



BALOCHIS OF PAKISTAN: ON THE MARGINS OF HISTORY

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PREFACE

The Foreign Policy Centre is keen to promote debate about some of the world's lesser known conflicts. The situation in Balochistan is one such example. This pamphlet sets out a powerful and well argued case that the Balochi people have been let down - by the British Empire, by the founders of modern India and by successive Governments in Pakistan. It is a fascinating analysis which we hope will contribute to constructive discussion about Balochistan's future.

– The Foreign Policy Centre

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ABSTRACT

The Balochis, like the Kurds, their cousins from Aleppo, do not have a sovereign state of their own. The colonial policy of drawing up state boundaries in the 19th century disregarded Balochi claims and divided an otherwise contiguous geographical terrain— spanning from Bandar Abbas in the west to Jacobabad on the east and from the Makran coast in the south to the Toba Kakar range in the north— among three states, i.e., Iran, British India and Afghanistan. The colonial cartographic adventure succeeded basically because the Balochi state had existed all through history as a loose confederacy which could not unite into a formidable force to challenge the colonial might and thus the Balochi claims were ignored without much concern. The Balochis living in the then British India, and subsequently Pakistan, are more numerous than their cousins in Iran and Afghanistan and are the focus of the study in this paper. The paper argues that the colonial division weakened the capacities of the Balochis further, yet, there was an attempt to unite them in the late 1920s. After the partition of British India into India and Pakistan, the Balochis sought complete independence. But they were soon overtaken by history and the Pakistani leadership, like the colonial predecessors, forced the annexation of the Balochi state, the Khanate, operating from Kalat. Ever since, the Balochis have not quite accepted the accession by a Balochi Khan under duress. The popular disaffection has simmered for years and the Balochis have risen in armed revolt against the Pakistani four times since 1947. The Pakistani state, in view of its critical dependence on the natural resources— including vast reserves of hydrocarbon, coal, copper and uranium, has tried its best to suppress the Balochi unrest with a heavy hand. On the one hand it has managed to quell Balochi rebellions. However, the coercive state apparatus, on the other hand, has strengthened the resolve of the Balochis and they have resurfaced like the Phoenix from the ashes again



and again, moving into higher levels of resistance in each successive appearance. This paper argues that with the gradual dismantling of the age-old 'Sardari' (tribal leader) system, a new generation of leaders is taking roots among the Balochis and these young and dynamic leaders are at the forefront of the Balochi struggle now. The Balochis have also started defining their nationhood consciously and have assumed greater international visibility now than ever before. While there are many weaknesses within the movement, the spirit of independence and the will to fight until the last breath, partly induced by the undemocratic and excessive measures by the Pakistani state, may turn the tide in favour of the Balochis, but only if there is exemplary leadership, a long-term strategy and the resources to keep the movement alive.



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THE BALOCH AND BALOCHISTAN THROUGH HISTORY

*“If you see the sun red.....any redness in flowers,
these must be the blood of my people.”*
Ghulam Rasool Mulla (1939-)

The Balochi¹ ethno-national identity has convincing claims about its origin and development over time in history. The Balochis claim that they have been a self-differentiating and self-defining ethno-cultural category throughout history even if they did not have the required sense of social or political solidarity to assert themselves as a nation— as it is understood in present day world— for the most part of their history.

The Balochis trace their origin to Aleppo, in northern Syria, a strategic trading point, midway between the Mediterranean Sea and the Euphrates along the river Quweiq. They are ethnically related to the Kurds and they started leaving the region from the 4th until about the 7th century AD. The Kurds went to Iraq, Turkey and northern Persia while Balochis came to Persia and the southern Caspian region and over a period of time entered southern Iran and south-west Pakistan. During the course of their nomadic existence, the Balochis settled down around the rather uninhabitable terrain extending from the Iranian coast of Bandar Abbas and Chah Bahar in the Iranian province of Sistan y Balochistan to the Pakistani coast of Karachi in the south, the southern areas of the Afghan districts of Nimruz, Helmund and Kandahar in the north-west to the district of Dera Ghazi Khan in Pakistani Punjab in the north-east. One also finds ethnic Baloch speaking population in Turkmenistan, as well as Balochi migrants in the Arab sheikhdoms and even in some East African states.

A Brief Prologue

History has been rather callous to the fate of the Balochis² ever since they stepped out of Aleppo (in Syria) going northward in the last century BC and inhabited the southern shores of Caspian before migrating southward again to what is now southern Afghanistan, south-eastern Iran and western Pakistan. This migration occurred in waves



over centuries. This ethnic group was closely related to the Kurds who also claim similar ethnic genealogy, which is somewhat endorsed by the linguistic affinity between Kurdish and Balochi language.³ During the course of their journey through other civilisations and cultures, the Balochi language was influenced by other languages like Persian, Dravidian, Urdu, Pushtu and many others.

The Khanate of Kalat: Between Dependency and Sovereignty

Balochi entry into the region, then known as Turan, followed the invasion by Alexander, predating the Islamic invasion in the 7th and 8th centuries. Those living around Kalat, later the nerve centre of Balochi rule, were the subjects of Sewai Hindus until the 16th century when the Mughals and Balochis drove the Sewais out of Kalat. The Balochis came of age politically only in the 15th century as an assertive community during the Rind era (circa 1400-1600). The feud between Rinds and Lasharis, both Balochis, continued for 30 years and led to the disintegration of the Balochis who then migrated towards Sindh, Punjab, Delhi, Junagarh, Mysore and even Deccan India. During the early part of their assertion, the Balochis had to fight with the powerful Mughals and could not quite achieve any autonomy until around 1666 A.D. when Mir Ahmed Khan of Kambarani tribe started the Ahmedzai dynasty which continued to rule up to the 1850s, when the British conquered the entire terrain.

If one studies the people loosely identified as Balochis through history one finds that they are an amalgam of two distinct linguistic groups, i.e., Balochi and Brahui. Linguistically, Balochi belongs to the western group of the Iranian branch of the Indo-European languages, and is closely related to Kurdish and Persian, while Brahui is Dravidian in origin. It was only in late 15th and early 16th centuries that for the first time some early trace of Balochi nationalism came to the fore, with the rise of Mir Chakar Rind (1487-1511). The intra-Baloch, Rind-Lashari, feud that culminated in a civil war and ruined the kingdom of Mir Chakar and the large-scale migration of the Balochis during Mir Chakar's forays into the areas now known as Punjab and Sind, defused the spirit of the Balochis. The next high-point of Balochi nationalism is supposed to have been reached under the Kalat confederacy in late 17th century AD (probably from 1666). The Kalat confederacy, based in the Kalat



highlands south-west of Sibi⁴ was established by Ahmedzai rulers, who were ironically Pathans or Pushtuns, but later they adopted the language, life-style and tribal mores of the Brahui speaking people who were more numerous in the terrain named after Balochis.⁵

During the initial phase of Ahmedzai rule, the Balochis tried to maintain good relations with the Mughals.⁶ As far as their administrative system is concerned, the Balochis developed the *sardari* system during the Rind era in early 15th century which is prevalent even today. The *sardars* pledged their loyalty to the Baloch Khan at Kalat and defended Khan's khanate or kingdom against any outside attack or provided the Khan with material and moral help during his campaigns. It was a well-federated system operating through tribal loyalty and a system of patronage. Ordinary Balochis were resigned to rule by the Sardars and were characterised by the British as 'slaves of the sardars'.

The 4th Khan of Kalat, Abdullah Khan, claimed the allegiance of Balochis from Kandahar across Makran to Bandar Abbas in Iran. The Mughals of India could not subdue the Balochis and the decline and fall of the Mughal Empire after the death of Aurangzeb strengthened the peripheral feudatories like the Khan of Kalat. This post-Mughal phase of Indian history saw the rise of Nasir Khan who ruled over Balochistan from 1741 until his death in 1794. To begin with, Nasir Khan owed allegiance to the Persian king Nadir Shah who had plundered Delhi in 1739 and took away the famous Peacock throne built by Shah Jehan, studded with gemstones and diamonds. Both Nadir Shah of Persia whose expedition to India was helped by Mehrab Khan and Ahmed Shah Durrani of Afghanistan, helped Nasir Khan to win the war of succession in Kalat (after Mehrab Khan) and assume throne in 1741. Nasir Khan paid tribute to Nadir Shah until the latter's assassination in 1747.

It was during the reign of Ahmedzai ruler Nasir Khan I (ruled 1749-1794) that Turan region was renamed "Balochistan" and Balochis regard his rule as a golden period in Balochi history. Nasir Khan ruled through a council of Sardars, and representatives from the area who paid tribute to Kalat. Even if the Khans ruled more or less independently within their Khanate, they swore loyalty to the emperors of their times, Mughals of Delhi (until 1707), Persian king Nadir Shah (until 1747) and later Afghan king Ahmad Shah Abdali. During the third battle of Panipat, the Balochis



helped Abdali with 25,000 troops. It was typical of the empire system of the medieval times to have tributaries spread around a powerful centre. In that sense the rulers of the area we know as Sindh and Balochistan today did not quite evolve as fully independent sovereign power centres.

Situated at the tri-junction of Persia, Afghanistan and the Indian subcontinent, the state of Kalat, which emerged as Balochistan, was inevitably vulnerable to the influence of the more powerful kingdoms in the neighbourhood. After Nadir Shah, the ruler of Afghan, Ahmed Shah Durrani emerged as relatively more powerful and demanded the allegiance of Nasir Khan and was obliged for 11 years, i.e., from 1747 until 1758, when the Balochi army fought back Durrani's forces bravely.

From 1758, until Nasir Khan's death in 1794, the Kalat confederacy, for the first time perhaps in history, enjoyed real autonomy. From 1805 until the British incursion in 1839, the less talented successors of Nasir Khan maintained nominal independence largely because of the disinterestedness of the rulers in the neighbourhood in the Balochi terrain, largely mountainous, barren, and infertile. The British interest in Balochistan grew during the 1860s and 70s primarily because of the British perception that the Russians might extend their territory southward. The 'Great Game', as the British imperial policy came to be known during that period dragged Balochistan into the vortex of power politics.

The Balochis, overwhelmingly Muslims,⁷ therefore, did not experience any autonomous, unified and centralised administration over the terrain they inhabited over the years even if a sense of independent identity started emerging over time, especially during the 17th and 18th centuries AD. The more powerful kingdoms in the neighbourhood in India, Iran and Afghanistan subsumed the terrain inhabited by the Balochis and subsumed it into their tributary states. Even Nasir Khan, the sixth Khan of Kalat and the most powerful of the Balochi sardars, was paying tributes to Nadir Shah of Persia (Iran) until the latter's assassination in 1747 and to Ahmed Shah Duranni of Afghanistan until 1758. After 1758, Balochistan remained an ally of Afghanistan and enjoyed a greater degree of autonomy until the British defeated the successors of Nasir Khan (who passed away in 1794) in 1854 and entered into a treaty with the then Khan of Kalat, to defend his territories against an external invasion from Central Asia and Iran.



The Colonial Era: The British Policy of Divide et Empera

After the death of Nasir Khan in 1794, his successors could not bring the Balochis together and the advent of the British introduced a different dimension to the inter-tribal relationship. In fact, by 1839, the British had already made their presence felt in the region and by 1876, the Balochi Sardars rallied around Robert G. Sandeman⁸ and demanded that Sandeman be given the right to mediate differences between the tribes, which was earlier the proud privilege of the Khan of Kalat. The pledge of loyalty to the Khan was made conditional and Khanate became a loose federation, a ghost of its former self. In the same treaty the British also forced the Khan to lease away Quetta, Nushki, Nasirabad and Bolan.

Realising the importance of Balochistan as a strategic buffer zone, the British colonial authorities decided to demarcate the boundaries of the territory under their control with Iran in the early 1870s and later with Afghanistan between 1896 and 1905. In 1871, Major General Frederick Goldsmith⁹ was appointed Chief Commissioner of the joint Perso-Baloch Boundary Commission and the decision of the commission was not acceptable to the Balochis, because the British were seen too eager to woo the Iranians away from the Russians by gifting away some portions of Balochi territory.¹⁰ Later, in 1896 and 1905, an Anglo-Persian Joint Boundary Commission was appointed under the chairmanship of Sir Henry McMahon to finalise the demarcation of boundary between Iran and Britain on the one hand and between Britain and Afghanistan on the other.

Boundary Demarcation and Trifurcation of Baloch terrain

Inayatullah Baloch writes in his book, *The Problem of Greater Balochistan*, that the British ignored all evidence of certain areas coming under the jurisdiction or influence of the Khan of Kalat and gifted them away to either Iran or Afghanistan, in a bid to placate the rulers in these two countries and befriend them in apprehension of an attack from the Russian side. This was the 'Great Game' of those times and the Baloch had to pay dearly for the selfish motives of the colonial rulers. In fact, a secret diary prepared by the British representative at Kalat on April 20, 1872, to the British Government of India suggested that Sardar Ibrahim



Khan Sanjrani of Chakansur (Outer Seistan) acted as a vassal of the Khanate. Sir Robert Sandeman, in the letters to Lord Curzon dated November 22, 1891 and January 12, 1892, also described the western limits of the Khanate as Hassanabad Q (Irani-Seistan) and the Helmand river near Rudbar in Afghanistan. The final demarcation of Seistan took place in 1904 by the British Commissioner, Sir Henry McMahon, but the historical right of the Khanate and the principle of the right to self-determination were ignored. Sanjrani, chief of Chakansur, refused to acknowledge the Afghan rule under Amir Abdul Rahman. Nonetheless, the Kabul policy of British India encouraged Abdul Rahman to occupy the country. Nothing was known about the reaction of Mir Khudadad Khan, the then ruler of Balochistan.

The Baloch-Afghan or McMahon Line covers an area from New Chaman to the Perso-Baloch border. The boundary was demarcated by the Indo-Afghan Boundary Commission headed by Capt. (later Sir) A. Henry McMahon in 1896. "The boundary runs through the Baloch country, dividing one family from another and one tribe from another", according to Inayatullah Baloch. As the Khan was not consulted by the British in the demarcation of the Perso-Baloch Frontier, the validity of the line was seen as doubtful by the Balochis. The partition of Balochistan took place without taking into consideration the 4 factors of geography, culture, history, and the will of the people. The final outcome of the boundary settlements imposed on the Baloch was:

1. Seistan and Western Makran, Sarhad, etc. became part of Iran.
2. Outer Seistan and Registan came under the control of Afghanistan.
3. Jacobabad, Derajat and Sibi were included in British India.
4. The Khanate of Balochistan was recognised as an independent state with the status of a protectorate.¹¹

During the process of demarcation of the frontier, several areas of the Khanate of Balochistan were surrendered by the British authorities to Iran and Afghanistan. The change in the British approach was visible in the way the Khan was treated during the negotiations. In 1871, the Khan was allowed to participate and the commission was called The Perso-Baloch Boundary Commission, but in 1896, it was called The Anglo-Persian Joint Boundary Commission. The Balochis had for all practical purposes lost their independence and autonomy.



By 1905, the demarcation of the boundary between British India and Iran on the one hand and between British India and Afghanistan on the other had quite effectively and unalterably divided the Balochis among three states – British India, Afghanistan and Iran. The Khanate lost its previous glory. Even inside Balochistan, direct British rule was imposed on certain strategic areas like Derajati, Jacobabad and Sibi while the rest of the Balochi territory was under the control of the Khan of Kalat, whose Khanate was a mere protectorate of the British government. In order to further delimit Khan's influence, the British encouraged the vassals of the Khanate in Makran and Las Bela to emerge as separate protectorates and thus there was a practical administrative trifurcation of the Khanate even within British India, i.e., the British Balochistan, the Khanate and Independent princely states of Makran, Kharan and Las Bela, and the tribal territories.

Nevertheless, Baloch tribes in the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century showed their hatred of the unnatural and unjust partition through their revolts against British and Persian rule. Gul Khan, a nationalist writer, wrote: "Due to the decisions of (boundary) Commissions more than half of the territory of Balochistan came under the possession of Iran and less than half of it was given to Afghanistan. The factor for the division of a lordless Balochistan was to please and control the Iran and Afghanistan governments against Russia"¹² in favour of Britain.

In 1932, the Baloch Conference of Jacobabad voiced itself against the Iranian occupation of Western Balochistan. In 1933, Mir Abdul 'Aziz Kurd, a prominent national leader of Balochistan, showed his opposition to the partition and division of Balochistan by publishing the first map of Greater Balochistan. In 1934, Magsi, the head of the Baloch national movement, suggested an armed struggle for the liberation and unification of Balochistan. However, it was a difficult task because of its division into several parts, each part with a different constitutional and political status.

As a border area, the British were more interested in keeping the area calm and quiet. Through the principalities and the tribal sardars, the British had astutely created a system of collaborative administration of the area and its people, which proved effective. The Khanate of Kalat



was completely subdued and with the emasculation of the predominant seat of power in Balochistan, the British had ensured perpetuation of their rule in the entire region. The British system had, in fact, developed a curious sense of 'centripetality' about it too. The moment Pakistan emerged as the heir to the British in 1947, the Shahi Jirga, a remnant of the British system of patronage, consisting of collaborative sardars and feudal overlords, immediately veered around Pakistan and supported Balochistan's accession to Pakistan. The rulers of Kharan and Makran were also too timid to support the Khan.



PAKISTAN ABSORBS THE KHANATE

The Khan of Kalat, who had expressed his enthusiasm for Pakistan as had Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who was the leader of the Muslim League and went on to become the first Governor General of Pakistan, in his payrolls as the legal advisor to the Kalat state, resorted to the legal position that with the lapse of 'paramountcy', leased out territories around Quetta that would return to Kalat and so also Kharan and Las Bela would be left independent to decide to rejoin Kalat.

The British had a relationship of 'paramountcy' with the Indian states or principalities. The rulers of these states enjoyed substantial measure of internal autonomy in exchange for their loyalty to the British. The Khan of Kalat, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan, emphasized on the special status of the Kalat State and in a memorandum to the Cabinet Mission, in 1946, he had highlighted that the governments succeeding the British could only inherit the states that had treaty relations with the British Indian government and not those states whose treaty relations were with Whitehall. As the Cabinet mission could not find flaws with the legality of the demand, it left the issue unresolved. Ironically, Jinnah, as the legal advisor to the Khan had prepared the case in favour of independence of the Kalat state.

By the time the British began their preparations to leave the Indian subcontinent, the state of Kalat had lost much of its past glory, yet it had a functioning government responsible to a parliament, which comprised of two houses, like the British parliament. Its council of ministers included Douglas Fell, a British, who was functioning as the Foreign Minister. In addition it also had Mohammed Ali Jinnah as its legal adviser. According to Baloch nationalists, Jinnah had agreed that the position of the Kalat State was different from that of other Indian princely states. In addition, at a round table conference held in Delhi on August 4, 1947, and attended by Lord Mountbatten, the Khan of Kalat, chief minister of Kalat and Mohammed Ali Jinnah, in his capacity as the legal advisor of Kalat State, it was decided that Kalat State would become independent on August 5, 1947. Subsequently, the rulers of Kharan and Lasbela were informed by the British that control of their regions had been transferred to Kalat State and the Marri and Bugti tribal regions which were under the British



control were also returned into the Kalat fold, thereby bringing the whole of Balochistan under the suzerainty of the Khan of Kalat .

Jinnah as the legal advisor of the Kalat state and Jinnah as the Governor General of Pakistan were two separate characters. Under his leadership as Governor General of Pakistan, the Government of Pakistan— the legal heir of the British imperial system— followed a policy not too different from the policy adopted by the British in 1839 in Kalat. Through gentle but forceful nudges, the principalities of Kharan, Makran and Lasbela were merged into Pakistan in March 1948. There were reports that during this period the Khan had sought Indian help but was turned down. However, Nehru later denied the report.¹³ The rumour was enough for Pakistan to threaten the Khan with preparation for military takeover and on 30 March 1948, in what the Khan construed as a decision taken in the interest of Balochi nation, without obtaining formal sanction from the Balochi Sardars and in opposition to the decision of the Balochi legislature (in October 1947), signed the treaty of merger with Pakistan.¹⁴ In April 1948, Pakistan forced *status quo ante*, i.e., Kalat was to be ruled by an agent of the Pakistani state. The short display of Balochi nationalist defiance under the leadership of Khan's brother, Abdul Karim Khan, continued until 1950, when the latter was captured along with his followers and put behind the bars. He spent 16 out of the rest of his 22 years in Pakistani prisons on charges of sedition.

Partition and the Annexation of Balochistan

"We are Muslims but it (this fact) did not mean (it is) necessary to lose our independence and to merge with other (nations) because of the Muslim (faith). If our accession into Pakistan is necessary, being Muslim, then Muslim states of Afghanistan and Iran should also merge with Pakistan."

Mir Ghaus Bux Bizenjo in 1947-48

The legal status of Kalat was different from that of other princely states in the Indian subcontinent. The 560 odd princely states belonged to Category "A" under the political department. States like Kalat, together with Bhutan, Sikkim etc. were under the External Affairs Department of the Government of India and were in Category "B". The 1876 treaty with the British provided for the independence of Kalat in internal jurisdiction



and non-interference in domestic affairs. It was on this basis that the Khan never joined the Chamber of Princes in Delhi and always maintained that they were on a separate footing and not part of Britain's Indian empire. Thus Kalat in 1947 was not really obliged to join either India or Pakistan. When it was decided to partition India, the last ruler of Kalat, Mir Ahmad Khan made it clear that he sought independence.

In a Memorandum submitted to the British Cabinet Mission in March 1946, the Khan made the following points: First, the Government or Governments succeeding the Raj would inherit only the treaty relationships of the colonial government in New Delhi and not those of Whitehall. Second, after the British left, Kalat would retain the independence it had enjoyed prior to 1876. Third, the Baloch principalities that had been tributaries of Kalat and which were later leased to the British under duress would revert to Kalat. As a result, the Memorandum stated, the Kalat will become fully sovereign and independent in respect to both internal and external affairs and will be free to conclude treaties with any other government or state. It added, "the Khan, his government and his people can never agree to Kalat being included in any form of Indian Union".¹⁵

On August 15, 1947, a day after Pakistan was formally established, the Khan declared Kalat's independence but offered to negotiate a special relationship with Pakistan in the spheres of Defence, Foreign Affairs and Communications. Pakistani leaders rejected this declaration touching off a 9-month diplomatic tug of war that climaxed in the forcible annexation of Kalat.

Pakistan historians have tried to argue that the Khan's stand was not representative of Baloch sentiments and point as evidence to the pro-Pakistan Assembly of Baloch leaders (called Shahi Jirga) held in Quetta on June 29, 1947. However, the participants were those who had been appointed by the British and the Assembly's recommendation related only to British Balochistan.

Apart from declaring independence, the Khan also formed the lower and upper houses of the Kalat Assembly. A meeting of the Kalat National Assembly (elections for which had been held a few weeks earlier) held on August 15, 1947 as well as subsequent meetings of the Assembly,



decided not to join Pakistan and affirmed the position that Kalat was an independent state and would only enter into friendly treaty relations with Pakistan. Amongst those who, in these meetings of the Kalat Assembly spoke in clear terms about the justification for an independent Balochistan was Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, who later became a leader of the National Awami Party and also the Governor of Balochistan for a short period. Bizenjo's speech of December 14, 1947, in the Kalat Assembly is noteworthy for the ample warnings that it conveyed to the Pakistani state:

“We have a distinct civilisation and a separate culture like that of Iran and Afghanistan. We are Muslims but it is not necessary that by virtue of being Muslims we should lose our freedom and merge with others. If the mere fact that we are Muslims requires us to join Pakistan then Afghanistan and Iran, both Muslim countries, should also amalgamate with Pakistan. We were never a part of India before the British rule. *Pakistan's unpleasant and loathsome desire that our national homeland, Balochistan should merge with it is impossible to consider.* We are ready to have friendship with that country on the basis of sovereign equality but by no means ready to merge with Pakistan. *We can survive without Pakistan. But the question is what Pakistan would be without us?* I do not propose to create hurdles for the newly created Pakistan in the matters of defence and external communication. But we want an honourable relationship not a humiliating one. If Pakistan wants to treat us as a sovereign people, we are ready to extend the hand of friendship and cooperation. If Pakistan does not agree to do so, flying in the face of democratic principles, such an attitude will be totally unacceptable to us, and if we are forced to accept this fate then every Baloch son will sacrifice his life in defence of his national freedom.” *(Italics by the author)*¹⁶

On January 4, 1948 the Upper House comprising Sardars discussed the question of a merger with Pakistan and declared “This House is not willing to accept a merger with Pakistan which will endanger the separate existence of the Baloch nation”.

What was the position of the Muslim League on this issue? The League had, in fact, signed a joint statement with Kalat and repeated the declaration two or three times that the League recognised that Kalat



was not an Indian state and constituted an independent entity and the League would recognise and respect this independence. In fact, as late as August 11, 1947 a joint statement was signed in which the League leaders, now as the government of Pakistan, again recognising the independence of Kalat. The operative portions of the communiqué dated August 11, 1947 is worth quoting from:

“As a result of a meeting held between a delegation from Kalat and officials of the Pakistan States Department, presided over by the Crown Representative, and a series of meetings between the Crown Representative, HH the Khan of Kalat, and Mr Jinnah, the following was the situation:

1. The Government of Pakistan recognises Kalat as an independent sovereign state; in treaty relations with British government, with a status different from that of Indian states.
2. Legal opinion will be sought as to whether or not agreements of leases made between the British government and Kalat will be inherited by the Pakistan government.”

Hence, by 1948 there was a situation where Khan of Kalat had declared independence, both houses of the Kalat Assembly had endorsed this decision and rejected accession with Pakistan, the Muslim League had acknowledged the independence of Kalat as late as in August 1947. Despite all this, and despite the close personal relations that Jinnah had with the Khan of Kalat and despite the Khan having made large financial contributions to the Muslim League, on April 1, 1948 the Pakistan Army invaded Kalat. The Khan surrendered and accepted the merger by signing the instrument of accession and ended the 225 days' independence of the Kalat confederacy formed by Mir Ahmad Khan's ancestors almost 300 years earlier.

Why this sudden turn-around? It was British advice that led to the forcible accession of Kalat to Pakistan in 1948. Initially, the British favoured honouring their commitments under the 1876 treaty regarding Kalat's independence based upon the prospects of using an independent Balochistan as a base for their activities in the region. Maj. Gen. R C Money in charge of strategic planning in India had formulated a report in 1944 on the post-war scenario. According to this report, in case of any eventual transfer of power, Balochistan, since it was not formally a part



of India, could serve as a strategic military base for the defence of the Persian Gulf. However, by 1946 when it was decided to partition India, the British felt that instead of locating a base in a weak Balochistan, such a base could be established in Pakistan which was more than willing to accommodate the British. Hence, it was in British interests to ensure that Balochistan was kept within Pakistan and did not become an independent entity.

Not surprisingly therefore, Secretary of State Lord Listowell advised Mountbatten in September 1947 that because of the location of Kalat, it would be too dangerous and risky to allow it to be independent. The British High Commissioner in Pakistan was accordingly asked “to do what he can to guide the Pakistan government away from making any agreement with Kalat which would involve recognition of the state as a separate international entity.” The British were keen to use Balochistan (which they did from 1949) against the new nationalistic government of Prime Minister Mossadegh that came into being in Iran and which had nationalised the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. It was then that the British bases in Western Balochistan started acting against Eastern Iran.¹⁷ Replace the British with the US and the government of Mossadegh with Ahmadinejad and the chilling similarity will not escape anyone’s attention.

After the departure of the British, Pakistan adopted the same imperial tactic of divide and rule, of false promises and deception and made it an inalienable part of Pakistan.¹⁸ By 1952, the princely states were united to form the Balochistan States Union (BSU). Later the BSU became part of the then West Pakistan as the Kalat Division in 1955. Under the one unit scheme started in 1955, in the face of rising assertion of Bengalis in East Pakistan, the British Balochistan along with the tribal agencies became part of West Pakistan as the Quetta Division in the same year. With the abolition of the One Unit plan on 1 July 1970, the combined divisions of Quetta and Kalat came together as the separate province of Balochistan. The one unit plan sought to subsume all ethno-national aspirations in West Pakistan, but in reality, strengthened the ethno-nationalist sentiments further.

The Indian Position

As soon as the possibility of the British leaving India became apparent, the Khan of Kalat (as most of Balochistan was then known)



Mir Ahmed Yar Khan made it clear that he sought independence. His arguments were based on the fact that Kalat had a status different than the 560-odd Indian princely states. It was in direct treaty relations with Whitehall and the 1876 treaty had affirmed that the British “would respect the sovereignty and independence of Kalat”.

Not only Khan, but the goal of the Kalat State National Party, made up largely of educated and left leaning Baloch, was also an independent and unified Balochistan. As a necessary prelude to independence, the party demanded that the British restore the Baloch principalities of Kharan, Makran and Las Bela to Kalat.

The Khan had argued before the Cabinet Mission in March 1946 that since the Empire was being withdrawn those other areas that the British had taken away from the original Kalat state should be returned to Kalat. The Khan followed this up by sending Samad Khan (a member of the AICC) to plead Kalat’s case with the Congress leadership. Nehru, however, totally rejected this contention and stated that the Congress would not accept on any account any attempt to bring about such a deal. Presumably, this was due to the Congress’s antipathy to the princely states without, however, making a distinction between the state of affairs in Kalat and the other princely states.

Subsequently, Ghaus Bux Bizenjo, President of the Kalat State National Party went to Delhi and met Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad, President of the Congress. Azad agreed with Bizenjo’s contention that Balochistan had never been a part of India and had its own independent status governed by the Treaty of 1876. However, Azad argued that the Baloch would never be able to survive as a sovereign, independent state and would ask for British protection. If the British agreed and remained in Balochistan, the sovereignty of the sub-continent would become meaningless. Hence, though Azad admitted that the demands of the Baloch were genuine that Balochistan had never been part of India, yet he could not help in maintaining Kalat’s independence.

A third blow to Kalat was the AIR broadcast of March 27, 1948 that reported a press conference in Delhi addressed by V P Menon. According to the report, V P Menon stated that the Khan of Kalat had been pressing India for agreeing to Kalat’s accession to India instead of Pakistan and



that India had not paid any attention to the suggestion and India had nothing to do with it. The Khan who had the habit of listening to the 9 o'clock AIR news was extremely upset at the dismissive manner in which he had been treated and is reported to have informed Jinnah to begin negotiations for Kalat's treaty relationship with Pakistan. Significantly, the minutes of a Cabinet meeting held on March 29, 1948 as well as Nehru's reply to a question on March 30, 1948 in the Constituent Assembly¹⁹, state that V P Menon had, in fact, made no such comments and that there was an error in reporting by AIR. Despite this attempt at damage control, the damage had already been done.



BALOCH INSURGENCIES 1948-1977²⁰

Wahe Watan O Hushkien Dar
'The fatherland even barren is worth anything'
Balochi saying

"People with a warlike spirit,
wearing exalted plumes, like the cock's comb, on their turbans."
Firdausi in *Shahnama*

The present day insurgency in Balochistan is a continuum of the intermittent guerrilla struggle against the Pakistani state that has characterised Balochistan since 1948. The insurgency in 2004-05 is only different from the ones in 1948-52, 1958-60, 1962-69 and 1973-77 in the scale of the violence and the geographical spread of the insurgency. The causes, the issues, the demands and the goal continue to be the same.

On August 15, 1947, a day after Pakistan came into existence, the Khan of Kalat had declared independence. Kalat's independent status had been affirmed several times by the Muslim League and by the Kalat National Assembly. Despite this, on 1 April 1948, the Pakistan Army marched into Kalat and arrested the Khan who capitulated. His brother, Prince Abdul Karim (with the Khan's tacit approval) however, declared a revolt proclaiming the independence of Kalat and issued a manifesto in the name of the Baloch National Liberation Committee rejecting the accession agreement signed by the Khan. Karim hoped to obtain Afghan support since Afghanistan had objected to the inclusion of the Baloch and Pashtun areas in Pakistan and had even opposed the admission of Pakistan to the United Nations. While the Pakistani version is that Karim received substantial Afghan support, the Baloch nationalist version is that Afghanistan denied support since it favoured the inclusion of Balochistan in Afghanistan rather than an independent Balochistan.

First Guerrilla Revolt

Prince Abdul Karim launched guerrilla operations against the Pakistan Army in Jhalawan district in late May, 1950, but the Khan,



threatened with reprisals by Pakistani Army authorities, persuaded his brother to surrender with assurances of safe conduct and amnesty from the Pakistan Army. Pakistani officers reportedly signed a safe conduct agreement with Abdul Karim's representatives and swore an oath on the Koran to uphold it. However, Pakistani forces dishonoured the agreements by ambushing and arresting the Prince and 102 of his accomplices on their way to Kalat in 1950.

Karim's revolt is important in Baloch history for two reasons. First, it established that the Baloch did not accept the accession of Kalat with Pakistan. Second, it led to the wide-spread Baloch belief that Pakistan had betrayed the safe conduct agreement. The Baloch regard this as a first series of broken treaties that have created distrust between them and Islamabad. Karim and his followers were all sentenced to long prison terms and became rallying symbols for the Baloch liberation movement.

The Second Revolt

The next violent outbreak of Baloch sentiments came in 1958. This was the direct result of the centralising policies pursued by the Pakistani leaders. Fears of Bengali domination in the 1950s had propelled the Punjabi leaders, who controlled the levers of power, to consolidate the Western Wing of Pakistan into a unified province to counter Bengali numerical strength. This One Unit plan was resisted by the Baloch, both by Abdul Karim who had completed his prison term in 1955 and the Khan who mobilised wide spread demonstrations through tribal chieftains.

Balochi nationalists within the Khanate took serious exception to the One Unit scheme and in a meeting with Pakistani president Iskander Mirza in October 1957 they urged Iskander Mirza to exempt Kalat from the One Unit scheme, and to allot more government spending on developmental activities in Kalat. But Ayub Khan's ambitions changed the political matrix in Pakistan and when some Baloch sardars started non-cooperating with the Pakistani commissioner, under a flimsy pretext that the Khan had raised a parallel army to attack Pakistani military, Ayub ordered Pakistani army to march into Kalat on 6 October 1958, a day before he imposed martial rule in Pakistan. The army arrested the Khan and his followers and accused them of secretly negotiating with Afghanistan for a full-scale Baloch rebellion.



The arrest touched off a chain reaction of violence and counter-violence with the government bombing villages suspected of harbouring guerrillas. Pakistan military's campaigns in Danshera and Wad were resisted by the Jhalawan Sardars loyal to the Khan. The octogenarian Chief of the Zehri tribe in Jhalawan, Nauroz Khan put up a stiff resistance in the Mir Ghat mountains, but the Pakistani military swore an oath by the Quran and urged Nauroz to give up arms and prepare for negotiations. Nauroz surrendered in anticipation of safe conduct and amnesty but the army put Nauroz and his sons behind the bars as soon as they laid down their arms. Nauroz's sons were hanged soon afterwards, in Hyderabad and Sukur, in July 1960. A shocked and surprised Nauroz died soon afterwards in Kohlu prison in 1962. Ayub's message to the Balochis of Kalat who were the first to challenge the might of the Pakistani state, was clear. He reportedly threatened the total extinction of Balochis if they did not mend their ways.

The 1958 revolt was followed by the Pakistan Army setting up new garrisons at key points in the interior of Balochistan. This in turn provoked the Baloch to plan for more armed guerrilla movements capable of defending Balochi interests. The movement was led by Sher Mohammed Marri who was far-sighted enough to realise that the disorganised random struggle adopted so far would have to be transformed into a classic guerrilla warfare. For this purpose, he set up a network of base camps spread from the Mengal tribal areas of Jhalawan in the South to the Marri and Bugti areas in the North. The *Pararis*, as the guerrillas were called, ambushed convoys, bombed trains and so on. In retaliation, the army staged savage reprisals. For example, the Army bulldozed 13,000 acres of almond tress owned by Sher Mohammed and his relatives in the Marri area. The fighting continued sporadically until 1969 when the Yahya Khan withdrew the One Unit plan and got the Baloch to agree to a ceasefire. Despite the ceasefire, the *Pararis* assumed that the renewal of the hostilities with Islamabad would be unavoidable sooner or later. As such, the organisational infrastructure was kept intact and cadres continued to be trained.

Third Balochi Resistance: The 1970s

The nationalist Balochis took to rudimentary politics during Ayub's practice of 'Basic Democracy' in Pakistan. They struck a chord of unity



with the Pakhtuns in NWFP and formed a National Awami Party (NAP) upon the dissolution of the One Unit scheme in 1970. In the elections of 1971, while Bhutto's PPP swept the polls in West Pakistan, the NAP won in Balochistan and NWFP. The attacks on Punjabi settlers in Quetta and Mastung in early 1973, the perceived defiance of the Ataullah Mengal-led government in Balochistan and the discovery of a large consignment of weapons in the Iraqi embassy were woven together to be served as conclusive evidence of the Balochis' militant intentions and General Tikka Khan was sent to Balochistan to lead the second military attack on Baloch nationalists. Pakistan, smarting under the shock of vivisection in 1971, certainly over-reacted to the Balochi nationalist assertion.

The immediate provocation for the Baloch resistance was Bhutto's dismissal of the Baloch provincial government in February 1973 in which Ghaus Bux Bizenjo was Governor and Attaullah Mengal Chief Minister. Bhutto alleged that the government had repeatedly exceeded its constitutional authority and alleged that this had been done in collusion with Iraq and the Soviet Union as part of a plot to dismember both Pakistan and Iran. The dismissal was timed with the disclosure of a cache of 300 Soviet sub-machine guns and 48,000 rounds of ammunition allegedly consigned to Baloch leaders that were found in the house of the Iraqi Defence Attaché in Islamabad. It was, however, subsequently revealed that the arms had actually been found in Karachi and were meant for Iranian Baloch in retaliation against Iran's support to Iraqi Kurds and that the Iraqi Defence Attaché had collaborated with Iranian and Pakistani intelligence agents in staging the arms exposure to put pressure on the Iranians.

Following the dismissal of their government, Baloch guerrillas began to ambush army convoys from April 1973. Bhutto retaliated by sending in the army to Balochistan and by putting three veteran nationalist leaders of Balochistan Ghaus Bux Bizenjo, Ataullah Khan Mengal and Khair Bux Marri, behind the bars. The armed struggle continued over the next four years with varying degrees of severity. At the height of the war there were over 80,000 Pakistani troops in the province. The fighting was more wide-spread than it had been in 1950s and 1960s. The guerrillas succeeded by July 1974 to cut off most of the main roads linking Balochistan with surrounding provinces and to periodically disrupt



the Sibi-Harnai rail link thereby blocking coal shipments from the Baloch areas to the Punjab. Additionally, attacks on drilling and survey operations stymied oil exploration activities.

The then Shah of Iran, apprehending trouble in Iranian Balochistan, supported the Pakistan forces in decimating the Baloch resistance. The Shah sent in 30 US Cobra Helicopters manned by Iranian pilots who pounded the Baloch pockets of resistance. The turning point came during the 6-day battle at Chamalang in the Marri area in September 1974. In line with the Pakistan army's scorched earth policy, an army ground and air offensive in the winter of 1974 on the Baloch tribes, largely Marris, along with their families, who had gathered in an annual pilgrimage to the Chamalang plains to graze their flocks, inflicted heavy human and livestock casualties. While casualties on both sides were heavy, the Baloch were unable to regain the military initiative in the ensuing years. Most of the Balochi leaders left Pakistan and went into exile in Afghanistan, the UK and other places outside Pakistan. Several Baloch groups migrated to Afghanistan where they were permitted to set up camps by Mohd Daud. Even if Bhutto claimed to have wiped out Baloch resistance, he played a big role in the transformation of dispersed *Pararis* into the Balochistan People's Liberation Front (BPLF) in 1976, led by Mir Hazar Khan Marri, who broke away from Baloch Students Organisation (BSO) led by Sher Muhammad Marri.

The anti-Bhutto sentiments of the Baloch nationalists were well manipulated by Zia ul Haq after he seized power in 1977 and his show of clemency was received well by many Baloch leaders including the Baloch triumvirate: Ghaus Bux Bizenzo, Ataullah Mengal and Akbar Khan Bugti. However, a rebel faction of the Marris continued defying the Pakistani administration. And, as a proof of the irreconcilability of Balochi nationalism with the Pakistani state-nationalism, the most aggressive and fiercely independent of all Baloch factions, the Baloch Students Union (BSU), reorganised and reasserted itself in the early 1990s.



THE STATE OF NATIONALIST POLITICS TODAY

To understand the current nationalist upsurge in Balochistan it is imperative to isolate the reflexes that characterise the collective sentiments of the people. The strength of nationalist politics depends first and foremost on the way the people perceive their own identity and the way they look at their history, the way they refashion their collective memory and build their own sense of community around common values, aspirations and common attachment to a distinct culture and territory.

Signifiers of Balochi Nationalism

The very fact that the Balochis have stood out both as an other-defined and self-differentiating collective group attests to their claims of a separate ethno-national group. A close study of the history of the terrain around which Baloch people settled, termed as “the place where God dumped all the rubbish of the earth”, suggests that the ethno-cultural identity that flourished irrespective of the politics of war and subordination over history, combined traces of pre-existing culture, i.e., the Dravidian culture in the Indus valley civilization, the Aryan, Hindu and Buddhist civilizations following that and later the Islamic culture that swept the region since 8th century AD. The Baloch national identity crystallised by the 16th century under the leadership of Nasir Khan the Great, and the Balochis were recognised by others as a separate cultural and ethnic group. This is not to deny that since the time of the Greek invasion until the advent of the British, the people inhabiting this terrain had developed certain unique characteristics and it will be useful to see the role of the following markers in the making of Baloch identity.

a) Language

The Balochi and Brahui languages, the two principal vernacular languages spoken in the region bear influences of all these preceding cultures and civilizations. While these languages have played a big role in the evolution of an ethno-national consciousness, in recent years the lack of effort to standardise the Balochi language and the inability to project it as the language of the people has considerably affected the growth and development of a sense of unity among Balochis at the inter-



regional level. However it is a fact that the Baloch language has a long history and a rich tradition and that over time the permeability between the Balochi and Brahui languages has increased. The Baloch nationalists have failed to forge it effectively into their nationalist struggle. It was interesting to find the provincial legislature voting in favour of Urdu as the only official language of Balochistan in 2003. The nationalists in Balochistan accepted it without even a murmur.

b) Islam

The Balochi national identity, as it has been built up by the nationalists, emphasises their distinct tribal character, their centuries old culture and their specific territorial presence. It clearly emerges from the discussion with the leaders of the Balochi movement today that they disregard Islam as a prime component of their national identity when they compare it with the way Islam is woven into the state-nationalist consciousness being patronised by the Pakistani elite. While they accept Islam as an important fact of life conditioning their existence, they do not define it in opposition to India or Hinduism, many would opine.

c) Sardari System

Until the 1990s, an important characteristic of the Balochi nationalist movement has been its proclivities for a Sardari driven socio-cultural system, which is sometimes passionately cited by unthinking nationalists as a typical symbol of Balochi ethnic identity. In fact, some close observers of the Balochi political life have suggested that “Baloch is a slave of his Sardar”. Neither the British nor the Pakistani authorities have done anything to replace the Sardari system with a more, open egalitarian system for the fear of provoking the anger of the Sardars. They have pursued the imperial policy of ruling through collaborators and indirectly strengthened the Sardari system over the years. While this has served as a marker of Baloch national condition, it has inhibited the growth of a pan-Sardar, national solidarity. The inter-tribal, inter-Sardari rivalries, partly traditional and partly constantly reinforced by the Pakistani administration²¹, have disallowed the development of a formidable resistance base among the Balochis.

It is interesting to note, however, that in recent years, a new leadership is emerging from among the Balochis, cutting across different



regions and socio-economic classes.²² They are toeing a separate line and urging the Sardars to leave their collaborative policies and champion the nationalist causes. The process of horizontalisation of the Balochi society and polity may have just begun. The Balochi nationalists may have embarked upon a long journey ahead.

d) Aversion towards Punjabi and Pathan Immigration

The most significant aspect of Balochi nationalism as we find it today has been the pervasive suspicion and fear that the Pakistani authorities have sought to reduce Balochis to a minority in their own province. Many young Balochi nationalists would even hint at the dilemma they are facing these days when they encounter the sad reality of developmental activities— undertaken by the Pakistani authorities in the shape of building highways, developing the port of Gwadar— bringing in a fresh wave of Punjabi and Pakhtun/Pushtun settlers into Balochistan. The Pakistan government on its part has also added to the Balochi sense of insecurity by disregarding Balochi sensitivities and going ahead with its plans of setting up additional military cantonments or regular presence in Gwadar, Kohlu, Sibi, Ormara and Pasni to secure the passageways being built up to facilitate surface trade and commerce through Balochistan.

The economic exploitation of the Balochis has also been a point of unity for the Balochis of late. The UNDP's Pakistan National Human Development Report 2003 shows that out of Pakistan's top 20 most backward districts, 10 lie in Balochistan. Balochistan is the most poorly represented province in national services. There is gross under-representation of Balochis in Pakistan government services, for example, ex-servicemen from Balochistan for the period from 1995-2003 numbered 3,753 men only while the numbers for Punjab and the NWFP for the same period were 1,335,339 and 229,856, respectively. The province, their leaders have argued has not been adequately compensated for the proceeds from the Sui gas fields (total reserve 25.9 trillion cubic metres), as well as the exploitation of the mineral resources of the province. Similarly, they allege that the prosperity of Gwadar port will never accrue to the people of Balochistan and the ongoing grafting of Punjabis and Pathans in the province will create further avenues for these forces to rob Balochistan of its economic resources.



The Post-1980 phase

“A nation which is not governed well is perpetually to be conquered”
Edmund Burke

The post-Bhutto politics of the Balochis, in spite of the strategic show of sympathy from the Zia-ul-Haq administration, has been one of reconciliation and refashioning of their demands in un-aggressive terms. Even if leading Baloch poets like Mir Gul Khan Naseer, Gul Rasool Mullah, Sayad Zahoor Shah continued to urge the Balochis to fight the injustice inflicted on them, the political leadership who stayed back practised caution in projecting their nationalist agendas. The willingness to accept Balochi nationalism as a sub-national strain of wider Pakistani nationalism, conceived in whichever way, Islamic or otherwise, featured prominently in Balochi nationalist discourse. Those in either forced-exile or self-exile, like Atullah Mengal in London and Khair Bux Marri in Afghanistan continued to pitch their demands high.

But most of the other Baloch leaders showed greater moderation, partly because of Zia’s ability to co-opt and defuse them. The former BSO president and guerrilla militant Khair Jan Baloch, for instance, gave up the fight and former Governor Bizenjo created the Pakistan National Party (PNP) in order to put pressure on the regime from inside, for promoting a better functioning of the federal structure enshrined in the Constitution of 1973. Many of the Sardars preferred to collaborate with the centre, which was most willing to co-opt them.

From 1988 onwards, the democratisation process gave even more room for manoeuvre to the Baloch notables in the political arena, and the more they took part competitive elections, the more they became divided. In November 1988, Sardar Akhtar Mengal formed the Balochistan National Movement which played a pivotal role in the new governmental coalition, the Balochistan National Alliance of Nawab Akbar Bugti. However, factional conflicts became more acute when the 1990 interim elections approached. Bugti broke away from the BNA and launched the Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP) which made an alliance with the Pakistan Muslim League of Nawaz Sharif. That was a clear indication of an interesting change in the strategy of the Baloch politicians: factional rivalries within Balochi groups led them to make alliances with



national parties which could help them in getting access to power. Similarly, in 1996 Zulfikar Ali Khan Magsi formed a government with the support of the PPP, of the PML (N) and the JUI.

In December 1991, the factions of Mengal and Bizenjo formed a new party, the Balochistan National Party (BNP). But none of the contenders won a majority of the seats to the provincial assembly in the February 1997 elections. With 10 seats of 43, the BNP was the largest single party and Sardar Ataullah Mengal therefore formed a coalition government with the support of the PPP. Simultaneously, the BNP supported the PML (N) in the National Assembly, another indication of the increasingly pragmatic relationship between the Baloch leaders and the national, mainstream parties.

Mengal resigned in 1998 in protest against the conduct of the nuclear tests in Balochistan because, he claimed, they had been decided without consulting him and the honour of the Balochis was at stake. After he resigned, Mengal reverted back to his traditional Baloch nationalist discourse. In an interview in *The Muslim* he declared: "We are forced to look for our identity". However, the main bones of contention between his government and Nawaz Sharif were not related to the identity question alone. Mengal resented the way the centre kept for itself an unwarranted share of the royalties from gas exploited in Balochistan. He was also very critical of the decisions of the National Finance Commission which, according to him were highly detrimental to Balochistan.

The Contemporary Socio-Political Scenario in Balochistan

Marxist students of Balochi history would tell us that the Baloch people are in a terrible state of disorganisation. Modernisation as a slow but sure process seems to have played an effective role in reorienting the economic relations in a society which was otherwise dominated by a system of economy where the person having power, the Sardar, had access to all lands and in fact had traditional rights of custody over these lands and could bequeath such rights to his progeny. Early British visitors to the Balochi terrain were confounded by the rare show of servile support by ordinary Baloch towards their Sardars. While they called the Pathan of the tribal areas a 'slave of the mullah' he called the Baloch 'a necessary appendage of the Sardar'.



The role of Sardarship in brewing and sustaining isolated local resistance throughout history has been highlighted by many observers too. And many have pointed out that these pockets of resistance, for the very fact that they are isolated and less connected, have made Balochi resistance manageable for all the external powers who have ruled over the Balochi terrain without much trouble.

If the Balochi Sardari system failed, then it is necessary to briefly dwell upon the 'whys' and 'hows' of such a position. Arguments supporting such a viewpoint focus on the following causes: the insertion of a modern educational system, the introduction of a modern means of communication, the increasing penetration of a relatively modern machinery of governance, the appeal of democratic ethos during spells of democracy, the change in the traditional economic structure, and above all the overwhelming desire of the people to shed traditional modes and a willingness to modernise their outlook.

There has been a counter-argument too, of all these changes not having stirred the depths of their being, i.e., they continue to remain backward, celebrate their traditional mode of living and the currents of change have touched only the Sardars and their henchmen who have managed to perpetuate their hold both through their ability to absorb the waves of change and by using their newly acquired intellectual capital. If one looks around the small pockets of development in Balochistan and the relatively low spread of urbanisation one tends to agree with such a point of view.

Against this backdrop, one needs to take into account the success of the coercive methods applied by the Pakistani state since 1970s which perhaps forced the tribal sardars to adopt a changed perspective vis-à-vis their fond dream of raising a movement of resistance in Balochistan. The policy of tactical accommodation adopted by Zia-ul-Haq needs to be mentioned here. Zia-ul-Haq declared a general amnesty for the Balochis taken up as prisoners during the insurgency and sent a serving lieutenant general and the corps commander of Quetta, Rahimuddin Khan, as the Martial Law Administrator and Governor of Balochistan. For the first time in the history of Pakistan, a provincial military regime was established in Balochistan and it was given phenomenal powers. Gen. Rahimuddin Khan wielded enormous powers and isolated areas which acted as pockets of Balochi resistance. He subdued rag-tag Baloch



rebels with an iron fist and was credited with stabilising Balochistan during his reign as the longest serving governor until he was promoted to the rank of full General in 1984. While Zia offered the carrot of amnesty²³, Rahimuddin was given enough freedom to wield the stick in any way he liked. It was strange to observe that no Balochi leader raised his voice against Rahimuddin's high-handedness and his authoritarian policies. Marri and Megal chose to stay out and Nawab Akbar Bugti who had collaborated with Bhutto in his attack on Balochistan was isolated. Rahimuddin adopted a policy of keeping Balochi sardars out of the pale of politics and functioned as a dictator. It is hard to believe that Baloch nationalists tended to ignore his rule. However, it has to be remembered that during this phase the Baloch People's Liberation Front (BPLF) consolidated its position and prepared itself for future action.

As has been the habit of the Pakistani establishment ever since they betrayed the trust of the Balochis in 1947-48, they have adopted a carrot and stick policy very effectively. Ayub advocated a policy of national reconstruction and subsidised all measures that strengthened regional and local culture once he decimated the Khan and quelled the Balochi rebellion at Wad (where the legendary octogenarian, Nauroz Khan, fought with exemplary valour).

The Pakistan government's policy of combining force with pretension played a major role in befooling the Balochi tribal sardars. The Punjabi dominated state structure in Pakistan has successfully inherited this old policy from the British and practised it with impunity, without any bad conscience at all. The rulers of Pakistan, both during democracy and army rule, have been quite impervious to any isolated call for autonomy even within the Pakistani state. The ghost of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) still haunts them and consequently they have used all kinds of methods to subdue regional assertions. They have divided Balochis effectively among different administrative units and through a policy of redistributing areas of tribal influence, akin to gerrymandering, they have reduced the importance of the traditional institution of Sardarship.

The proactive policy of engagement of the Pakistani state in Balochistan in recent years is predicated upon the immense strategic importance of Balochistan for the Pakistani state. Apart from acting as a nuclear wasteland, the province has huge deposits of rich minerals and



most importantly a substantial reserve of gas in the Sui gas fields. The coastline along Gwadar and Pasni also has huge potential for economic and strategic purposes. In contrast, the Pakistani state largely ignored the tribal corridors along NWFP, the infamous FATA, which attracted the attention of the world recently in the wake of the entry of Taliban and Al Qaeda remnants after the war on Afghanistan. The attention of the Pakistani state has been much more focused on Balochistan instead.

Influence of Jihad in Afghanistan

It is important to isolate yet another phenomenon that has undercut the tribal system and diluted nationalist dimension of Balochi identity. It is necessary here also to remember that the province called Balochistan has a very significant Pathan or Pushtun presence in the north and one of easiest links to Afghanistan from Pakistan lies through Chaman. During the years of jihad in Afghanistan, one saw a massive inflow of Afghan refugees into Balochistan, so much so that at one point of time, it was estimated that the urban centres of Balochistan, especially in the north, were swamped by Afghan refugees, who gradually through illegal means acquired Pakistani citizenship and the increased number of Pashtuns in the state reduced Balochis to a minority.

Does Islam blunt Baloch nationalism?

During these years, a slow process of Islamic indoctrination has also taken roots in the state. The rise of MMA in Balochistan in October 2002 is advanced by many as an example of the dent of the Islamist forces in Balochistan which arguably burst open the traditional structure of the Balochi society and spelled the doom for the elitist Sardari system that held its sway for the most part of the history. But such considerations are superfluous and arise out of imagining the Pathan dominated northern Balochistan as the real Balochistan.

Let us analyse this argument here. The following facts have to be taken into account.

- The 2002 elections were held after the delimitation of constituencies, which, if looked at closely and analytically, decreased the importance of the Sardar-led nationalist movements. It was a very shrewd move and it has been adopted quite successfully by all governments in Pakistan starting from Ayub onward.



- The popular participation was at an all time low. According to highly liberal estimates provided by Musharraf's administration, only 28 % voted in the elections, i.e., a meagre 971,814 out of a total registered voter population of 3,413,393. The elections were preceded by the War on Terrorism in Afghanistan which significantly affected the voting pattern.
- If the results are analysed in terms of constituencies, MMA won in the north, Pathan majority areas, while Balochi Nationalist Parties, the National Alliance, PKMAP as well as PMLQ and PPP fared well in other areas.
- The Bugtis retained their hold on the Dera Bugti area while in the southern Brahui and Balochi dominated areas non-MMA parties fared well.
- Even in Quetta, supposedly the hub of MMA politics, the margin of difference was very thin and in case of a larger turnout the MMA would have been less successful. The success of Pakhtun Khwa Milli Awami Party (PPMAP) in one of the segments of Quetta signals the continuation of the Pathan nationalist sentiment, which at the moment due to the widely prevalent pro-Taliban and anti-US sentiments among the Pathans might have translated into MMA support-base but it is too early to predict a sustained MMA constituency in the area.
- Even if MMA manages to prolong its influence it will be limited to the north.
- The issues like additional cantonments in Balochistan had not come up during the elections which would have acted as a spur for the growth of nationalist sentiments.
- The anti-Shia violence in Quetta and some other places in northern Balochistan is rather sporadic and indicative of the sense of acute frustration among the Afghan-returned Jihadis, who are out to exhibit their violence more to demoralise the Musharraf administration than to Islamise politics in Balochistan.

With the above points in mind, it is necessary to reinterpret and re-analyse the pattern of voting behaviour among the Balochis. The conclusion that the Sardari system and Balochi nationalist sentiments are being overridden by Islamist politics is rather premature.



THE BALOCH RESISTANCE MOVEMENT 2000-2006

The rebels among the older generation of Balochis might have given up after the uprising in the early 1970s and its brutal suppression by the Pakistani army, but the clouds of a fresh insurgency have started building up in Balochistan since the beginning of the year 2004. It has even warranted army action since July 2004 and the encounters between the army and insurgents have resulted in quite a few casualties. An underground armed rebel group which calls itself the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA)²⁴ was seen to be operating from early 2000. It has no leadership but has been gathering strength gradually. It is useful to analyse the phenomenon from a strategic perspective.

The current Balochi resistance has been building up for quite some time, especially since federal authorities in Pakistan started developing Gwadar port and road and rail links to it as part of an ambitious project to provide a surface (trade) link with central Asia through Chaman, Kandahar across Afghanistan into central Asia, akin to the Silk Route. This was a fashionable idea during Nawaz Sharif's time, the late 1990s, who was obsessed with motorways, and had sound economic reasons. The Chinese patronage to this idea gave this idea a further boost and it continued after Musharraf's takeover. The resistance from the Balochi side to such federal efforts was limited to the nationalist fringe who came out with the traditional interpretation that even if it would bring development to Balochistan, it would ultimately favour the Punjabis. But the Balochi resistance was submerged in the Islamist fervour that surfaced in the wake of post-9/11 war on terror in the neighbourhood. This was clearly visible from the way the nationalist parties were decimated in the elections in 2002, even if they did not concede the areas where the traditional Sardars held sway, i.e., Khuzdar, Kohlu, Dera Bugti, Kalat, Nushki and Awaran.

But the sense of Balochi disaffection grew up in the aftermath of the attack on Afghanistan, with the establishment of US bases in Pasni, Gwadar, Dalbandin and Jacobabad (in Sind), not so much because of the US army presence but because of the decision of the Musharraf administration to establish some army cantonments in Balochistan, on



the pretext of contributing to the anti-terrorist actions. This was part of a larger plan to consolidate the army's position in the border provinces. The army, as well as the MMA led government could not effectively assuage the Balochi nationalist argument, which was put forward through PONM (Pakistan Oppressed Nations' Movement) platform, that the building up of cantonments will help the Punjabis in strengthening their controls over Balochis and Balochistan. The imperviousness with which the federal administration dealt with the legitimate demands of the Balochis, that they should be considered for recruitment ahead of others in the so-called developmental activities, hardened sentiments further. In a way, Musharraf obliged the Balochi nationalists with a cause they were desperately in need of, to resuscitate Balochi nationalist resistance.

While all this was happening it was interesting to see a younger generation of Balochi leadership taking on the mantle of the resistance movement. This new leadership is removed from the old in terms of its bases of influence, its power of articulation and its ability to look at the Balochi problem in an un-emotional way. The young leaders like Sanaullah Baloch, Hameed Baloch, Amaullah Baloch, who are all associated with the Baloch Students Organisation (BSO, which has become BSO-United), which provided the sparks during the resistance of the 1970s, do not look towards the old traditional Sardari based system of loyalty and privilege for a guaranteed support base and through their appeal and persuasion they have managed to assemble a group, which is modern in its outlook and has the capacity to sustain the Balochi nationalist struggle for a longer period.

This is not to deny that the veterans of the resistance movement in 1950s and 1970s, the 'famous four'— Ghaus Bux Bizenzo, Khair Bux Marri, Nawab Akbar Bugti and Ataullah Mengal— have lost their appeal. The second generation Sardari leadership, i.e., Hasil Bizanzo, Balach Marri, and Akhtar Mengal— are also less feudalistic in their outlook and have expressed their willingness to work together in the ongoing movement.

It needs further mention here that the spark of the ongoing Balochi upsurge started from the areas still under the control of some of these veteran families. It built up around the terrain rich in gas resources and under the control of the Marris and the Bugtis in the districts of Dera



Bugti and Kohlu. Khair Bux Marri and his two sons Balach Khan Mari and Hyrbyahr Marri, along with the sister tribal group, the Bijrani Marris led by the indomitable Sherbaz Marri, have kept the flag of resistance alive in Kohlu, while Nawab Akbar Bugti's successors have jealously guarded their influence in the Bugti region. Since October 2003, the Kohlu and Bugti areas have witnessed sporadic attacks on outposts of the Frontier Constabulary and the Levies. They have also reacted strongly to the idea of building up cantonment in Kohlu. These attacks perhaps encouraged the Balochi nationalists of the south around Kech (Hq. Turbat) and Gwadar and later Khuzdar to resist the idea of stronger and larger army presence in Gwadar. In fact since June 2004 the nationalists even rejected the Mirani dam project close to Turbat and fired several rockets at the project site damaging some parts of it.

The encounters between the army and the Balochi nationalists became regular and more intense since early July 2005 when in response to the rising tide of terrorist attacks in Karachi, Musharraf directed the Gwadar Port Implementation Authority (GPIA) to shift to Gwadar and instructed the army to provide them tight security in view of the earlier attack on the Chinese engineers in April. With the introduction of the regular army into the fight with the Balochi nationalists, the struggle has intensified and with the attacks on the MMA Chief Minister and army men (who were only proceeding on leave) in July-August 2004, the insurgency seemed to be gathering momentum.

The State of Baloch Insurgency

Even if the Baloch resistance started in a low key fashion towards the close of 2000, it gathered momentum from 2003-2004. A hitherto unknown organization called the Baloch Liberation Army began staking its claims for planting mines, firing rockets, exploding bombs and even ambushing military convoys from 2003. However, it was in 2004 that the Pakistani government showed some anxiety and concern over the issue of Baloch resistance. As the work around Gwadar, the construction of the highways and cantonments gathered pace by 2003, the Baloch rebels made their presence felt with equal speed by attacking all the developmental activities. The main argument that the Baloch nationalists advanced was that all this development will flow to outsiders who will flock to their province and take up all the jobs and participate in the



trade and business activities. The Balochis, because of large scale illiteracy and poverty can never avail of the opportunity that such developmental projects provide.

The Balochi rebels were seen to be targeting foreigners and critical facilities aimed at discouraging external participation in the projects on the one hand and discouraging internal efforts by disrupting critical facilities like power and gas on the other. Attacks on security forces also increased day by day. The more high profile acts by the liberationists were the murder of three Chinese engineers working on the Gwadar Port Project, the attack on the Chief Minister's convoy and the attack on Sui Airport Building, as well as regular disruption of power transmission lines and railway-lines, attacks on military and government installations etc.

During 2004 there were 626 rocket attacks, out of which 379 rockets targeted the Sui gas fields and some of them targeted the railway tracks. There were 122 bomb explosions on the gas pipeline. Initially the government ignored the issue, but as the attacks grew in frequency and intensity, the government sent in forces from outside the province and took control of vital installations and engaged the nationalist insurgents. The alleged rape of a Sindhi female doctor by security forces in early 2005 gave a new force to the Baloch movement. The BLA launched a massive attack when the government showed its callousness in dealing with the issue. Hundreds of rockets and mortar shells were fired and there was a heavy gun battle, which lasted for 11 hours. Large-scale damage was inflicted on the property of residents as well as Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL); the town of Sui was cut off from the rest of the country. In a clear demonstration of their determination and strength, the rebels made an attempt to capture the gas field at Sui in January 2005. According to the Pakistan government sources, the rebels fired 14,000 rounds of small arms, 436 mortar and 60 rockets in four days of fighting. By now Nawab Bugti had completely dedicated himself to the Baloch nationalist struggle and his support gave further boost to the movement.

As per media reports, in the fierce engagement, over two dozen security forces were killed in the incidents in Sui and gas supply to major industrial units in the Punjab and Sindh was disrupted.



Subsequently, the Pakistan army rushed in thousands of regular army troops to the area. Even helicopter gunships were marshalled to put down the Bugtis and the Marris. The government attributed the attack to Nawab Bugti and the Pakistani media was replete with stories of how a septugenerian chief of the Bugtis took charge mainly because the Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) refused to finance the lavish lifestyle of Nawab Bugti. It was also reported that the PPL was bankrolling the pay and allowances of Nawab Bugti's personal staff to the tune of Rs 122 million per year. The situation turned even worse even in March 2005 when a minor exchange of fire between the tribesmen and the FC personnel was used as an excuse by security forces to attack the Hindu ghetto in Dera Bugti, which lied just outside the ancestral house of the Nawab, where he was supposed to be hiding. The day-long shelling claimed 67 lives, including 33 Hindus and 8 FC men. Over 100 people were injured and houses and temples were severely damaged. All this was going on when a senate committee on Balochistan was seeking to iron out the differences and address the genuine demands of the people of the state/province. Chaudhary Shujat Hussain, leader of the ruling PML (Q) was sent to Dera Bugti to broker a ceasefire.

The following nine months were relative peaceful. Both the sides dug into their own positions and planned to resume their offensives at an opportune time. Ayaz Amir, a noted commentator on Pakistani politics wrote that the Pakistani army has to be more circumspect while deciding to take on the Bugtis: "Bugtis in particular, are a proud and warlike people with a strong sense of grievance against the perceived injustices of the military-bureaucratic oligarchy— Pakistan's permanent ruling party. While there is no comparison between the army and the Bugtis, taking on the Bugtis would be no tea party. You can bet the Bugtis will take to the hills, thus creating another South Waziristan for the army".²⁵

The lull was broken in December 2005. Unknown armed men fired at least eight rockets on a paramilitary camp in Kohlu on December 14, 2005, where the president was to address the tribal elders two hours later. Three of the rockets landed near the Frontier Corps (FC) camp. Subsequently the BLA claimed responsibility for the attack. The President however, went ahead and laid the foundation of the garrison. This was the much needed alibi that the army was waiting in patience to seize upon.²⁶ On December 17, 2005 the security forces launched



attacks against the Marri tribes in Kohlu district. Over 200 troops supported by helicopter gunships attacked the Marri camps. A number of aerial sorties were used to attack the positions held by Marri tribesman. According to Baloch sources there was large scale collateral damage and a heavy loss of life and property on account of indiscriminate bombings carried out by the security forces. Over 40 civilians were reportedly killed on the very first day of the operation.²⁷ The operations intensified with each subsequent day and engulfed not only the entire Kohlu district but also the neighbouring Dera Bugti district. Dr Abdul Hayee Baloch, President of the National Party, went to the extent of saying that the situation of Balochistan was like that of former East Pakistan in 1970.

Baloch nationalists soon responded with their favourite tactics of blowing up gas pipelines, railway lines and communication and electricity towers. They not only challenged the writ of the state across the length and breadth of the province, they also went outside the province and targeted pipelines in other states. The government claimed that it had seized some of the rebel training camps and started attacking with all the might at its command.²⁸ Opposition parties in parliament have accused the government of carrying out genocide of “innocent citizens” in Balochistan, using helicopters in bombing sorties and poisonous phosphorus gas against the “people”. They have also deplored the way in which the air force was being utilised in the operation. Even Asma Jehangir, the chair of the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) was prevented from visiting Balochistan.

Human Rights Violations

The HRCP urged the government to stop killing Balochs in Kohlu under its military operations and order a ceasefire immediately and resolve the issue politically. It said that the military operation was a violation of national and international rules and expressed concern about people disappearing from the area and condemned the role of intelligence agencies in this regard.²⁹ It also accused President Pervez Musharraf’s military-led government of “gross human rights violations” in Balochistan, where a “war like situation” prevailed. The HRCP has also rejected the government claims that it was not using regular armed forces in the crackdown in the province launched in December 2005. It said that it



had “received evidence that action by armed forces had led to deaths and injuries among civilians” and that “populations had also been subjected to indiscriminate bombing”. According to the HRCP report up to 85 per cent of the 22,000 -26,000 inhabitants of Dera Bugti had fled their homes after the town was repeatedly hit by shelling by paramilitary forces. The HRCP report also said there have been many cases of torture, extrajudicial killings and disappearance and accused security forces of carrying out summary executions, and claimed to possess credible evidence to prove its assertion³⁰. Reports by Amnesty International also reported in February 2006 about the human rights violations by Pakistani security forces. A report by Nir Rosens in January/ February 2006 also referred to the way the Pakistani state was handling the Baloch insurgency by quoting many Baloch leaders including BSO activists like Allah Nazar and Imdad Baloch.³¹

The human rights violations in Balochistan have attracted international attention and will continue to hog media headlines. Selig Harrison has called these violations “slow motion genocide”, which unlike the humanitarian crises in Darfur and Chechnya, have not troubled the conscience of the world yet. But, he would argue that “as casualty figures mount, it will be harder to ignore the human costs of the Baloch independence struggle and its political repercussions in other restive minority regions of multi-ethnic Pakistan.”³² It appears that this current revival of Baloch nationalism may pose a far greater threat to Pakistan than any of the previous insurgencies.

Killing of Nawab Bugti

Undeterred by the reports of human rights organisations, the army went on targeting rebel locations and killed veteran Balochi leader, Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, in Kohlu District of Balochistan, on 26 August 2006. The killing was handled shabbily by the Pakistani administration. However, it did not lead to the desired effect. The Musharraf-led administration in Islamabad hoped that Balochi rebels would take a lesson from this and fold up their movement. But events since suggest otherwise. The killing of Nawab Bugti seems to have brought the Balochis together and united them further. The ground position remains unchanged and the BLA continues to target symbols of government authority across entire Balochistan and its surrounding regions at will.



The assassination of Nawab Bugti, in fact, led to renewed violence and protests not only in Balochistan but across the entire state of Pakistan. Nawab Bugti's assassination was a pyrrhic victory for the Pakistani establishment who had been targeting him for quite sometime. In fact, the security forces had targeted him in March 2005. But he survived even though as many as 17 shells hit his residential complex. In July 2006, his hideout had come under intense attack again, but he survived. His elimination in August indicates that the Pakistani military establishment feels it can resolve the issue militarily. However, many analysts and opposition leaders have sought to portray his demise as a major threat to the federation and have compared the unfolding of Balochi situation to the East Pakistan crisis in 1971. The International Crisis Group (ICG) in its report, dated September 14, 2006, has appealed to the international community to press the Pakistani government to end all military action in Pakistan and to stop all practices that violate international human rights like torture, arbitrary arrests and extra-judicial killings.³³

Causes of Baloch Disaffection³⁴

The standard argument by many analysts in Pakistan has been that the sardars want to retain their fiefdoms and oppose development as it could increase awareness and expose their tribes to modern concepts of democracy, thereby posing a challenge to their leadership. However, the fact of the matter is that this time round the Baloch movement is led by urbanised educated Baloch youth influenced by Marxist thinking, who have been receiving support across the tribal divide. It is pertinent to note that out of 250 odd Baloch sardars, only Bugti, Marri and Mengal sardars have been opposing the government in recent times. Others are muted in their support to the cause of Balochistan. They are convinced of the causes of Balochi disaffection. A strong ethnic consciousness together with a sense of political alienation and economic deprivation drive the Baloch resistance movement. While some other nationalities within Pakistan also have similar feelings, it is more intense in the case of the Balochis. Some of the more pronounced causes are identified below.



a) Richest in Resources, Yet the Poorest Province

The percentage of people living below the poverty line stands at 26 per cent in Punjab, 38 per cent in rural Sindh and 29 per cent in NWFP and 48 per cent in Balochistan. Balochistan also has the highest rate of illiteracy (at 50 per cent). Estimates for the period 1973-2000 showed that there was a decline in GDP growth in the case of Balochistan and Sindh where as Punjab, in spite of its huge population base increased its GDP by 2 per cent. This is in spite of the fact that the contribution from the gas to the national exchequer has been to the tune of US\$ 1.4 billion but the average annual allocation to the province from the centre has been only US\$ 116 million. The human development indices prepared by the UNDP for the year 2003 revealed that in almost all human development indices, Balochistan was at the bottom of the table.

RANKING OF PROVINCES BY OVERALL HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX

Name	HDI	HDI Rank
Punjab	0.557	1
Sindh	0.540	2
NWFP	0.510	3
Balochistan	0.499	4

Source: *Pakistan National Human Development Report 2003*, UNDP, Pakistan
Estimation by Wasay Majid and Akmal Hussain. http://www.un.org.pk/nhdr/htm_pages/cp_1.htm

Human Development Indices of Different Provinces in Pakistan

Name	Literacy Ratio % 1998	Enrolment Ratio % 1998	Infant Survival Ratio %	Immuni-sation Ratio% 1998	Real GDP per capita (PPPS) 1998	Educational Attainment Index	Health Index	Adjusted real GDP per capita (PPPS) Index	HDI
All Pakistan	45	71	95.5	49	1715	0.537	0.82	0.272	0.541
Punjab	46	75	95.4	55	1770	0.557	0.83	0.281	0.557
Sindh	51	64	94.9	38	1804	0.553	0.78	0.287	0.540
NWFP	37	70	96.3	54	1364	0.480	0.84	0.213	0.510
Balochistan	36	64	96.4	34	1677	0.453	0.78	0.265	0.499
Islamabad	72	58	95.9	72	1743	0.673	0.89	0.277	0.612

Note:

1. GDP per capita and Infant Survival Rates for Islamabad are calculated as an average of Punjab and Pakistan.
2. Enrolment rate is for primary level only.
3. Immunisation refers to fully immunised children based on record and recall having received BCG, DPT1, DPT2, DPT3, Polio1, Polio2, Polio3 and Measles.

Source: *Pakistan National Human Development Report 2003*, UNDP, Pakistan



Balochistan has substantial gas deposits as well as minerals like chromium, copper, iron and coal. Gas is found in commercially viable quantities in Sui and Pirkoh³⁵. The province provides seventy to eighty percent of the country's gas and most of its coal. According to some estimates, the cumulative royalty from gases Balochistan amounts to US \$114 billion every year. The Baloch have also not benefited much from its 600-mile coastline and its fish wealth. But the main allegation from the Baloch side has been that they have not been given their due share in terms of their contribution to the national exchequer.³⁶ Baloch political leadership has consistently raised the issue of legitimate distribution of resources between the centre and the provinces³⁷. They interpret the disparity between the value of gas produced in Balochistan and the poverty of the province as a consequence of their exploitation by outsiders³⁸.

One reason why the Baloch have been resisting oil and gas exploration in their area is the manner in which Sui's gas reserves have been appropriated by Islamabad. Discovered in 1952, five gas wells at Sui presently meet 38 per cent of Pakistan's domestic and commercial energy needs but only 5 to 6 per cent of Balochistan's population have a gas connection. Ironically, these connections came a decade after gas had been supplied all over Pakistan. In fact, had the Zia regime not decided to set up an army corps headquarters in Quetta, there would still be no gas there. Though the Pakistani constitution stipulates that the province in which the well head of natural gas is situated shall have precedence over other parts of Pakistan in meeting the requirements from that well head, 83 per cent of the gas produced in Balochistan is provided to the other provinces for industrial and household use, whereas piped gas is available to only four of Balochistan's 28 districts. Compared to this, gas is supplied to almost every village in Punjab, while there is not a single CNG station in the entire province of Balochistan.³⁹

Such inequitable policies vindicate the arguments of the Baloch nationalists. The project to exploit and distribute gas was dominated by Islamabad, which is in turn dominated by Punjabis, and so the gas went where the Punjabis, who dominated the state structure in Islamabad, wanted it to go. And there are few convincing counterpoints to their argument.⁴⁰ In the Marri area, the government had the economic objective of enhancing oil exploration activity with the development of



road communications. But the Baloch nationalists linked it with the exploitative tendencies of Islamabad, since the profits were to go to the national government and the foreign companies rather than to the provincial government treasury. Therefore, the BPLF held up the construction of 57 km of oil-related road building for about five years; the road could only be built because of army's limited success in quelling the armed resistance of the insurgents.

The Baloch nationalists allege that the province receives a mere 12.5 per cent of the well-head price (set by the government, at a rate the Baloch maintain is one of the lowest in the world) in gas royalties⁴¹. The Balochis claim that the centre owes them a huge sum of royalties for gas supplied over the decades⁴². Nawab Akbar Bugti had constantly complained that Pakistan Petroleum Ltd has reneged on its financial commitments to local Bugti tribesmen at Sui. There were reports that various federal governments tried to bribe or browbeat him. However, Islamabad has resorted to the propaganda that the tribal sardars are opposed to their area's development and are only bothered about their own fortunes. As Najam Sethi would argue, this has injected personal acrimony into the conflict and stiffened the tribal resolve⁴³. Moreover, the coal mines are almost all owned and operated by the non-Baloch. Balochistan's coal is sent to the Punjab, so the Baloch have to burn wood trucked in from Sindh. Its onyx and marble are shipped to Karachi for finishing, and its natural gas is piped to industrial belts in the Punjab and Sindh, returning in cylinders to Balochistan.⁴⁴

b) Lack of Representation

The Balochis are not well represented in state and central government structures. There are very few Baloch on the higher rungs in the central and state government, ministries or the armed forces of Pakistan. One study reveals that during the period 1947 to 1977, only 4 out of the 179 persons, who were named in central cabinets, were ethnic Baloch. In the armed forces, the number of Baloch has been extremely small. An academic study reveals that from the areas that became Pakistan, British recruitment was 77 per cent from Punjab, 19.5 per cent from NWFP, 2.2 per cent from Sindh and 0.6 per cent from Balochistan.⁴⁵ In post-colonial Pakistan, the proportion did not change much. The ethnic group strength of Pakistan's military officer corps in



the 1970s was approximately estimated as 70 per cent Punjabi, 15 per cent Pathan, 10 per cent *Mohajir* and 5 per cent Baloch and Sindhi. As regards higher military positions, it was maintained that until June 1959, out of 24 generals in the Pakistan army, 11 were Punjabis and 11 Pathans. Even later, there were hardly any Baloch in the top echelons of the armed forces⁴⁶. According to former Baloch chief minister Ataullah Mengal, "There are only a few hundred Balochs in the entire Pakistani Army. The famous Baloch Regiment has no Baloch in it. The Kalat Scouts was a paramilitary force raised during the Ayub regime and had only two people from Kalat within its ranks. The same is the case with the Sibi Scouts, created to police the Marri areas. It does not have a single Baloch in its ranks. The officers are from Punjab and soldiers from the Frontier."⁴⁷

Though the quota for recruitment of soldiers from Balochistan and Sindh was raised to 15 per cent in 1991 and height and educational standards were relaxed for them, there was still a shortfall in December 1998, of about 10,000 other ranks from Balochistan and interior Sindh.⁴⁸ As the quota is on provincial basis, most of the recruits to the army from Balochistan are Pathans (Pakhtoons) and other settlers rather than Balochs⁴⁹.

According to one estimate, of the 830 civil services posts in Balochistan, only 18 were held by Balochs in 1979. There was only one Baloch each holding the rank of secretary, director and deputy commissioner. As regards the police, all the high officials were non-Baloch and so was three quarters of the police force. The status in judicial services was not very different⁵⁰. In order to correct the age-old imbalance in representation of the Baloch and create a sense of participation in them in governance, in 1980 the Zia regime promised to make their representation in the federal bureaucracy commensurate with their 3.9 per cent share of Pakistan's national population.⁵¹ However, the Balochs are even today very poorly represented in the government. There are scarcely any Baloch in the Pakistani Army, civil service, or diplomatic corps.

In 2002, out of a total of 14 provincial government secretaries in Quetta, only four were Baloch; of a total of 3,200 students at Balochistan University, fewer than 500 were Baloch; of a total of 180 faculty members,



only 30 were Baloch⁵². According to Baloch MP Abdul Rauf Mengal, as on March 2005, there were very few government servants from Balochistan in Islamabad and not a single Baloch in foreign missions abroad⁵³. Even today most officials working in senior positions in Balochistan, from chief secretary to inspector general of police as well as most of the government secretaries working in Balochistan, come from Punjab or other provinces.

The late Nawab Bugti used to often tell his visitors, “If you visit the Balochistan secretariat, check out the name plates outside each office. You will find virtually no locals running provincial affairs.”⁵⁴ As Balochistan continues to be grossly under-represented in all the organs of the Pakistani State, people find it extremely difficult to identify themselves with the government. The government and its organs are therefore perceived as aliens lording over Baloch territory.

c) The case for Autonomy

The Baloch leaders also feel that there has been gradual erosion of provincial autonomy as defined in the Constitution. At the time of the adoption of the 1973 Constitution, it was also promised that the Concurrent List⁵⁵ would be progressively abolished within a period of 10 years. However, 30 years on, the list still stands and the federal government continues to interfere in subjects which should be within the domain of provinces like tourism, environmental pollution, labour welfare, transfer of property, newspapers, educational curriculum, etc, to name but a few⁵⁶. Under the current constitutional arrangement, economic resources and political power are concentrated in the hands of the federal government. The situation in Balochistan is the worst, where even maintenance of law and order is the responsibility of federally controlled paramilitary troops. In the words of an observer, “the master-servant relationship is starker there than in any other province. The return of military rule further aggravated the situation. Even the present pro-military provincial government does not have any real power”.⁵⁷

According to Jamil Bugti, the son of the late Nawab Bugti, the chief minister of Balochistan is nothing more than a clerk as everything is controlled from Islamabad. He has to run to Islamabad every month to get the salaries for his employees in the secretariat. So he is given a



cheque for the month's salaries and sent home and the next month he is back again with palms outstretched.⁵⁸ As a result, under the present military dispensation, Balochistan's provincial government is practically a subsidiary of the centre, which works at its behest and follows its instructions. There is no provincial purview of the political and economic decisions, which are taken in Islamabad.⁵⁹ This has led to the economic backwardness of Balochistan and the lack of job opportunities for the Baloch.⁶⁰ The general belief among the Baloch nationalists is that the military government has either tried to sideline the political forces in Balochistan or put itself in direct confrontation with them.⁶¹

In this context, the Baloch leaders have been agitating vociferously in parliament and outside against the setting up of three new cantonments at Sui, Kohlu and Gwadar in the province. Balochistan already has an excessive security apparatus, apart from four existing cantonments at Quetta, Sibi, Loralai and Khuzdar, there are 3 naval bases, 4 missile testing sites, 2 nuclear development sites and 59 paramilitary facilities.⁶² Today, provincial governments in Pakistan have no rights to levy either the entertainment tax property tax or property tax on the property located inside the cantonments including private properties. The cantonments have become a sort of parallel government by themselves where the writ of the provincial government does not run. These islands have over the year become centres of parallel authority beyond the provincial and local governments⁶³. Baloch perceive these cantonments as nothing but the occupation of their traditional land by the army. Over 500 acres of land was forcibly occupied in Sui when citizens refused to sell their land, the same process is being repeated in Kohlu leading to similar resentment.⁶⁴ As a result the Baloch perceive the cantonments as instruments of colonisation and exploitation.

d) Development as Colonisation

The issue that has agitated the Baloch mind the most in recent times is the issue of mega-developmental projects being undertaken in Balochistan purportedly for the economic development of the province. The Balochis believe that the advantages from such developmental projects in the province will flow onto non-Baloch outsiders. These include the Gwadar port, the coastal highway linking Karachi with Gwadar and beyond, the Saindak copper project and the Mirani dam. All these



projects have been long over due in a province, which is Pakistan's most backward. When completed, these projects could turn out to be of vital importance to Balochistan's socio-economic upliftment. The Mirani dam, for instance, could bring 33,000 acres of barren land under cultivation in the Turbat area; the coastal highway will lead to an increase in transport and give a boost to tourism, while Gwadar would turn into a major port serving as an outlet for Afghanistan, China and Central Asia⁶⁵. The targeting of these projects often baffles Western analysts as well as other Pakistanis who feel that the rebels do not have the good of Balochistan in their heart. However, the Baloch leaders complain that the manpower for the project, which is being run by the federal government, is drawn largely from outside the province.

It is repeatedly being impressed upon the Baloch that the mega projects will provide a lot of opportunities of not only employment but business, trade and investment for everyone. According to Abdul Hakim Baloch, a former chief secretary of Balochistan, the basic issue is not the construction or the operation of these projects but their ownership. Of all the mega projects, nothing agitates the Baloch mind as much as Gwadar Deep Sea Project, which is the largest infrastructural project being undertaken in Pakistan. The state land around Gwadar and the coastal highway, which belongs to the province, has been usurped by the land mafia in collaboration with the Mekrani underworld and its members who are in government and the legislative bodies⁶⁶. This mega corruption has deprived the government of Balochistan of a major source of income amounting to perhaps trillions of rupees. Moreover, the state government has no say in the development of the project and Islamabad has been unilaterally taking all decisions regarding the port and large tracts of land have been seized by State agencies like the navy, the coast guard and paramilitary forces.⁶⁷ Also Gwadar is being connected to Karachi but has not been connected through Turbat, Panjgur and Khuzdar to Quetta, as a result the rest of the province will not derive any benefit from these projects. This is making the people restive as they feel that they are being converted into a landlocked province despite having the longest coastline in the country.

Baloch nationalists feel on the contrary that these projects will lead to a large-scale influx of outsiders in Balochistan⁶⁸ and make them a minority in their own province. "There are also fears that unbridled foreign



investment and development projects will bring too much foreign influence, threatening the indigenous social and cultural patterns".⁶⁹ According to Ataulah Mengal, "If there are jobs in Gwadar, people would flock there, Pakistanis and foreigners alike. With time, they would get the right to vote. The problem is that one Karachi in Gwadar is sufficient to turn the whole population of Balochistan into a minority. Gwadar will end up sending more members to the Parliament than the rest of Balochistan, We would lose our identity, our language, everything. That's why we are not willing to accept these mega projects".⁷⁰



THE FUTURE

The Balochis are one of the least numerically significant nationalities (4.9% of the total population in Pakistan, projected population of Balochis was 7.101 million in 2001)⁷¹. Out of the total population which claims Balochi as its mother tongue, 24% live outside Balochistan and inside Balochistan, the percentage of Balochi speaking population is 54.76. The literacy rate in Balochistan is an abysmal 24.8 per cent, which explains that lack of political awareness and the reason for persistence of archaic socio-economic structures that perpetuate the Sardari/feudal system to the detriment of the national interests of the Balochi people.

The trajectory of the Baloch nationalist movement comes as a reconfirmation of four key features of the ethnic issues in Pakistan. First, self-determination movements crystallise in overreaction by the over-centralized and authoritarian State to demands for autonomy from the provinces (reaction of Pakistani government to Pakhtunistan, or Pakhtunkhwa forms an interesting example here). Second, the co-option of the ethnic leaders or the making of alliances between their parties and national parties tend to defuse the centrifugal tendencies: this process reflects the rising integrative capacity of the Pakistani administration during the phases of democracy. Third, the intensity of the nationalist feelings also depends upon the distribution of power and the socio-economic situation. Fourthly, assertive nationalist politics in Pakistan has been immensely vulnerable to coercive methods employed by the state.

The most recent phase of Balochi nationalist politics signals this sense of economic isolation. There is a feeling of isolation among some of the major groups known for their continual resistance, like Bajrani-Marri tribal group in the Kohlu region, the faction of Bugti resistance led by Nawab Akbar Bugti and now his son. For example, the Bugtis of Balochistan strongly believe that they were legal owners of the gas resources in Pakistan in the Sui area for the gas-field is situated in the area (almost 37, 500 acres) gifted to them by the British, as a return of favour for their support against the Hurs in 1880s. They view the Pakistani state as a major usurper of the resources, which rightfully belonged to



them. The Marris of the Kohlu valley have demonstrated perennial contempt for imposition of external authority over them. The British were continually irked by their resistance in spite of the fact that they stationed a regiment in the valley itself from 1890s onwards.

The electoral debacle of the nationalist parties has not affected the morale of the Balochi resistance in these areas in recent months and years. In fact, one has to look at it strictly from the individual tribal consciousness point of view rather than view it as an overarching nationalist resistance. In the absence of any available leadership that could thread them together into a wider nationalist resistance in Balochistan, it is difficult to argue that the resistance movement that is building up would blossom into a lasting pan-Balochi resistance movement in Pakistan. The military administration in Pakistan, strengthened as it has been at the moment with moral and material support from US to fight such insurgencies, will also not allow such resistance to build up beyond the critical point.

However, the determination of an army-led government to extend its writ to the farthest corners of Pakistan has induced a sense of stubbornness in the radical elements among the Balochis. The way the military administration has decided to take the army deeper into the troubled pockets in Pakistan by establishing cantons in Gwadar, Kohlu, Sibi, and even in Ormara and Pasni, in recent years, has provoked strong Balochi nationalist criticism. Coupled with the allegation that Balochistan has been at the receiving end as far as sharing of state resources are concerned and the perception that the contribution of Balochistan to the national exchequer has been quite enormous, you have an explosive combination.

There is also a neo-literate leadership that is coming up in the next generation of the Mengals, Bugtis and Marris. Apart from them, relatively newer faces like Sanauallah Baloch, Amanullah Baloch of the BSO (Muttahid), Hameed Baloch, Bizen Bizenjo and many others, are seeking to pursue the issue of Balochi autonomy with passion and vigour. If this new leadership succeeds in creating an appeal beyond the old Sardari sentiments that so far characterized Balochi national struggle and only if they generate resources to propagate their convictions more freely and widely and communicate their grievances well, they will be



able to create a larger and more stable constituency of nationalist-minded Balochis who can take the flame of Balochi resistance forward.

The Weaknesses

The evolving leadership among the Balochis also has to face many problems on the way. The recently passed resolution in the assembly to adopt Urdu and not Balochi as medium of instruction in schools, with a relatively less vocal and almost muted resistance from the nationalists shows how they have not managed to take advantage of the linguistic sentiments that have been there waiting to be exploited. Moreover, the interpretation that the Balochis are being increasingly persuaded to treat it as a language inferior to Urdu and other neighbouring languages is a worrying signal for the nationalists.

The temptation to tie Baloch nationalist struggle up with Pakhtun nationalism has robbed the nationalists of their original strength and at a certain level the collective political front for fighting the rights of oppressed nationalities (Pakistan Oppressed Nations' Movement) reduces the separate popular appeals of these nationalities on the one hand and alerts the Pakistani state and provokes the might of it on the other.

It has been the constant refrain of many analysts close to the Pakistani establishment to drag India into the internal troubles in Pakistan and invent an Indian hand even behind the sectarian killings on the occasion of Muharram in Quetta. Such inventions have hardly helped to bring down the temperature in Balochistan. If Balochis succeed in sustaining their movement it may very well inspire similar resistance movements among Searikis, Balwaris and even Pakhtuns.

The fight among consanguine tribal groups which has assumed violent colours in recent times like for example among the Bugtis led by Nawab Akbar Bugti and the Kalpar Bugtis reduces the potential of the movement considerably. Similarly the uncoordinated efforts of the different groups of Marris as well as the fight between Marris and Bugtis create the space for external intervention and dissipate the idea of a combined Balochi resistance.



The division between the Brahuis and the Balochis are obvious and cementing these two groups together for an overarching national cause may not always be easy. The fact that there are more Balochis outside Balochistan in Pakistan and that they have 'de-Balochised' themselves also impacts on the appeal of Balochis at the national level in Pakistan.

Last but not the least, the unpredictability of the Sardars in relating themselves to the Pakistani central administration may steal the thunder away from the movement. With the killing of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, the sub-feudal leadership or the second tier Sardars may very well prefer to disassociate themselves from the nationalist struggle. They have been vulnerable to show of patronage from Islamabad and would be the first ones to jump into the Pakistani nationalist bandwagon in return for some political or economic concession.

The Road Ahead

It is impossible to imagine a well-networked resistance movement taking shape in Balochistan in near future without active outside help and guidance. The recent surge in Balochi militancy is provoked and propelled by the insensitivity of the Musharraf administration to the demands of Balochis to withdraw cantonments from Gwadar, Kohlu and Sibi and stop the intrusion of non-Balochi industrialists into Balochi economic landscape. The decision of the Musharraf administration to shift the office of Gwadar Port Implementation Authority (GPIA) from Karachi to Gwadar and the strengthening of security around GPIA has sparked the current resistance movement around the Makran coast. The encounter between the Balochi nationalist outfits in Kohlu, Khuzdar and Turbat since June 2004 now threatens to engulf the entire province. But the divisions mentioned above among Balochis as well as the determination of the Musharraf administration to quell any such movement with an iron hand, will, in all likelihood, weaken the movement in coming days. But unlike in the 1970s, the younger generation of Balochi nationalist leadership, one hopes, with their determination and efforts will ensure the continuation of the Balochi resistance movement in the days to come.

In the Pakistani media, the insurgency in Balochistan is not given the attention it deserves. But still there is a suspicion in Pakistan, as



one gets to know about it through Pakistani sources, that even if the Balochi resistance is a fact of life in Pakistan these days, the army is deliberately provoking the Balochis to prepare the case for a full scale attack for quelling the rebellion there. With the introduction of sophisticated defence equipment for tackling the insurgency in FATA as well as assured American sympathy at its command, the army will never allow the insurgency to build up beyond a point. However, it will be naïve on the part of Pakistani administration to equate Wana with Balochistan, as Balach Khan Marri would have us believe, in one of his articles in Urdu. And the present edition of Balochi resistance is more explosive and cohesive, he would say.

The problems the resistance movement may encounter in coming days may however come from within the movement. For it will be extremely difficult to sustain the tenuous pan-Balochi unity, cutting across divisions on the lines of tribes, clans and even ethnicity (Baloch-Brahui). The Islamist enthusiasm of the majority Pushtuns/Pakhtuns of the northern Balochistan, which seems to have infected many Balochis in the Balochi-dominated corners in the western, central and southern Balochistan, is also diluting the nationalist position and making the army intrusion in the name of anti-terrorist operation, look more legitimate and creating more enemies than friends for the movement. Kissinger said in 1962 that he would not recognize the Balochi problem even if it hit him in the face, and one believes the response of his successor in the US State Department will not be any different at present. It will thus require exemplary leadership, long-term strategy and resources to keep the movement alive.

Endnotes

- ¹ Baloch people are also known as Balochi, Balochee, Baluchee, Beloochi but they all mean the same. In this paper one or more of these expressions have been used but they all refer to the same Baluchi/Balochi people.
- ² According to Janmahmad The origin of the word "Baloch" is still unknown. E. Herzefeld believes that it is derived from brza-vaciya, which came from brza-vak, a Median word meaning a loud cry, in contrast to namravak, quiet, polite way of talking. Some writers maintain that the Baloch owe their name to Babyloian King 'Belus',



also the name of their God. It is also believed that the word is a nick-name meaning a 'cock's comb'. As the Baloch forces who fought against Astyages (585-550 B.C.) wore distinctive helmets decorated with a cock's comb, the name 'Baloch' is said to have been derived from the token of cock. Some writers believe that etymologically it is made of two Sankrit words, 'Bal' and 'Och'. 'Bal' means strength or power, and 'Och', high or magnificent. The word 'Baloch' therefore, means very powerful and magnificent. Yet another erroneous version is that Baloch mean 'nomad' or 'wanderer'. This has been presumed perhaps due to the innocent use of the word for nomadic people, and may be because of the fact that the term may be used by indigenous settlers for the Baloch nomads. Janmahmad; *The Baloch Cultural Heritage*, 1982.

- ³ According to the view of the scholars, the Balochi language originated, in a lost language, related to the Parthian or Median civilization. It is classified as a branch of the Iranian group of Indo-European language family like Kurdish, Persian, Pashto, and Osseetic. Historically, Balochi was believed to have originated between 200 B.C and 700 A.D. J. Elfenbein, a scholar of Balochi, compared Balochi with Parthian and Persian of middle stage and concluded that: the ancestor of Balochi was neither Parthian nor middle Persian but a lost language, which, sharing a number of characteristic feature with either, and some with both, had pronounced (characteristics) of its own. Referring to the affinity of Balochi language with Kurdish, having an ancient Median background, this author has stressed that Balochi has its own unique features. The same view presented by M. L. Dames in his book *The Baloch Race* (London, 1904), in which author reported that Balochi resembles the Zand or old Bactrian rather than old Persian. This special position of the Balochi language, having no real affinity with the Indian subcontinent and being a distinctive language along the Iranian group of Indo-European language family, has strengthened the consciousness of the Baloch people in their demand for the right of self-determination. Balochi has several dialects. The Ethnologue (www.ethnologue.com) lists three major dialects: Eastern Balochi, Western Balochi and Southern Balochi while the Encyclopedia Iranica (from Elfenbein, see <http://www.iranica.com/newsite/articles/v3f6/v3f6a030.html>) lists six major dialects: Rakhshani (subdialects: Kalati, Panjguri and Sarhaddi), Saravani,



Lashari, Kechi, Coastal Dialects, and Eastern Hill Balochi.

- 4 Yet another irony of history which also partially explains the Dravidian origin of the Brahui language is that the township of Sibi, which is an accentual corruption of the word, Sewa, a place named after a Hindu dynasty, which ruled over the terrain before they were overrun by the invaders from Persia and Afghanistan. It is also interesting to note that the area around Sibi is regarded as the cradle of Afghan or Pushtun language and culture. The legends and myths of Pushtuns indicate a lasting sense of emotional affiliation to the terrain among the Pushtuns even to this day. It is also believed that the term Puhtun or Pathan is derived from the Sanskrit word "Pratishthan", which means people who are established and command respect in society.
- 5 The 1901 the census conducted by the British showed that the Balochis were less numerous than both Brahuīs and Pathans in Balochistan, i.e., the combined terrain of British Balochistan, the Kalat Confederacy and the Tribal agencies. The exact numbers were, Balochis, 80,000, Brahuīs, 300, 000 and Pathans, 200,000. The census figures further stated that the number of Balochis staying outside Balochistan in Sind and Punjab were 950, 000.
- 6 For instance they defeated the Kalhoras of Sindh and arrested their chiefs and sent them to Aurangzeb in 1695, who in turn gifted away Karachi port to them.
- 7 The majority of Baloch are Hanafi Sunnis, but there is a community of an estimated 500,000 to 700,000 Zikri Baloch, who live in the coastal Makran area and in Karachi. The Zikris believe in the Messiah, Nur Pak, whose teachings supersede those of the Prophet Muhammad. Their beliefs, considered heretical, have led to intermittent Sunni repression of their community since its founding in the fifteenth century.
- 8 Robert Groves Sandeman (1835-1892), British Indian colonial officer and administrator, was appointed district officer of Dera Ghazi Khan in 1866, and there first showed his capacity in dealing with the warring Baloch tribes. He was the first to break through the close-border system of Lord Lawrence by extending British influence to the independent tribes beyond the border. In February 1871, he was given the political control over the warring Marri, Bugti and Mazari tribes of Sulaiman Hills at the Mithankote conference between the governments of Punjab and Sind provinces. In 1876 he



negotiated the treaty with the Khan of Kalat, which subsequently governed the relations between Kalat and the Indian government; and in 1877 he was made agent to the governor-general in Balochistan, an office which he held until his death in January 1892 at Bela, where he lies buried under a beautiful tomb. He is credited with the evolution of an administrative system called Sandeman System, which was a political framework that gave near complete autonomy to the Baloch tribals in return for their protection of British interests in the region.

- ⁹ During the late 1850s and early 1860s the Indo-European telegraph line was extended from Karachi to Gwadar, which was under the control of the Khan of Kalat who had tentatively accepted British guidance if not control and then it was extended to the Jack coast in Iranian Balochistan. Between 1849 and 1862, one of the Persian Shahs of the Qajar dynasty, Nasiruddin Shah(1848-1896) had extended his control deep into the Balochi terrain towards the west of the Khanate of Kalat. Many of the Balochi chiefs from this region had earlier accepted suzerainty of the Khan of Kalat during Nasir Khan's rule but enjoyed near total independence afterwards. During the course of the surveys for the construction of the telegraph line, the British were confronted with conflicting territorial claims to this region then known as 'western Balochistan' by the Shah of Persia, the Khan of Kalat, and even the Sultan of Muscat. The British adopted a posture of neutrality during the process of extension of the telegraph line and were concerned about the security as well as protection of the telegraph lines and stations. In 1865, Goldsmith, then a colonel and Chief Director of the Indo European Telegraph was deputed to Tehran to help negotiate a telegraph treaty, reported to the government of Bombay on October 4, 1865, that "the sole difficulty that I see in the way, is the discontent likely to be raised among the petty Baloch chiefs on the west of Kalat line, who may look upon themselves as given over to Persia by this arrangement." Goldsmith developed enormous acquaintance with the tract, and its people in the process; so much so that he was appointed the Chief Commissioner of the Perso-Baloch Boundary line later. During the course of the laying down the telegraph line Goldsmith persuaded the British government effectively to ignore the questions of territorial sovereignty for the time being and sign separate agreements with the Shah of Persia in 1858, Sultan of Oman in 1865, and the Balochi



chiefs of Bahu, Dastiari, Geh, and Jask in 1869. These agreements dealt only with the question of the protection of telegraph wires and stations, and in each case the British undertook to pay a fixed subsidy to the separate parties involved. (For detailed discussion see F. J. Goldsmid and W.T. Blandford, ed., *Eastern Persia. An Account of the Persian Boundary Commission 1870-1872 (Two Vols.)*, Macmillan, London, 1876.)

- ¹⁰ Goldsmith was hugely aware of this as his communications to the British government would show. As early as in 1862 he wrote that “I do not for a moment believe that the Persian yoke is acceptable to the Sardars of Makkuran west of Kalat”. But as far as British policy was concerned he asked the government to be careful: “I cannot but believe that we might come to a satisfactory understanding with the Persians to the effect that up to the long strip of Coast formed by the Imam of Muscat, of which Bunder Abbas is the western extremity, we treat the local chiefs as independent in regard to any subsidy given; but *carefully stipulate a policy of non-interference in the general question of sovereignty, in which we neither acknowledge or disown the Persian claim.*” Even he went to the extent of saying that no new argument will be needed to show that anything like *the dismemberment of Kalat would be as advantageous to Persian interests as detrimental to our own*. (italics mine) However, from 1864 on wards, the observations of Goldsmith increasingly accommodated Persian interests by judging the whole issue of sovereignty from the point of view of “allegiance exacted by a stronger”. The issue of Balochi unity and a united Baloch terrain could then be easily parried as the British thought it wiser to close their eyes to the Baloch national issue and treat the issue as one between a powerful Persia and as Goldsmith put it “a little known chieftom of Kalat”. And the Russian expansion into Central Asia in the 1860s (conquest of Bokhara in 1866 and of Samarkand in 1869) persuaded the British to strengthen and defend the buffer status of Persia and Afghanistan against the Russian expansion towards the south. The British also welcomed the Persian advance as a further assistance in pacifying the unruly and independent minded Balochi tribes which were viewed as a constant source of threat to their lines of communication. The British, in fact, joined hands with Persia in launching several joint expeditions for suppressing the constant tribal revolts in Balochistan throughout the rule of the Qajar dynasty.



- ¹¹ See Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Balochistan: A Study of Baloch Nationalism*, 1987, Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, Stuttgart, for South Asian Institute, University of Heidelberg.
- ¹² Ibid.
- ¹³ For details see Baren Ray, "Balochistan and the Partition of India: The Forgotten Story", Occasional Paper, South Asian Centre for Strategic Studies, New Delhi, 1998
- ¹⁴ One can find a detailed discussion on this from the Khan's autobiography. Mir Ahmad Yar Khan Baluch, *Inside Baluchistan: A Political Autobiography of His Highness Baigi: Khan-e-Azam-XIII*, Karachi, 1975
- ¹⁵ For details see Khan of Kalat's autobiography cited in endnote no 10.
- ¹⁶ Cited in Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Balochistan: A Study of Baloch Nationalism*, Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, Stuttgart, for South Asian Institute, University of Heidelberg, 1987.
- ¹⁷ For detailed discussion see Baren Ray, op. cit.
- ¹⁸ For further discussion on the way the princely states were absorbed into the Pakistani dominion see W.A. Wilcox, *Pakistan: The Consolidation of a Nation*, Columbia University Press, New York and London, 1963.
- ¹⁹ See Appendix 2.
- ²⁰ Selig S. Harrison in his book cited below analyses the insurgencies between 197 and 1977 in a splendid manner. His book is: *In Afghanistan's Shadow—Baluchistan: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations*, 1981, New York / Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- ²¹ This has been reinforced by the governmental recognition, direct or indirect, of privileges accorded to Sardars, patronising of Sardars and indirectly through perpetuating poverty, illiteracy and lack of socio-political awareness among the masses.
- ²² There is a neo-literate leadership coming up in the next generation of the Mengals, Bugtis and Marris and apart from that relatively newer faces like Sanaullah Baloch, Bizen Bizenjo, Imdad Baloch, Dr. Jumma Marri are seeking to pursue the issue of Balochi autonomy with passion and vigour. If this new leadership succeeds in creating an appeal beyond the old Sardari sentiments and only if they generate resources to propagate their convictions more freely and widely and communicate their grievances well, they will be able



to create a larger and stabler constituency of nationalist-minded Balochis who can take the flame of Balochi resistance forward.

- ²³ Zia reportedly commented while he released many Balochi rebels :
“We have thrown some bad eggs and saved the lives of many innocent ones.” Gen Rahimuddin took good care of the bad eggs in Balochistan and Zia considered those imprisoned less dangerous.
- ²⁴ The BLA was reportedly funded by Khair Bux Narri in early 1990s. His sons, Blach Marri and Gizen Marri, are allegedly leading the organization in the latest phase of Baloch resistance. See Frederic Grare, “Pakistan: The Resurgence of Baloch Nationalism”, Carnegie Papers, South Asia Project, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, January 2006.
- ²⁵ Ayaz Amir, “How not to put out Fire”, *The Dawn*, Karachi, January 14, 2005.
- ²⁶ Muhammad Ejaz Khan, “Saboteurs cannot hamper progress: Musharraf”, *The News International*, Internet Edition, December 15, 2005.
- ²⁷ Saleem Shahid, “Troops move against Marris in Kohlu”, *The Dawn, Karachi*, December 19, 2005.
- ²⁸ Muhammad Ejaz Khan, “12 Farrari camps dismantled in Balochistan”, *The International News Internet Edition*, January 22, 2006
- ²⁹ *Daily Times Website*
http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=2005%5C12%5C31%5Cstory_31-12_2005_pg7_15 (accessed on January 4, 2005)
- ³⁰ “HRCP reports rights abuses in Balochistan”, *The News*, January 22, 2006.
- ³¹ Nir Rosen, “Among the Allies”, *Mother Jones*, January, February 2006
Available on http://bsd.mojones.com/news/feature/2006/01/among_allies.html
- ³² Selig S. Harrison, “Pakistan’s Baluch insurgency”, *Le Monde*, October 5, 2006
Available on <http://mondediplo.com/2006/10/05baluchistan>
- ³³ “Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan”, International Crisis Group, Asia Report No 119 dated September 14, 2006, p iii.
- ³⁴ The study here draws upon the data collected by various researchers on the causes of the Balochi resistance movement.
- ³⁵ Taj Mohammad Breseeg, *Baloch Nationalism its origin and*



- development*, Royal Book Company, Karachi, 2004, p 380.
- ³⁶ Masooda Bano, "Dialogue is the only Solution", *The News*, Lahore, January 21, 2005.
- ³⁷ Paul Titus in his introduction to Sylvia Matheson' book *The Tigers of Baluchistan* published by Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1998 p xix.
- ³⁸ Ibid p xx.
- ³⁹ Massoud Ansari, op. cit.
- ⁴⁰ M Ilyas Khan, "Money ,money, money", *The Herald, Karachi*, September 2004, p 52.
- ⁴¹ Emma Duncan, *Breaking the Curfew: A political Journey through Pakistan*, Penguin Books, London, p 139.
- ⁴² "Confrontation No Solution to Balochistan Imbroglio", Editorial, *The News*, January 16, 2005.
- ⁴³ Najam Sethi, "Balochistan's Volcanic Eruption", *The Friday Times*, Lahore, January 14-20, 2005.
- ⁴⁴ Weaver, op. cit, pp 105-106.
- ⁴⁵ Veena Kukreja, *Contemporary Pakistan: Political Processes, Conflicts and Crises*, Sage Publications, New Delhi, 2003, pp 132-133.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ Tariq Ali, *Can Pakistan Survive? The Death of a State*, Penguin, Suffolk, 1983, p 117.
- ⁴⁸ Hasan-Askari Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan*, Macmillan, London, 2000, p. 242.
- ⁴⁹ In Sindh to protect the interests of Sindhis there are separate quota for non-military federal government jobs for urban and rural Sindh.
- ⁵⁰ Urmila Phadnis, "Ethnic Movements in Pakistan", in Pandav Nayak (ed.), *Pakistan: Society and Politics – South Asian Studies Series*, 6. South Asian Publishers, New Delhi, 1984, p 194-195.
- ⁵¹ Selig S Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baloch Nationalism*, Carnegie Endowment of International Peace, New York, 1981, p 164.
- ⁵² Mary Anne Weaver. *Pakistan in the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2002, pp 105-106.
- ⁵³ Atta ul Mohsin, "NA Debates Baluchistan Situation; MPs call for Political Solution", *Pakistan Times*, March 1, 2005.
- ⁵⁴ Massoud Ansari, "The Battle for Balochistan", *Newsline*, September



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- ⁵⁵ Concurrent List consists of subjects on which both the centre and the state government can make laws.
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- ⁵⁸ Sairah Irshad Khan, “When mobs in Karahi burn down public property, is military action taken against them?”, an interview of Jamil Bugti, *Newsline*, September 2006.
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- ⁶⁰ Ibid.
- ⁶¹ Breseeg, op. cit., p 374.
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- ⁶⁴ Shahzada Zulfiqar, “Land-Mine”, *Newsline*, August 2004, p 58.
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- ⁶⁶ Although the government has banned the transfer of land, the land mafia has shown backdated transactions to transfer the land to outsiders in collaboration with corrupt officials.
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- ⁷⁰ Idrees Bakhtiar, “Mega-projects are a Conspiracy to turn the Balochis into a Minority in their Homeland”, an interview with Sardar Ataullah Mengal, *The Herald*, August 2004, p 51.
- ⁷¹ The data here have been reproduced from Pakistan government sources, *Population Census Organisation*, available on <http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/statistics/statistics.html> and *Socio Economic Development Profile of Pakistan*, Population Association of Pakistan (PAP) Secretariat, Islamabad, 2004. If one calculates as per Pakistan government’s projection of country-wide population growth rate, in 2003 it was in 7.383 million.



GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS USED

BLA	Baloch Liberation Army
HRCP	Human Rights Commission of Pakistan
PONM	Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement
UNPO	Unrepresented Nations Peoples Organisation
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic
NAP	National Awami Party
BSO	Baloch Students Organisation
NWFP	North West Frontier Province
BPLF	Baloch People's Liberation Front
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BLF	Baloch Liberation Front
DSG	Defence Security Guards
FC	Frontier Corps
PPL	Pakistan Petroleum Limited
PML(Q)	Pakistan Muslim League (Qaid-e-Azam)
MQM	<i>Muttahida Qaumi Movement</i>
PKMAP	Pakhtoonkhwa Milli Awami Party
MMA	<i>Muttahida Majlis -e-Amal</i>





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