent tribal chiefs transformed themselves into political leaders and began forming tribally based political parties. They used their tribes to fight the Pakistani governments over a long period of time. Some of them achieved the status of the heroes but they never became national leaders who had the capability of mobilising a large number of Baluch people from different tribes and regions. Four tribes were among the vanguards of political activities in Baluchistan. In fact the state and the status of every tribe depended on the nature and quality of its leadership. If its leadership was a militant, then the whole tribe turned into a military force. Mengal , Marri , Bezanjo and Bugti tribes were among the most militant tribal organizations that challenged different Pakistani governments. A large number of them were killed, displaced, disappeared, arrested, tortured and executed. As these tribes continued the war against the government, other tribes and individuals began to form political parties and joined the fight against the government.

In the lack of strong and generally accepted political organizations in Baluchistan, the tribal leaders have played very important roles in Baluchistan's politics and in defence of Baluch people. They have volunteered to sacrifice numerous privileges to secure the right for self-determination for the Baluch people. All the Baluch people acknowledge these sacrifices and dedications. When the Pakistan government could not provide the Baluch people with the safety, security, justice and welfare, different tribes and tribally-based political parties sacrificed what ever they had to begin a campaign for the restoration of their sovereignty. The Baluch people used their traditional organization of tribalism to protect themselves, defend their land, develop their nation and stand firm and demand their rights.

These developments affected the structure of tribal leadership and how they functioned in a modern world. A traditional tribal structure was sufficient to serve its purpose in the old times but in the modern times that the political organizations are the main sources of organising, managing and leading people; tribal leadership was affected enormously in different ways. In many cases, its main objectives changed and in many other cases, its main objectives were reinforced.

The social tribal structure of Baluch society was changed at different degrees in different parts of Baluchistan. In certain parts, the tribal structure diminished enormously. In other parts, tribal structure became the source of political organizations.

As these developments progressed, the members of different tribes reacted differently to the changes. Some members of the some tribes separated themselves from their tribes and began acting as civil citizens. Others began to join political organizations which were based on tribal organizations.

Tribal loyalty and nation building

The movement of Baluch people towards a civil society has been very slow and mainly deetered by the dictatorial regimes of Pakistan. Civil society is the result of rule of law and practice of democracy. The rule of law provides protection for individuals and practice of democracy provides the opportunity for political participation, increase in welfare, confidence in the system and fair administration of justice. When the governments fail to provide these important services, the people have to look to their traditional systems for what the government is supposed to provide.

Since the purpose of tribalism is protection, the individuals tend to associate themselves with the tribes which are stronger and larger. If a tribe has the capacity of turning itself into a nation, then different members of different tribes will join the nation and will stay as a member of the nation if the nation is capable of providing more protection and security than what the smaller tribes were able to provide. The nation's survival is also based on protecting the members and itself as a group of people against other nations, the same way that one tribe wants to protect itself and its members against another tribe. If a nation cannot provide the protection members required, then the members of the nation will separate themselves from that nation and move to another nation and seek protection of that nation. This is true that both tribes and nations provide the same kinds of services. If at any time one of them failed to provide the service the members required, they would lose their sense of loyalty and go to someone else. Loyalty to tribe or a nation depends on the level of the service that a nation or tribe renders to its members.

The main criterion for the members to become loyal to an association of people is the equality of opportunity in receiving the services. If a member of the tribe in a nation feels that he has not been treated equally he would lose its loyalty towards that tribe or nation. The important thing is the protection of the individual and instituting some organizations that can define the relationships between the members of the same clan or country. The equality of members in a tribe is an accepted principle by all members of the tribe. At the same time because there must be an organization to govern the tribe, there is a need for a ruling body. The ruling body is usually the ruling family that inherits the role of leadership from one generation to another generation. Since the leadership is hereditary, there are some complications. If the hereditary leadership is a capable body to rule the tribe, it will be respected. If it is the body that has not sufficient competency in ruling the tribe, it will be challenged by different members of the tribe and division in the tribe arises from that time.

Tribally-based political leadership

Since the leadership is monopolised by one family, never mind how other persons of that tribe are popular and powerful, it is very unlikely for them to reach the top. In many occasions you will be usually challenged by the ruling family and humbled. If he does not comply he will be eliminated. There are hundreds of examples of how very competent members of the tribe which were not part of the ruling family have been eliminated. The elimination of competent members will reduce the tribe to the level of the strength of that ruling family. In many occasions the tribe will never rise to its full potential as the potentials of the ruling families may be very limited or under-developed.

That is the reason that we see a lot of challenges and crisis in modern tribal structure. There is no any alternative but educating the individuals and public. Once education and knowledge are available to all, the potential of different people begin to appear in public domain. The competent people with exceptional skills and knowledge always are considered as great threats to the ruling families of any tribe. Ruling families do not accept them as assets to move the whole tribe to a higher level of power but consider them as threats to their own authorities. For this reason, an ordinary member of a tribe in a tribally-based political party, must inevitably remain and look less competent and less skilful in leadership than the ruling family. Since the leadership of the tribe is monopolised only by one small family, the other members will not reach the leadership regardless of how skilful or competent they may become. If these kinds of people can join such political parties and demonstrate their abilities in those organizations and if the political parties are based on tribalism, the way for high flyers and high achievers is usually blocked by ruling families of the political parties.

It is a must that the ruling families of the tribes also become the leaders of these political parties. If the high flyers can accept a lower role than the ruling families of the tribes and political parties they get a chance of survival but if they cannot comply they will turn into rebels and usually will be eliminated as traitors. They would not be strong enough to protect themselves against a large number of people and an established ruling family. At the same time the ruling family of the tribe who are the ruling families of the political parties can define them negatively and portray them as agents of agencies and discredit them. They will be accused as spy or as corrupt persons who intended to create unrest and division among the tribe and party.

The reasons for suppressing political rivals in tribes are the same as those of suppressing political rivals in a nation. When a nation is ruled by one family, everybody else has to comply to be a subordinate. They must accept the leadership of the family and work with them. If the ruling family is a figurehead, it is easy to comply as that will not prevent the development of leadership talents but if the ruling family wants to rule directly then the highly qualified people always will be given a job less than what they deserve and they will never reach the top job that they can deserve. Nobody can become a greater leader that King in Sauid Arabia, but, in UK, Winston Churchill was greater than all British kings.

The fight for the top job always creates crisis among the tribes and nations that are not used to accepting the most qualified and the most competent as their leader. Consequently, internal strife for leadership will follow and can cause immense trouble within a society. The history has witnessed wars between brothers and the members of

the same family for succeeding to the top job. The power makes people extremely ruthless. Although there is no love stronger than family love, love for power can become extremely stronger than love for family. When a person kills a family member for power, it is easier for him to kill his subordinates who challenge his power.

If the political party is based on tribalism and the ruling family of the tribe is also the head of the political party, the strength of the party will never rise higher than the strength of the ruling family. Although the members of the tribe have immense respect for their ruling family, however, the ruling family does not necessarily delivers the most talented and most competent leaders in the tribe. If the political party is supposed to cover the whole nation, its leaders must have national standing as well as national understanding. If a political tribal leader is limited within his own tribe his rise to the national standing or national understanding will be deterred by his tribal bodings.

The best talents and potentials of the members of the tribe cannot be unleashed infinitely, if the members are not supposed to become more important than the leaders of the tribe. The reason that we cannot see high standing national leaders in Baluchistan is because the ordinary leaders are not allowed to rise over the established tribal political leaders. While tribal political leaders have vital roles in fighting for the rights of the nation, they can become formidable obstacles to the emergence of great national leaders. The tribal political leaders must be aware of their national responsibilities and open the way for the emergence of national leaders at this time that requires personal, tribal and national dedication. All of us must be responsive to a national need. While every person, every tribal leader, every political leader must use his resources for the advancement of the national cause, encouragement must be given to the exploration and acceleration of a national process which intends to free people from regional and tribal limitations and set them on the path of nation building. Tribe building will never replace nation building.

Since the ruling families come from one particular part of the tribes, it has been very hard for them to spearhead national question, represent national identity and assert themselves as accepted national leaders. While the tribally-based political parties can be very effective in protecting the interest of the tribe, they are not adequately effective in the promotion and protection of the higher interests of the nation as they are limited in their power; and the application of their power is only limited within their region which does not cover the whole land of the nation. It is not easy for a tribal leader to become a national leader acceptable to different tribal leaders if his influence is limited within his tribe's land. It requires freedom from the tribal bonding of his own tribe first that can set up one tribal leader to his gradual climbing over the national ladder that can make him acceptable to all. But if a tribal leader gives more loyalty and interests to his own members of tribe then the members of other tribes feel a kind of discrimination and will not accept his leadership and if he divides his loyalty among all tribes, he may lose the support of his own tribe. Therefore, if a tribal leader wants to become a national leader, he must move above the loyalty of any tribe. He must be able to define and differentiate tribal and national interests and generate a very careful balance between them; so that he is seen as a national leader whose priority is achieving national interests. Achieving national loyalty is extremely difficult for tribal leaders who have accumulated their power

from the members of their own tribe. People with hard and strong tribal loyalties will find it hard to become national leaders.

Local and national leaders

The people who are also bonded very strictly to one location will find it hard to become national leaders. Loyalty to one location will give the person a constituency. But if the person is completely dependent on the constituency he will never turn into a regional or national leader. Those members of the public and ordinary members of a tribe that wish to become equal to tribal leaders have a very difficult job. The possibility that these people can achieve high positions in such circumstances is very small. Bezanjo was an exceptional person who was able to rise higher than the state and status of the chief of his tribe. He was the only person who achieved the status of the national leader. The other leaders in Baluchistan are mostly localised in their own region and too much entrenched in their own tribe. The main members of their political parties are the members of their tribes. If there are other people who join them it is because they can see some protection in joining them. But no one can join the tribally-based political parties and hopes that one day he would become the leader of the party. This is impossible. We have seen hundreds of capable individuals who have been disappointed after many years of service in the tribal political party when they found that they will have to do be subordinate all the time and for ever to a person who is less talented but he has happened to be a member of the ruling family of the tribe.

Many of these high achievers join the tribally-based political parties to gain some strength and when they reach a stage where their advancement will be practically blocked by the ruling family of the political party, they have either to fight or they have to resign. Just few have the ability to fight as they are more likely to get killed and be eliminated. The absolute majority of them either get resigned by acting as subordinates or they practically resign from the political party and as soon as they resign they will be accused of corruption or treason. The ruling families are very skilful in character assassination and misinformation and blame trading, and therefore, an ordinary member will become easily known as a traitor in a society where conspiracy theory is popular. It will be very difficult in such a society for a national leader to appear. These societies need to struggle for a long time within themselves before they can find a person who has the capability and strength to lead them to a new level which is national level.

Non-political tribes are also concerned about this fact that if a tribal political leader becomes a national leader, he will dominate the smaller tribes and force them into subjugation. The tribal leaders have a kind of autonomy within their tribal region. They usually do not want to lose their autonomy specifically if they contender t is a strong ideological tribal political leader that has a reputation for character assassination and misinformation. Most of these tribal leaders are not political and therefore, they are labelled as the agents of the government by the tribal political leaders. In such circumstances, the non-political tribal leaders use their resources to stop their accusers from becoming a dominant force.

Those tribal political leaders who see in themselves the ambition of becoming national leaders must refrain from accusing the smaller tribes and leaders. Levelling any kind of accusation will only alert the non-political tribal leaders and encourage them to prevent the potential national leaders from becoming national leaders. Nobody wants to see his own demise and therefore, if they see a threat they will encounter it. If they think they do not have the power of neutralising them, they will seek the support of the government they were supposed to fight against.

Pressurising the smaller tribes who are not political will end in pushing them towards more collaboration with the governments. The potential national political leaders must not project themselves as threats to the tribal leaders or political activists. They must stop using the culture of the old left that was discrediting the enemies even if they were innocent. The instinct of survival is stronger than the desire for nation building. In Baluchistan these tactics did not work and it will not work but it will generate a backlash which will be very dangerous. Persuasion and seeking equal partnership with political activists and tribal leaders are the only strategies for pursuing a position of national leadership.

The tribal mentality and character of a political leader deters him from becoming a national leader. Your tribe can protect you but at the same time, it can become a confining environment for you. It cannot allow you easily to break the limits of tribal loyalty and rise over the tribal interests. At the same time, the public need somebody who is truly national and can think at national level and can protect every member of the public equally with equal interests. Since the tribal leaders derive their power from their own tribe they do not know how to attract the loyalty and interests of other tribes and tribal leaders. A tribal leader does not need to work very hard to attract the loyalty of the members of his own tribe as their loyalty has been already contracted. The loyalty of the members of the tribe goes first to his tribe and the leader of the tribe regardless of the quality of the leadership of the ruler but it is also the quality of the leadership that determines his popularity among his own tribe. If he moves to become popular in other tribes he loses some of the loyalty of his own tribe and therefore, he finds himself in a very complicated situation. There are exceptional leaders in the world that can accommodate the interests and loyalty of many opposing tribes.

How to become a national leader?

Among the Baluch leaders, the only person who could be called a national leader was Bezanjo. He was the only person in the modern history of Baluchistan who ever rose himself above the loyalties and interests of his own tribe and extended them to Baluch people. Possibly the main reason was that he was not the chief of his tribe and therefore, he was not bonded and entrenched in the limits of tribal loyalties and interests. As a member of the tribe, the people of his tribe expected him to serve the interests of his tribe but he was not the only one who was expected to render such services. The chief of his tribe was mainly responsible for the welfare of his tribe and therefore, he had the privilege and the capacity to move out of his tribe and reach other individuals. He was the person who had the capability to become a national leader. The rest of the Baluch leaders are mostly tribal leaders who have been able to move one step forward to establish tribally-based political parties. This is a step higher than

tribal politics. It is a step towards a national move. But none of them reached the point of becoming nationally recognised and accepted as the leaders of Baluchistan. A lot of them tried to form coalitions to bring different Baluch leaders and tribes and parties together. All of them failed.

In such circumstances and in such societies that becoming a national leader has strangling constraints, the people must look to somebody who has a potential position for becoming a national leader. In Baluchistan today there is only person who has the potential to become an accepted national figure and that is the head of state of Baluchistan, Khan of Kalat. I am talking about a national figure as I understand that the present head of state of Baluchistan, Khan of Kalat, is not a national leader but he has the potential and the status to become a national. He has national acceptability and the Jirga he organised proved that he is acceptable to the absolute majority of Baluch people, Baluch tribal leaders and Baluch political activists. He has the potential and the ambition to become the national leader and assume the responsibilities and duties that the national leadership requires. His family background positions him above tribal interests. He does not pose any threat to any political leader. He does not pose any threat to tribal chiefs.

The Baluch political activists must realise the significance of the national interests and move above party politics in order to find a way to national advancement. National advancement will not be easily accomplished by tribal leaders or political activists who have not been able to turn themselves into national political leaders. In such circumstances we have to be aware that the person who has the potential of becoming a national leader must be given the chance and support in his active attempts to become a national leader. This is a historical demand. It is something that must go over and beyond party politics, individual and tribal thinking.

Who can be a national leader?

If the Khan of Kalat demonstrated reasonable willingness to move over his personal and family interests and entered the national arena for assuming the political leadership of the nation he must be welcomed by all and specifically by those tribal leaders who tried all their lives to become national leaders but they couldn't. If they have aspirations of their nation at heart they must give all the supports to a man that can achieve for the nation what all of them have been trying to achieve. A leader is not someone who believes that he must achieve and can achieve everything he wants for his nation. A patriotic leader must be somebody who can support all other leaders for the collective achievement of what could be achieved only collectively. If the aspirations of the Baluch people for a sovereign state are to be realised at any time in future, participation of all people must be actively encouraged.

We are striving to achieve a national cause. This will not be achieved by tribal leaders who are not accepted as national leaders. They must realise that and understand their political manoeuvres can contain them in their own region and in their own tribe. So far their regions and tribes as well as their mentality and behaviours, contained them from becoming national leaders. They must offer their support now to somebody who has more chance of becoming a national leader. This is only if they really have the interests

of their nation in their own hearts and this is only if they are not seeking to monopolise the glory of patriotism for themselves.

Few people can become national heroes by tribal politics. The wider tribal politics with national values can make somebody a national hero who could be respected by all but not a national leader who is followed by all. Most of the heroes are people who have shown dedication at times that nobody else had the courage of doing what they did. But national leaders are those who can bring opposing groups together, contrasting views into a single mission and mobilise a large number of people to achieve an outcome that cannot be achieved by individual heroes. The descent and honourable political and tribal leaders must realise what they could not achieve, may be achievable by somebody else. Their emotions may motivate them for doing it all alone, but the general wisdom tells them to support somebody else if he has the opportunity and the potential to win a national goal.

Many people may have their own doubts about the Khan of Kalat and may think he is not up to the job. Nobody knows that this assumption is true. If they give him a chance he may prove that he could do it.

Since there is a lot of disinformation and character assassination about him, a lot of people do not know his true potentials and skills and his will for success. The misinformation can drown him and encouragement could garner talents and make him capable of achieving what all want to be achieved. If he does not succeed, the people will discard one more person who claimed to do the job and couldn't do it. It is the job of the public to discard everybody who claims to do the job and cannot do it until they find a person who is up to the job, who is the one who can do it.

We know that some tribal leaders of political parties are the masters of disinformation and character assassination. They can vilify the most sacred people. They can also glorify an ordinary person to become a national leader. It is time to put aside jealousy and think nationally. It is time for the public to realise the urgency of the issue of national leadership and exert pressure on tribal leaders to support the initiative of forming a new national leadership which has its traditional acceptability among all tribes, political activists and ordinary people. Ideology is something that you can use to achieve a purpose. If that ideology could not help you to achieve your purpose then that ideology has already become a limiting factor in your political activities. The ideology of the left has already done its service to Baluch people and it is time to move beyond it. It is time to move beyond all ideologies with an open mind and welcome new ideas openly for a new thinking which is so strongly required now.

Conclusion

The Baluch people must move beyond character assassination and undermining each other. If they think somebody is not serving the national interests in his best ability, he must be guided in a positive and friendly way in a new direction. Every Baluch I have seen loves his land and his people. They do their best to serve their people in their own way and within their means and resources. Instead of undermining them, we have to guide them. Instead of labelling them, we have to inspire them. Instead of forcing them

to follow one particular individual, we have to give them options, the pleasures of freedom to choose a leader they think is closer to their aspirations. Instead of blaming them, we have to encourage them to do the right things.

Nobody knows the truth and the whole truth. Nobody owns the truth and the whole truth. Everybody must acknowledge that. Everybody knows a bit of the truth and he acts the way he understands the truth. There is no a common and shared understanding of our great mission yet. The Baluch people slowly and gradually move towards a new understanding and sharing a common understanding of the mission. As this process continues, people become closer and they cooperate with each other more closely. The respect for what they do will grow and a new shared commitment will replace the lack of discipline which is prevailing now. The realities on the ground must be looked at very carefully. Wishful thinking brings only illusions. And illusions results in disappointment. Yet, the mission is tough and nobody must expect quick solutions. The normal expectation is to wait for nine months before the baby is born. After that, it will come, especially if there is a collective will to make it happen.

Those political leaders that played with the dreams and desires of the Baluch people to promote their own positions need to stop and think. Giving empty promises is different from giving inspiration. Inspiration is based on realities. Promises could be based on delusions. The exercise of self-restraint in expressing views is possibly the most important skill that anybody can master at this stage. Calculated but inspiring statements must replace the delusional expressions.

Every member of the nation must think of the highest priority and the most important responsibility of the nation. Slow progress must not frustrate anybody. The task ahead is undeniably very challenging and difficult but it is not beyond the potential powers of our nation. Nobody must be expected to do what he cannot do but everybody must be expected to do what they can do. What we have to do, we can do when the time is right. We have to look for the right opportunity.

Reza Hossein Borr is an NLP Master Trainer and a leadership consultant and the creator of 150 CDs and 14 Change management models. He is also the author of Manual Success, Manual of Coaching and Mentoring, Motivational Stories that Can Change Your Life, and a New Vision for the Islamic World. He can be contacted by email: sarawani@aol.com www.rezaaa.com