

Pashto Language & Identity Formation in Pakistan*

Tariq Rahman[†]

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Abstract

Traces out the history of the movement to increase the use of the Pashto language in the domains of power in Pakistan. Relationship of the movement with ethnic politics; Linguistic and ethnic

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[†]Tariq Rahman is Associate Professor of Linguistics, National Institute of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

situation in Afghanistan; Pashto and Pakhtun identity; Attitude of the Pakistani ruling elite towards Pashto.

Pashto, a language belonging to the Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family, has more than 25 million native speakers. Of these, 16 to 17 million live in Pakistan and 8 to 9 million in Afghanistan.¹ Pashto is the official language in Afghanistan, along with Dari (Afghan Persian), but in Pakistan it is not used in the domains of power-administration, military, judiciary, commerce, education and research-in any significant way. The activists of the Pashto language movement of Pakistan have been striving to increase the use of the language in these domains-i.e. for status planning or language allocation² in favour of Pashto since pre-partition days.

This article intends to trace out the history of the Pashto Movement with a view to exploring its relationship with politics-especially ethnic-in Pakistan. The article has two parts. The first part looks at the position of Pashto in Afghanistan, the language and ethnic situation in Pakistan and the relationship of language with ethnicity and politics. The second part traces out the rise and development of the Pashto language Movement for Pakistan and relates it to politics.

1 Linguistic and Ethnic Situation

1.1 In Afghanistan

Pashto is the mother tongue of the Pakhtuns who comprise 52.3% of the population in Afghanistan. The other ethnic groups; Tadhiks (20.3%); Uzbeks (8.7%); Hazaras (8.7%); Chahar Aimaks (2.9%); Turkmen (2.0%); Baluchi (1.0%), others (4.1%)—use Persian and Pashto in official domains and their respective mother tongues—if different—in private.³ *Britannica Year Book* (as in n. 1) However, in order to create a modern nation out of semi-autonomous tribes *nationalism* in Fishman's terms and *official nationalism* according to (Anderson, 1991; Fishman, 1968) the governments of Afghanistan have been promoting the use of Pashto since the 1920s. A Pashto Academy (Pashto Tolane پښتو ټولنی) was established in Kabul to standardize and modernize the language (ie Corpus Planniing)Cooper (as in n. 2) and the first constitution of the country was written in Pashto as well as in Dari.(Poullada, 1973; Constitution, 1923) Despite state patronage, the Afghan aristocracy, which was mostly Pakhtun, regarded Dari as a sophisticated language and a symbol of cultured upbringing—hence the use of Dari among the educated Afghans reported by the Pakistani Pakhtun leader, Ghaffar Khan⁴ (1890-1987) and

¹According to the *Britannica Year Book* Encyclopaedia Britanica, 1992 the population of Pakistan was 126,406,000 and that of Afghanistan 16,922,000 in 1991. As the percentage of Pakhtuns in Pakistan is 13.1% this gives a figure of 16,432,780, and for Afghanistan, where Pakhtuns are 52.3%, the figure is 8,850,206, the total adding up to 25,282,986.

²These terms from language Planning theory are explained in Robert L. Cooper, *Language Planning and Social Change* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989

³For the use of languages see Battacharya

⁴Abdul Ghaffar Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badsha Khan* Delhi: Hind Pocket Books Ltd, 1969

Legend for Chart:

A - Year B - Punjabi C - Sindhi
 D - Pashto E - Urdu F - Baluchi
 G - Brohi H - Siraiki I - Hindko

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1951	67.08	12.85	8.16	7.05	3.04	4.04	--	--
1961	66.39	12.59	8.47	7.57	2.49	0.93	--	--
1982	48.17	11.7	13.15	7.60	3.02	1.21	9.54	2.43

Table 1: Mother tongue speakers as percentages of population (Govt. of Pakistan Census 1951, 1961, 1981)

continued to use it. Even in 1977, according to one writer, government officials claim support for Pashto; although in fact, almost all of them function in Dari.(Miran, 1977) In other words, the ruling elite, which was Pakhtun, used the apparatus of the state to increase the use of its language, thus symbolizing its dominance while privately acting according to its internalized values. The significance of these facts will be discussed in the context of identity-formation later.

The erstwhile Communist rulers in Kabul, in keeping with the Soviet policies about nationalities, allowed teaching in the mother tongue in 1979: thus, Uzbek, Turkmen, Baluchi and Nuristani could be used in schools and publications.(Battacharya, 1984, p.23) But the country was then, and continues to be, embroiled in a protracted civil war which makes all statements about it tentative. Future divisions of the country could, however, be along linguistic (roughly north-south) cleavages even if they are currently articulated in terms of ideological differences. If that does happen, however, Pashto will continue to be a state language in the Pakhtun-dominated part of Afghanistan.

1.2 In Pakistan

In Pakistan, Pashto is not a state language and it has very little role to play even in the North Western Frontier Provinces (NWFP) where it is the mother tongue of between 70 to 80% of the population.⁵ However, Pakistan is a multilingual country, as the census figures shown in Table-1 indicate.⁶

While multilingualism is not denied - though the census of 1971 contained no question on language - the state does deny the multinationality thesis endorsed by ethno-nationalist leaders. The classical form of this thesis, argued by Gankovsky, suggested that there were four major nationalities in Pakistan; the Punjabis, Sindhis, Pakhtuns and Baluchis.Gankovsky (1964, 1973 (tr)) To this list, the Siraiki nationality was added in the 1960s (Shackle, 1977) and Mahajir in the 1980s.(Alavi, 1991) The official point of view

⁵Handbook of Population Census Data, Technical report Population Census Organization, Statistics Division, Government of Pakistan, 1985

⁶The figures for Pakistan as a whole before 1971 include Bengali speakers who constituted 56.4% of the population in 1951 and 55.48 in 1961. The number of Punjabi speakers is less in the 1981 census because Hindko and Siraiki, which were included in Punjabi in 1951 and 1961, were classified as separate languages. The number of Pashto speakers is higher in 1981 because the former princely states of Dir, Swat and Chitral, were included in the census figures as districts of the NWFP.

is that there is one Pakistani nation united by the bonds of Islam and the national language Urdu.

This one-Pakistani-nation thesis is part of *official nationalism*; the perception of belonging to one politically defined collectivity, imposed by the dominant elites with the help of the state apparatus. In the terms of Anderson's theory, Urdu, the national language, helps to imagine, and hence create the idea of a single unified entity.⁷ Thus it is Urdu which the ruling elites of Pakistan have supported and which the ethnic communities have resisted.

To understand why this has happened let us briefly examine the role of language in the awareness of ethnic identity in Pakistan. In common with other post-colonial states, Pakistan too inherited a dominant military-bureaucratic elite which was more modern in the Weberian rational-legal sense and therefore more adept at exercising state power than were the professional politicians.(Alavi, 1972) This *salariat*, as Hamza Alavi calls it, competes for employment and *has a tendency to divide and align along ethnic lines in order to draw wider support and solidarity in their struggle for a greater share of the available jobs as well as the limited places in institutions of higher education.*¹(Alavi, 1991, p. 159)

In order to continue to occupy privileged positions, and to increase the possibility of lucrative employment abroad, the Anglicized upper level of the salariat supports English. However, in order to retain its hegemony over the less developed vernacular-educated provincial salariats, it supports Urdu through the apparatus of the state.(Rahman) This hegemonic role of Urdu (and Islam) was challenged by the Bengali language Movement (1948-52) which was an outcome of the counter-hegemonic aspirations of the Bengali salariat supported by the 'Bengali subaltern classes'.(Alam, 1991)

Language-based articulation of identity was not confined to East Bengal. Sindhi was an important component of Sindhi nationalism (Amin, 1988); Baluchi was part of Baluchi nationalism (Harrison, 1981); and the leaders of Southern Punjab, which was relatively less developed than Central Punjab, used siraiiki as a symbol to create awareness of a common Siraiiki identity in that area. The above explanation of the manipulation of language to create a sense of collective identity by elites is primarily instrumentalist, but it must be modified by giving attention to the inter-subjective reality of the participants; the actors in all movements.⁸ First, the elites themselves choose symbols, such as language, on partly primordialist grounds to mobilize people.(Skinner, 1974) Whatever the rational reasons for the use of certain symbols and whatever their political consequences, ordinary people, and to a lesser extent the leaders, do not take them primarily as means to ends. They take them as ends.

It is in the light of such insights about nationalism, identity-formation and ethnicity that one may study the Pashto language movement in relation to the politics of Pakistan.

2 Pashto and Pakhtun identity

According to Gankovsky, the *fundamentals of the Pashtun original culture and the peculiar psychological make-up of Pashtuns had evolved by the second millennium AD.*(Gankovsky, 1964, 1973 (tr), p. 129)

⁷Chapter 10 in (Anderson, 1991)

⁸For the instrumentalist view about Urdu's role in Muslim separatism, see Paul R. Brass, *Language: Religion and Politics in Northern India* Cambridge University Press, 1974 and also his Idem, Ethnicity and nationality formation. This is also debated by Francis Robinson, *Nation formation: the Brass thesis and Muslim separatism*, volume 15 Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 1977. The primordialist-instrumentalist debate goes on. See Paul R. Brass, *A reply to Francis Robinson's Nation Formation: the Brass Thesis and Muslim Separatism*, volume 15 Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics, 1977.

These fundamentals, summed up as pakhtunwali, emphasize vengeance (badal بدل), hospitality (mel-mastia مېلمستیا), forgiveness (nanawati ننواټی). (Barth, 1969) This ideal privileges autonomy, egalitarianism and chivalry. One who lives up to this ideal is said to possess or do Pashto and not merely speak the language of that name. (Barth, 1969, p. 119) The Pakhtuns do not seem to have emphasized their language, Pashto, as much as the ideal of pakhtunwali as an ethnic identity-marker. Thus Khushal Khan Khattak, a great Pashto poet (1613-89) identifies himself as a friend of another person of Pakhtun ethnic origin (but no longer a speaker of Pashto), Farid Khan (Sher Shah Suri),⁹ who had defeated the Mughal King Humayun (1508-56) and ruled India from 1540 to 1545.

Conversely, Shabbir Hasan Khan Josh, an Urdu-speaking poet of Pakhtun origin from Malihabad¹⁰, tells us that the Pathans of India took pride in their ethnicity and considered bravery and aggressiveness a part of it. He himself is almost obsessed with his *pathanwali* as he calls it.¹¹ The Pathans of India did not speak Pashto, though, according to Raverty, *in the territory of the Rampur Nawwab, whole towns and villages may be found in which the Afghan language was spoken up to 1860.* (Raverty, 1901) Their genealogical tables, in common with their Pashto-speaking counterparts, were in Persian, which appears to have been the language of literacy among the Pakhtuns.

Persian, being the language of sophisticated discourse, seems to have been used by Pakhtun aristocrats, and even the kings of Afghanistan. Ghaffar Khan, who was referred to earlier in this context, writes that King Amanullah did not know Pashto. (Khan, 1969, p. 51-52) To Barth, *the elite and urban middle class in this purely Afghan kingdom have shown a strong tendency to Persianization in speech and culture, representing—I would argue—a sophisticate's escape from the impossibility of successfully consummating a Pathan identity under these circumstances.* (Barth, 1969, p. 129)

But this ideal-type society is almost non-existent in the urban areas, and even in the tribal townships of Pakistani Pashto-speaking areas. According to Akber Ahmed, *Pakhtun society may be divided into two categories; acephalous, egalitarian groups, living on irrigated lands, usually within larger state systems.*

*ننگ (nang - honor) is the foremost symbol of the former society, as قلنگ (qalang - taxes or rent) is of the latter.*¹²

However, it is in the قلنگ societies, the urbanized Pakhtuns of Afghanistan and Pakistan in the 1920s, that the Pashto Movement rose. King Amanullah, who himself could not speak Pashto, tried to promote it in 1920s. Later, it was also made one of the official languages of the country. In British India, Ghaffar Khan himself pioneered the trend of emphasizing Pashto as a symbol of Pakhtun identity.

In short, the Pashto Movement rose when Pashto could no longer be taken for granted and when the modern state was being created in Afghanistan. The dominant Pakhtuns, who could have afforded to be indifferent to it earlier, now needed to extend their power base by creating an Afghan nation state. Also, to promote *official nationalism*, they needed such symbols of statehood as state languages.

In British India, similar symbols were required to confront the colonial state. But here the need for

⁹Sir Olaf Caroe in Sir Olaf Caroe, *The Pathans* London: Macmillan, 1957, p. 141 relates that the Chief Minister of the NWFP, Dr Khan Sahib, also considered Sher Shah his hero because *he was such a true Pathan.*

¹⁰Uttar Pradesh, India

¹¹Shabir Hassan Khan Joshi, *یادوں کی بارات* Maktaba Sher o Adab, Lahore, 1965, title translated as wedding procession of memories

¹²Akbar S Ahmed, *Resistance and Control in Pakistan* Routledge, London, 1991. Also see Idem, *Millennium and Charisma Among Pathans: A Critical Essay in Social Anthropology* Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1976

creating a community with as many bonds of solidarity as possible was an anti-colonial enterprise. Thus the Pashto movement was suspected by the colonial powers and, as we shall see later, by its successors.

2.1 Imperialist mistrust of Pashto

When the Punjab was conquered in 1849, the present-day North West Frontier Province of Pakistan¹³ (NWFP), being part of it, came under British suzerainty. Subsequently, it became a separate administration unit under a Commissioner in 1901, and a Governor's province in 1932.¹⁴

It had already been agreed that the use of the vernacular would make the government appear less alien to the natives.¹⁵ Thus the choice was between Punjabi and Urdu in the present-day Punjab. It appears, however, that most of the British officers considered Urdu a superior form of Punjabi and chose to adopt it as the vernacular.¹⁶ As for Pashto, they were aware that it was a different language. What made the British still choose Urdu rather than Pashto or Persian, the elitist language in Afghanistan, is revealed by the available documents of that period. For instance, the Commissioner and Superintendent of the cis-Sutlej states wrote to the Secretary, Punjab Government, on 17 June 1862:

In 1853 when I first took charge of the Commissionership of Peshawar the language of the Courts was Persian; and I altered it to Oordoo for two reasons. Firstly the extreme slipperiness of Persian, and extreme Provision of Oordoo as a Judicial language. 2ndly the Political advantage of hastening the amalgamation of our provinces.(Chaudhry, 1977, p. 43)

The idea that the Pashto-speaking people of the NWFP should look towards India, where Urdu was predominant, and not towards Afghanistan, certainly influenced the choice of the vernacular in this region.

This is further supported by the following letter of 22 July 1862 from the Director of Public Instruction to the Secretary of the Punjab Government:

Even in the frontier Districts of Peshawar, and the Derajat, where Persian may be considered the vernacular of the educated classes rather than Urdu, and Pushtoo a distinct language from either, is commonly spoken by the masses, I would recommend that Urdu be continued as the Court Vernacular. On the annexation of the Punjab political motives, I dare say, had a great share in giving the superiority to Urdu over Persian, which was commonly used in the Courts in the Frontier, and the desirability of making the union of the wild tribes with the adjoining population in our territories more complete, and their intercourse more convenient, by the use of a common tongue, is obviously very desirable. All our Education efforts tend to this object among others and they will be greatly aided by the currency of Urdu, in all our Courts, as the standard language.(Chaudhry, 1977, p. 38)

¹³Renamed to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in 2011

¹⁴Diwan Chand Obhari, *The Evolution of the North West Frontier Province* London Book Co., Peshawar, 1938. Also see Lal Baha, *NWFP Administration Under the British Rule 1901-1919* National Commission on Historical and Cultural Research, Islamabad, 1978

¹⁵See letters between British officers in Nazir A Chaudhry, *Development of Urdu as Official language in the Punjab (1849-1974)* Government of the Punjab, Lahore, 1977

¹⁶This view is expressed in most letters, Ibid.

It appears then that the British did not promote Pashto because of their political interests. That could be the reason why they discouraged all radical attempts, especially by anti-imperialist politicians, to promote it.

2.2 Pre-partition efforts to promote Pashto

Pashto was proposed as an identity-marker by Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan, the founder of the anti-British and pro-Congress Khudai Khidmatgar Movement which began in the NWFP in 1929.¹⁷ The members of this movement wore red clothes; a colour chosen arbitrarily for reasons of convenience as white clothes got easily dirty Tendulkar (1967) and were very nationalistic. The *Red Shirts* were seen as Soviet-inspired revolutionaries and the supporters of Afghan irredentist claims (*Pakhtunistan*) by the British and the Pakistani governments. Hence Pashto, which was one of the symbols manipulated by Ghaffar Khan, also came to be tainted with these anti-government, indeed anti-state, perceptions. That is why the British intelligence agencies reported all the activities of Ghaffar Khan and the movement for the promotion of Pashto.

It was during the 1920s, the period of the anti-British Khilafat Movement, that Ghaffar Khan entered politics. (Korejo, 1993, p. 14-15) He reopened the *old schools in the tribal areas* (Khan, 1969, p. 57) such schools were called the *آزاد* *Azad* (free) or *Islamia* schools and Ghaffar Khan is reported to have said that Pashto and Arabic would be taught to primary classes in them.¹⁸ However, police records show they were only the schools located at Utmanzai, Swabi and Charsadda¹⁹ and not the ones in the tribal areas mentioned in Ghaffar Khan's biography. In all Azad schools, according to Ghaffar Khan's son, the Pashto poet Ghani Khan, the language of instruction for beginners was Pashto. (Interview, Ghani Khan, 2 Nov 1993) Ghaffar Khan also started publishing a magazine called the *Pakhtun* in 1928.²⁰ Emphasizing the importance of Pashto he wrote:

A nation is known and recognized by its language and without a language of its own a nation cannot really be called a nation. A nation that forgets its own language will eventually disappear from the map altogether. (Khan, 1969, p. 88-89)

¹⁷Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badsha Khan* (as in n. 4), p.96. Also see M S Korejo, *The Frontier Gandhi: His Place in History* Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1993

¹⁸Accession No 479, in the National Documentation Centre (NDC), Cabinet Division, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, as Para 418 of NWFP Police Abstract [1929c]

¹⁹Accession No 472, in the National Documentation Centre (NDC), Cabinet Division, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, as Paras 320, 410 and 697 of NWFP Police Abstracts [1921b]

²⁰Khan, *My Life and Struggle: Autobiography of Badsha Khan* (as in n. 4), p. 88-90. Also see Accession No 479, in the National Documentation Centre (NDC), Cabinet Division, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, as Para 418 of NWFP Police Abstract (as in n. 18), p. 337

2.3 Journalistic and literary activities in Pashto

The late 1920s and 1930s are significant for the development of Pashto nationalistic prose and poetry. According to Ghani Khan, Makhfi of Charsadda, Abdul Malik Fida, Abdul Akbar Khan and Ghani Khan himself wrote nationalistic literature. (Interview, Ghani Khan, 2 Nov 1993)

The first anti-imperialist newspaper to be launched in this area was *Islam*. Started by Abdul Ghafoor of Saidu in 1854 and published and distributed secretly, it was instrumental in raising the consciousness for Pashto, Islam and anti-imperialism.²¹ In 1925 Allah Bakhsh Yusufi launched the *Sarhad*. This paper was in Urdu, though it did have 12 Pashto pages as well. Another publication, the fortnightly *Angar*, contained more Pashto columns than Urdu. It was published by the rebel Khudai Khidmatgar Amir Nawaz Jalia. (Sabir, 1986, p. 189)

However, it was the *Pukhtun* which gained the widest popularity and which expressed and influenced Pakhtuns most of all, among other things by raising the issue of language planning in Pashto. It also emphasized Pashto as the marker of Pukhtun identity and exhorted the people and the authorities to use it in informal as well as formal domains.²² In the August and September 1929 issues, for instance, Ghaffar Khan wrote that the British system of schooling was only meant to perpetuate British rule and that the people were alienated from it. He also demanded that Pashto should be made the medium of instruction at the primary level.²³

Another contributor suggested that the people themselves should conduct their daily affairs; writing letters, maintaining business records and accounts, conversation in Pashto. The government, too, was asked to establish a Pashto Academy with a perpetual grant of Rs 40,000 per year. It was also suggested that non-Pashtuns should be asked to learn Pashto especially if they wanted to be employed in the NWFP. (Babar, 1945)

Some contributors believed that even code-switching, or the use of foreign words in Pashto, was a sign of mental servility and the Pakhtun identity could only be maintained through correct Pashto. (Naseem, 1945) In short, Pashto was seen as a necessary ingredient of Pakhtun ethnicity and its development was supposed to lead to the progress of the ethnic group.

2.4 Pashto and politics in pre-partition NWFP.

The NWFP Legislative Assembly was not the equivalent of the legislature of other provinces, but Sahibzada Abdul Qaiyum Khan (1864-1937)²⁴ had been nominated the Minister of Transferred Departments in the 1932 Legislative Council. He had already contributed to a survey which the Primary Education Committee had conducted in 1929-30 to find out the problems of basic schooling. (Ahmed, 1989, p. 159) So, education being one of his responsibilities, he replied to a question about the medium of instruction on 12 October 1932 as follows:

Among the Pushto-speaking people, we came across a remarkable solidarity of opinion in

²¹Sultan Sabir, پشتو صحافت (*Pashto Journalism*) مجموعه کا مقالات کی کانفرنس کی پہلی لسانی اور ثقافتی کانفرنس کی پہلی لسانی اور ثقافتی کانفرنس کا مجموعہ , edited by Nawaz M. Tair Pashto Academy, Peshawar, 1986, Translated in Urdu as *A collection of papers on the first linguistic and cultural conference of the Frontier Province*

²²Several articles in the *Pakhtun*.

²³Abdul Ghaffar Khan, پښتانه و مدرسې د سرکار مدرسي و پښتانه, September 1929. Also see Accession No 479, in the National Documentation Centre (NDC), Cabinet Division, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, as Para 418 of NWFP Police Abstract (as in n. 18), p. 417ibid.

²⁴For a biography, albeit too sympathetic, see Shakeel Ahmed, *Sir Sahibzada Abdul Qaiyum: Life and Work* Islamia College, University of Peshawar, Peshawar, 1989

*favour of instruction being given in Urdu rather than in Pushto. Pushto was recommended to be used only colloquially in the lower classes of the school in the course of explanation by the teacher. The Pushto-speaking population was practically unanimous in favour of instruction throughout in Urdu. Accounts and every day conversations are usually in Urdu and never in Pushto.*LAD:F [12 October 1932a], p. 132²⁵

In 1935, however, Sahibzada Abdul Qaiyum presented certain letters pertaining to the medium of instruction. It was now conceded that:

*. . . education of the 1st and 2nd classes should be imparted in the mother tongue of the student; that is to say, in Pashto speaking areas in Pashto, and in Hindko speaking areas, in Hindko.*²⁶

Even so, the non-Pashto-speaking, and predominately non-Muslim members of the Assembly, objected to this memorandum. It came to be known as the anti-Hindi-Gurmukhi circular or the *Black Circular*: the Hindu and Sikh members, who opposed it vehemently, did not attend sessions of the Legislative Council for three days, and a *Black Day* was observed with processions. Dr Khan Sahib, the elder brother of Ghaffar Khan, who was Sahibzada Qaiyum's political opponent, expressed his sympathies with the non-Muslims and declared on 7 August 1936 that when the Congress came to power, this circular would be repealed.²⁷

The main objection of the non-Muslims was that their language and culture would be under threat, and although the government did point out that Pashto would only be used in predominantly Pashto-speaking areas, the opposition did not refrain from opposing it.²⁸ After the 1937 elections Sahibzada Qaiyum, who now led the United Nationalist Party, won the support of the non-Muslims to form a ministry on certain conditions, one of which was that the Pashto circular be withdrawn.(Shah, 1992) This ministry, however, lasted from 1 April 1937 till September 1937, when Dr Khan Sahib's Congress, with the help of the Hindu-Sikh Nationalist Party and the Hazara Democratic Party, passed a no-confidence motion against it.(Rittenberg, 1977) Dr Khan Sahib's government, which lasted for two years and six weeks, again reopened the Pashto language issue.

In the session of 28 September 1937 Mian Jafar Khan, the Minister of Education, moved the following motion:

This Assembly recommends to the Government that Pushto be made the medium of instruction in the primary schools in the North West Frontier Province.

This time, once again the opposition came from the non-Muslim members, but they also had the support of the Hindko-speaking Sarwar Khan of Haripur. The non-Muslim members felt that making Pashto

²⁵LAD: F stands for Legislative Assembly Debates: North West Frontier Province. The legislature has been called by different names but the above abbreviation is used consistently to refer to these proceedings. These references are parenthetically embedded in the text giving dates and page numbers.

²⁶LAD:F, *Letter from Secretary NWFP Government to Director of Public Instruction dated 4 September 1935 [13 November 1935c]*, p. 258

²⁷LAD:F [28 September 1937d], p. 674

²⁸See Lala Ladha Ram's speech in the Legislative Assembly's session in LAD:F [6 Nov 1935b], p. 69

compulsory would be an imposition.²⁹ Sarwar Khan, however, added the argument that improvement in the status of Pashto would lead to extra-territorial loyalties. He said: *Let us pause to see whether the people of the Frontier Province are going to federate with Kabul or with India.*³⁰ This argument was refuted by Sardar Aurangzeb Khan, but it was certainly this which, as we have seen, British decision-makers kept in mind. In any case, despite Dr Khan Sahib's wish to teach Pashto *to the Pashto-speaking boys*,³¹ he did not want to antagonize his anti-Pashto supporters. Thus, Pashto could not be made the medium of instruction at once.

In 1938, however, Dr Khan Sahib's government did manage to introduce Pashto *as a compulsory medium of instruction for primary education* (Tendulkar, 1967, p. 229) but, explained Qazi Ataullah, the Minister of Education, it would only be taught in *Pushto-speaking areas*.³² The Minister also said that Pashto literature would be promoted. The language did not, however, become the medium of instruction as the Report on Public Instruction says: *Pashto continues to be taught in primary schools in Pashto-speaking areas as an additional subject.*³³

Meanwhile, the speaker of the Assembly had ruled that those who did not know English could speak in Pashto or Urdu and they would be responded to in the same languages.³⁴ However, the Acts of the Legislative Assembly were not printed in Pashto,³⁵ nor were members allowed to use Pashto if they knew English. In fact, the use of English was not curtailed though Pashto was tolerated more than it had been before.³⁶ The maximum the colonial government could do for Pashto was to tolerate it in order to conciliate public opinion, but this toleration never went beyond recognizing it in certain peripheral domains so as to give it symbolic importance.

2.5 Pashto in Swat

Knowing what the British attitude was towards Pashto in India, the Pakhtun nationalists looked for inspiration to Afghanistan and Swat; the only two states that did use Pashto. The case of Afghanistan has been mentioned already; that of Swat follows. The Swat state was recognized by the British in 1926 and Miangul Abdul Wadud, the de facto chief of the Yusufzai clan that ruled Swat, was now accepted as the *de jure* ruler or Wali. The new Wali, in his own words, took the following language policy decisions about Pashto:

I declared Pashto to be the official language of the state and adopted the Urdu script as the style of writing. Special forms and registers were prepared in Pashto for use in offices and courts. Both officials and the public were directed to employ simple, every day language in all their writings, and express themselves briefly and to the point; especially avoiding lengthy salutations and adulatory phrases. Experience proved that I had decided rightly: Yusufzai Pathans of Swat find it convenient to conduct their personal and official business in Pashto. (Husain, 1962)

²⁹See the speeches of Rai Bahadur Ishar Dass and Rai Bahadur Mehr Chand Khanna LAD:F (as in n. 27), p. 610-624

³⁰Ibid., p. 606

³¹Ibid., p. 622

³²LAD:F [25 March 1939f], p. 582

³³Report on Public Instruction: NWFP 1940-41, Manager of Government Printing, Peshawar [1941], p. 61

³⁴LAD:F [8 November 1938e], p. 342-344

³⁵LAD:F [24 March 1939g], p. 583-584

³⁶LAD:F [21 March 1946h]

Schools in Swat, however, used Urdu and English as in the NWFP. There was also an Anglo-vernacular school and a number of primary schools run under the directions of British officers, as letters and reports on Dir and Swat prove.³⁷ The Wali did, however, get a number of books translated from different languages into Pashto though the literacy remained very low. (Husain, 1962, p. 118) However, when Swat was amalgamated with Pakistan in 1969, this experiment with Pashto came to an end. Even so, the very fact that Pashto has been used in the domains of power somewhere, and is still in such use in Afghanistan at least at private level if not officially, gives the supporters of Pashto the argument that the Pashto speaking areas of the NWFP could also follow this line.

3 Pashto in Pakistan

The attitude of the Pakistani ruling elite towards Pashto can be better understood in the light of the events of the partition and the early years of the new state. Let us then look at this political background first.

3.1 The political background

The Muslim League wanted a referendum in the NWFP on the question whether the people of the province *want to join Pakistan Constituent Assembly or the Hindustan Constituent Assembly*.³⁸ The Congress accepted the League's demand but Ghaffar Khan decided to boycott the referendum saying that if it *was to be held at all it should be a referendum on the question of Pakhtunistan or Pakistan*. (Khan, 1969, p. 178) Pakhtunistan was defined as *a free pathan state* by Ghaffar Khan on 24 June 1947 (Tendulkar, 1967, p. 439) but on 4 September 1947 he said he would accept a loose confederation (i.e. agreement on defence, external affairs and communications) with Pakistan of the *six settled Districts of the North-West Frontier Province which may wish to join the new state of their own free will*. (Pazhwak, 1960) (Tendulkar, 1967, p. 451) Later, the terms *Pakhtunistan* and *Pakhtunkhwa* were also used by Wali Khan merely as substitutes for the British name NWFP for this Pakhtun-dominated province. This change of stance from independence to mere symbolic assertion of cultural autonomy reflects the decline in separatist tendencies in the NWFP. (Pazhwak, 1960, p. 16) (Amin, 1988, p. 187)

However, as the Afghan government used the Pakhtunistan issue for irredentist claims on Pakistani territory; an example of such claims is a pamphlet written by Rahman Pazhwak in 1960³⁹ – the Pakistani ruling elite developed a deep distrust even of the everyday use of the words *Pakhtunkhwa* and *Pakhtunistan*. One part of this claim – about the *national entity of the people of Pakhtunistan, as a people apart from the peoples of the sub-continent*⁴⁰ was also based upon Pashto. Moreover, at least during the 1950s, many supporters of Pashto and Pashto publications also supported Pakhtunistan.

³⁷ Accession No 772, in the National Documentation Centre (NDC), Cabinet Division, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad

³⁸ Mohammad All Jinnah, Text of broadcast by Mr Jinnah, (3 June 1947) appearing in Syed Waqar Shah, *Muslim League in the NWFP* Royal Book Co, Karachi, 1992, p. 182-186

³⁹ Letter from Pakistani charge d'affairs in Kabul to the Chief Secretary NWFP Government, 4 March 1950 Memo No PEK/21/2 in Rahman Pazhwak, *Pakhtunistan: A New State in Central Asia*, in: India Office Library, London Privately Printed, New York, 1960

⁴⁰ Ibid.

Some of them also collaborated with Afghanistan and India, as the facts given below will bear out.

According to intelligence reports, Anwar ul Haq Gran, the supervisor of the Pashto Unit of the All India Radio in New Delhi, was also the Chief Organizer of the Pakhtunistan Movement in India. (Khalil, 1966) Moreover, Nasrullah Khan Nasr, Secretary of the Adabi Toli, an organization created in 1943 for the promotion of Pashto, used to meet the Afghan Consul at Peshawar and give him news about the NWFP.⁴¹ Nasr was well known in the NWFP for his efforts to increase the use of Pashto in all domains and is still remembered with respect as *the martyr of Pashto*.⁴²

At least one attempt at opening a Pashto school, the *Pashtoon Hala Maktab* in Gangi Khel⁴³, was said to have been initiated by the Afghan allowance holders.⁴⁴ These allowance holders were reported to be 1578 in number and received Rs. 6,80,424 annually, from Kabul.⁴⁵

The Afghan Consul was once reported to have announced a special fund for the upkeep of the tomb of the Pashto poet Rahman Baba after a poetry session held on 31 March 1950 in the poet's honour. The descendants of the poet went to the Consul to claim the money on 17 April and these events were reported by the police.⁴⁶

The Pashto Tolane *پښتو ټولنی* of Kabul was also reported to be working in the interest of Afghan irredentism. As a secret report said:

[The Pashto Tolane] . . . *is the main organization responsible for the development and propagation of the Pashto language and literature and for the dissemination of Pathan culture in Afghanistan. Actually it serves the double purpose of a Pashto Academy and a mighty machine that is zealously advocating the Pathanistan ideal.*

The report went on to give the names of all the Afghan journals, most of them in Pashto, which advocated this ideal in Pakistan.⁴⁷

Not only the Pashto publications of Afghanistan but even those of Pakistan, at least before 1958 when martial law was imposed, were reported to have *contained highly objectionable matter advocating the cause of Pukhtoonistan and the disintegration of West Pakistan*.⁴⁸

⁴¹Letter from Chief Secretary NWFP Government to Assistant Secretary Government of Pakistan, Ministry of States and Frontier Regions, NDC Letters 823/STB/128 [17 April 1950a]

⁴²Letter from Political Agent, South Waziristan, to the Chief Secretary, NWFP Government, NDC Letters 12/S-8/49 [19 January 1950b]

⁴³in South Waziristan

⁴⁴Special Diary of the NWFP Police, NDC Letters 8 [18 April 1950d]

⁴⁵Notes on Pathanistan Propaganda, by Local Administration, NDC Letters [22 August 1950c]

⁴⁶Letter from Director of Information, Peshawar, to the Resident and Commissioner, Frontier Regions, Peshawar, NDC Letters 30/122/ID [14 October 1959e]

⁴⁷Letter from Director of Information, Peshawar, NDC Letters 7815/ID [1960f]

⁴⁸LAD:F [29 September 1950i], p. 39-40

Such reports made government officials so distrustful of Pashto that all Pashto publications and all efforts to develop the language were monitored by the police. For instance, when the Pashto weekly *Jamhuriat* published a poem on 8 April 1960 entitled *Rahman Baba and Pashto* exhorting the Pakhtuns to promote their language, it was reported at once, as were all other such efforts.⁴⁹ Indeed, at the height of the Pakhtunistan issue in the 1950s and 1960s, the government can be said to have been paranoid about Pashto which it took to be the major visible symbol of Pakhtun ethno-nationalism.

3.2 The status of Pashto

The NWFP Legislative Assembly, dominated by Khan Abdul Qaiyum Khan's Muslim League, proved its Pakistani credentials by moving the Urdu resolution which was meant to make Urdu rather than English, or Pashto, the language of the courts in 1950.⁵⁰ It was later reported that Urdu was used in the lower courts though the higher courts continued functioning in English. Pashto was given no official status though it was, of course, used informally because most people who thronged the courts understood no other language.⁵¹ As for the domain of education, Mian Jafar Khan, the Minister of Education, replied as follows in the Assembly:

*Pashto is a subject of study in all schools in the Pashto speaking areas of the province. It is also an official subject in the middle and high schools as well as in the university.*⁵²

This, however, was merely the letter of the law. In practice, Pashto could not be introduced in elitist schools at all. For instance, replying to a question about a recently opened public school in Peshawar cantonment, the Minister of Education said:

*It is a Military school and is directly under the supervision and control of the Military authorities. The Provincial Government has nothing to do with the affairs of this school.*⁵³

Apart from elitist schools controlled by the army and the air force, the provincial government also could not dictate to private schools. Thus, the English medium schools of the NWFP never included Pashto in their curricula.

Even schools controlled by the government, where Pashto was the medium of instruction in class 1 and 2 and a compulsory subject up to class 5, did not teach Pashto well. Sometimes there were too few teachers (Carter, 1991) and at other times students were not encouraged to take it as an optional subject from the 6th to the 10th class.⁵⁴

Even in the Tribal Agencies, where hardly any language but Pashto is understood, the children are not always taught in it. A recent US Aid survey of the Kurram Agency tells us that the *formal medium of instruction remains Urdu*.⁵⁵ This is rather surprising in view of the fact that as far back as 1922-27, Pashto was taught in this Agency. The Report of Public Instruction of 1922-27 states:

⁴⁹LAD:F [7 Nov 1952j], p. 8-9

⁵⁰LAD:F [13 March 1952k], p. 21

⁵¹LAD:F [22 November 1952l], p. 29

⁵²LAD:F [17 November 1952m], p. 5-6

⁵³*Editorial of Pakhto February 1970b*, p. 2-3

⁵⁴Report on Public Instruction: NWFP [1927a], p. 89

⁵⁵Ibid.

*An interesting feature of the Kurram schools is the prominence given to Pushtu, which forms pan of the school course for primary classes. The subject is said to be well taught.*⁵⁶

But this was perhaps exceptional, as it was the initiative of the Political Agent who also encouraged the publication of a Pashto newspaper, the *Kurram Times*, at that time.(Carter, 1991, p. 82) Similarly, the Frontier Boy Scout magazine was edited in both Urdu and Pashto in the 1930s.(Carter and Raza, 1990)

At present, the report on the Kurram Agency says that the use of Urdu *may increase attrition by discouraging the students.*(Carter and Raza, 1990, p. 69) In South Waziristan, too, the medium of instruction in primary schools *appears to be primarily Urdu.*⁵⁷ In this case the report adds:

Sources say that this is mainly because the Pushto text books in use in the settled areas of N.W.F.P. are written in the Yusufzai dialect, which is not the dialect in use in the Agency.(Carter and Raza, 1990, p. 69)

This problem was noticed by the Evaluation Report of the Primary Pashto Text Books Translation Project,⁵⁸ but it did not prevent Pashto from being used in the settled areas.

The teachers were said to be the source of the problem, as many of them are Hindko speakers from D.I. Khan and accordingly either do not speak Pushto or are not very comfortable in that language.(Amin, 1988, p. 192) However, this too has not been proved and an existing survey suggests that most teachers can use Pashto in the class.⁵⁹

Pashto was not introduced as a medium of instruction even at the primary school level (i.e. class 1 to 4) until 1984 when the country was under martial law and many Afghan leaders were fighting against the Soviet Army with the support of the Pakistani government. In any case, by now most Pakhtuns, expressing sympathy with the Afghans, had moved away from the demand for Pakhtunistan. The members of the Pakhtun elite had been co-opted by the Pakistani ruling elite.⁶⁰ Even so, even in 1984 it was only introduced in selected areas of the NWFP.⁶¹ Simultaneously, a Pashto Text Books Translation project was also launched. This project was evaluated by a committee in 1989 which pointed out, inter alia, that:

1. Pashto was not introduced simultaneously in all primary schools nor is it being taught as a subject in Urdu-medium schools.
2. Achievement tests show an improvement in Pushto medium schools over Urdu medium schools.
3. The drop-out rate in the Urdu medium and the Pushto medium schools is the same.⁶²

⁵⁶ *Report on Public Instruction: NWFP [1939b]*, p. 107

⁵⁷ Evaluation Report on the Primary Pashto Text-Books Translation Project, Education Department, Government of NWFP, Peshawar [1991], p. 28

⁵⁸ Human Resources Survey: Teacher Supply and Distribution: Interim Report for Semi-Urban Villages, Directorate of Primary Education, Peshawar, NWFP [1991]

⁵⁹ Evaluation Report on the Primary Pashto Text-Books Translation Project, Education Department, Government of NWFP, Peshawar (as in n. 57), p. 1

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1-4

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 38

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 40

In other words, the use of Pashto in the primary classes was a success in pedagogical terms. But there are numerous other problems which the responses to the questionnaires given to teachers, parents and administrators revealed. The major problem was that of the ghettoizing potential of the language. If the student had to switch over to Urdu (and at the highest levels English) and employment was available only in those languages, it appeared wasteful to parents to teach their children in Pashto.⁶³ Perhaps, because of the devaluation of Pashto in the domains of power, ordinary people feel that it cannot be used in those circumstances. As the report put it:

*Psychologically, the people are not used to be convinced [sic] of the fact that Pashto should acquire a privileged place in the school curriculum.*⁶⁴

In short, because Pashto is still not used as an official language, it occupies a peripheral position even in the areas in which it has been introduced. It is arguable then that the apparent change in the status of Pashto is merely cosmetic. It is peripheral in non-elitist schools and non-existent in elitist ones. An example of such a cosmetic change is the use of Pashto in signboards.⁶⁵ Other such examples are Pashto publications, including two dailies and the language planning activities of the Pashto Academy of Peshawar University. These steps make the Pashto-speaking people less critical of the government than before when their language was totally ignored. However, Pashto-speakers still cannot aspire to positions of power in Pakistan without learning Urdu and English.

3.3 The politics of Pashto

Soon after the creation of Pakistan, as we have seen, the Pakhtun nationalists were associated both with Afghan irredentism⁶⁶ and socialism. Ghaffar Khan was in touch with both India and Kabul and Wali Khan was widely suspected of being lukewarm towards Pakistan. As Pakhtun nationalists, the supporters of Ghaffar Khan and his son Wali Khan, gave primacy to their Pakhtun identity over their Muslim or Pakistani identity, and discussions over this would grow bitter. Once Khan Qaiyum even refused to shake hands with Samin Jan Khan, a member of the ethnonationalist opposition, because the latter had said that he was *a Pathan as well as a Muslim*.⁶⁷

Pashto, being the visible symbol of this identity, was always supported by the Pakhtun nationalists; thus, Wali Khan continued to give statements in support of Pashto.⁶⁸ His elder brother, Ghani Khan, also voiced similar views, though he declared that he was not against Urdu and was only articulating the reaction to its imposition in the NWFP.⁶⁹

The NWFP was merged with West Pakistan according to a resolution passed by the provincial assembly on 25 November 1954.⁷⁰ Soon after this, Ghaffar Khan spoke bitterly against Punjabi domination on

⁶³See Editorial of Pakhto December 1969a, p. 7-10 for the complaint that even signboards were only in Urdu. Bengali and English before 1970.

⁶⁴LAD:F [7 March 1952n], p. 35

⁶⁵Pakistan Times [1 August 1962a]

⁶⁶The Pakhtunistan claim on Pakistani territory mentioned earlier

⁶⁷Frontier Post [22 October 1989d]

⁶⁸LAD:F [25 November 1954o], p. 23

⁶⁹Ghaffar Khan, Speech Against One-Unit, Criminal Investigation Department, NDC Letters (Acc No. 234) 24 April 1956. A forum meant to oppose the amalgamation of all the provinces of West Pakistan into one unit

⁷⁰Tariq Rahman, Interview of Rajwali Khattak on 2 Nov 1993, New Times 4 May 1972

the platform of the Anti-One Unit Front.⁷¹

The National Awami Party (NAP) continued supporting Pashto throughout the period of the One Unit, and during Yahya Khan's government. However, when it came into power in coalition with the Jamiat-e-Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) in the NWFP from April 1972 to February 1973, it moved away from Pashto. The Education Minister, Ameerzada Khan, who was from NAP, is said to have turned down the request of members of his party to give Pashto a higher status.⁷² Instead, the NAP chose to declare Urdu the official language of the NWFP and assured the PPP's leadership that it would support Pakistan's integrity and had left the Pushtunistan issue behind.⁷³ Thus the NAP leaders, keen to prove their loyalty to Pakistan to stay in power, chose to ignore ethnic symbolism. Even so, Bhutto wrested power from the hands of NAP and banned the party.

Pashto did, however, remain an issue in the legislative assembly. Although the text of the debates of the 1970s is in Urdu, many people actually spoke in Pashto and a translation was given. Moreover, the translation of the verse from the Holy Quran is generally in Pashto also. The fact that members of the NAP took their oath in Pashto and delivered speeches in it, politicized the language issue. In the session of 3 May 1972 some members from Hazara protested that translation of Pashto speeches was not being provided to them.⁷⁴ The debate became so acrimonious that on 14 June 1972, the opposition, led by the PPP's Hayat Mohammad Shepao, staged a walkout⁷⁵ and there was much discussion of the issue in subsequent sessions.⁷⁶ The point was that, despite Urdu being the official language of the NWFP, the PPP saw the NAP as the supporter of Pashto in its role of a Pakhtun identity-marker; and this, indeed, was the way in which members of the NAP saw it themselves. Hence, the significance of the use and non-use of Pashto in the legislature.

Noting the contradiction in NAP's attitude towards Urdu, its opponents sought to embarrass it with accusations of not promoting it. Thus Maulana Habib Gul asked the government what was being done to make Urdu the official language of the NWFP and pointed out that English boards were being put outside ministers offices.⁷⁷ The Chief Minister, Inayatullah Gandapur, replied that three committees were working on the issue. Habib Gul, however, repeated his question later saying that he was not satisfied with the work of the committees. (Rahman) During Zia ul Haq's days, the martial-law administrator and Governor of the NWFP, Lt.-General Fazle Haq, discouraged Pashto at least in the beginning of the military rule. He often told the members of his Council, the equivalent of the Legislative Assembly in that period, to use Urdu⁷⁸ and once declared that only in Mardan did most people speak Pashto. As for the other cities, he presented the following figures (only for the cities and not the areas around them):

1. Peshawar - 70% spoke Hindko
2. Kohat - 70% spoke Hindko
3. Dera Ismail Khan - 90% spoke Hindko

⁷¹Nawae Waqt [12 May 1972b] and Amin, p. 125

⁷²LAD:F [3 May 1972p], p. 7

⁷³LAD:F [15 June 1972q], p. 17-19

⁷⁴LAD:F [16 June 1972r] and LAD:F [28 June 1973s], p. 30-51

⁷⁵LAD:F [21 November 1975t], p. 15-16

⁷⁶LAD:F [6 July 1980u], p. 48

⁷⁷LAD:F [27 February 1983w], p. 103 and LAD:F [5 October 1980v], p. 90

⁷⁸Muslim [30 April 1987c]

4. Bannu - 40% spoke Hindko
5. Abottabad and Mansehra - 100% spoke Hindko

From these figures, for which no empirical evidence was provided, he concluded that the medium of instruction could not be Pashto unless the teachers were trained first.

This emphasis on Urdu was in keeping with Zia ul Haq's use of Islam and Urdu as symbols of national integration and political legitimacy. The opponents of military rule, of course, played down the significance of these symbols and promoted others. Pashto, then, was one of the symbols promoted to oppose the military's centrist ideology.

Another such symbol was the process of modernization and standardization (i.e. corpus planning) in Pashto. Both were ideologically motivated. The Pashto Academy of Peshawar uses Urdu, English and Perso-Arabic roots; those who emphasize the Muslim identity use Perso-Arabic roots while the ethnonationalists prefer indigenous roots which, they feel, are symbolic of their distinctive identity. For reasons of identity, again, most Pakhtuns oppose giving up the distinctive letters of the Pashto alphabet. Among the anti-Zia circles in the NWFP, this was used to express opposition to authoritarian federal rule, martial law, Islamization and support of the Afghan Islamic resistance to Soviet intervention. This role was evident at the World Pashto Conference held at Peshawar on 22 April 1987. Renowned anti-establishment figures like Ghaffar Khan and Wali Khan expressed satisfaction with the conference. Representatives of left-leaning political parties like the PPP, Mazdur Kisan Party and the Pakhtun Students Federation, and of course the ANP, attended it. The conference expressed solidarity with the communist revolution in Afghanistan and the poet Hamza Shinwari made the demand that Pashto be introduced at a high level and its use promoted in all domains.

After the 1993 October elections, the ANP was again in power in coalition with the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) in the NWFP. However, because the PML-N is rightist and centrist in ideology, there was no significant change in the status of Pashto. In future too, despite the populist rhetoric of the PPP, which is in power again at the moment of writing (May 1994), only cosmetic changes may be made, but any major change, such as the use of Pashto in the domains of power, will strengthen the Pakhtun identity and concede the multi-national thesis. The ruling elite does not appear to be inclined to concede that and thereby reduce its own power in the provinces of the country.

4 Conclusion

Pashto has been manipulated as a symbol of Pakhtun identity by the ethnonationalist Pakhtun leaders – such as Ghaffar Khan, Wali Khan and other ANP leaders – since the late 1920s. They wanted Pashto to be used in the domains of power and to make it the major marker of their identity. It was a way of mobilizing the Pakhtuns as a pressure group to agitate for their rights and autonomy on the basis of an identity-marker less elusive than the code of values called Pakhtunwali. As the movement was anti-imperialist, the British did not allow it to succeed.

The government of Pakistan, faced with irredentist claims from Afghanistan on its territory, also discouraged the Pashto Movement and eventually allowed its use in peripheral domains only after the Pakhtun elite had been co-opted by the ruling elite. The ethnonationalist Pakhtun protoelite did use Pashto as an ethnic symbol. However, as its secessionist stance changed to autonomist, Pashto became

a counter-hegemonic symbol of mere cultural autonomy. Thus, even though there is still an active desire among some Pakhtun activists to use Pashto in the domains of power, it is more of a symbol of Pakhtun identity than one of nationalism.

In short, a study of the Pashto Movement facilitates our understanding of how language helps a group of people to see themselves as a collectivity or to use this self-perception to gain power. As this phenomenon – the assertion of group or ethnic-identity – is the major problem of Pakistan’s politics, this study may contribute in some small way towards an understanding of the relationship between language and the politics of that country.

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