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Fault Lines of Pakistan's Baluchistan Policy

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Increasingly, Baluchistan is coming under international focus and its tense relationship with the government of Pakistan. In fact, the nationalist forces of Baluchistan never accepted its integration in 1947-1948 with brute force and since then the Baloch people call their land an occupied area, leading to various insurgencies against Pakistan in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The current phase of insurgency in the form of more vigorous movement for independence began in 2004, growing gradually and still continuing. In addition, Pakistan's Baluchistan is a poor land with rich natural resources such as gas, coal and other minerals with other important economic sectors which include fisheries, mining manufacturing industries, trade and other services. In contrast, Baluchistan has been called a "neglected province where a majority of people lacks amenities"¹. It has always been the poorest and least developed of all of Pakistan's provinces. The paper aims to highlight this contradictory position of Baluchistan which, to a large extent, has fuelled the overall dissatisfaction/alienation of the Baloch people from the parent country, Pakistan. There are several provinces, like Baluchistan, that gave a potential contribution to country's development but get a little in return. By examining the entire elements inside Baluchistan, it will be placed in a larger regional and global context. The case of Baluchistan contains far-reaching implications for the world but, in particular for the country and region.

Keywords

Baloch people, society, economic exploitation, political alienation, coercion.

Introduction

The province Baluchistan has been marginalized throughout history. It goes back to the independence of Pakistan in 1947. The conflict in Baluchistan is an ongoing conflict between the inhabitants of the Baluchistan province and the government of Pakistan. It is born from

¹ **Kupez M.**, Pakistan's Baloch insurgency: history, conflict drivers, and regional implications, *International Affairs Review*, 2012, 20, 3, 96-97.

a combination of social, economic, political, and cultural factors and is characterized by a high level of insecurity and continuing violence/organized violence, weak institutions; and poor governance or the lack of equitable delivery and distribution of public goods and services. Currently Baluchistan is an unending tale of socio-economic and political lapses. Despite its abundance in the wealth of natural resources, it remains the most backward province of the country. A deep-rooted sense of deprivation and frustration has made its people highly suspicious of the policy-makers in Islamabad, raising serious questions about the state of federation in Pakistan. Since independence, in general, the people of Pakistan in all provinces have had no role in determining the course of their history or the direction of their country's policies. They have been exploited in the name of ideology and external threats while the real domestic challenges facing the country have remained unaddressed. The governments have been presiding without taking the people in confidence or accepting the responsibility of their action or policies.

Objectives of the Study

The research is about the several aspects of Baluchistan, now a province of Pakistani state. In reference to this, right from the days of its accession to Pakistan in March 1948, Baluchistan continues to be a trouble-torn province despite its richness in natural resources and minerals. Even today, it is considered as the most neglected and underdeveloped province of the country. After 23 years of its accession, in 1970, it gained the provincial status under Pakistani federation, but it made no difference for Baluchistan. A section of the people, from the beginning was against its accession to Pakistan and favoring independence they waged a guerilla war against the central government. The current situation in Baluchistan not only challenges the federalism of Pakistan, but poses a potential threat to its unity and integrity as well. In this respect, the study will

- discuss the situation in which the Baluchistan Province was formed;

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- analyze the social composition of the province with its various aspects;
 - evaluate the excesses/exploitation of province's natural resources;
 - analyze the overall situation including phases of violence in Baluchistan;
 - analyze and suggest the needs-based measures failing which will upset the regional balance and peace in Pakistan.

Methodology

The research methodology in the paper is to explain the entire context of Baluchistan in reference to Pakistani state. The existing material on various aspects of Baluchistan is mostly descriptive and theoretically ambiguous. Therefore, the study used secondary sources such as books, journals, and newspapers, at times quantitatively to explain and analyze today's alarming stage in Pakistani's federal structure. In addition, primary sources such as different reports, published from time to time have been used for quantitative analysis. The study relied mainly on data/materials collected because it would help to test the hypothesis. The objectives/questionnaires built for this purpose shall analyze the problem with the help of theoretical frameworks on different aspects.

Finally, in course of the study the main focus remained on different aspects of Baluchistan under Pakistani federal structure and therefore, the work has excluded otherwise very useful narrations of other contexts to concentrate solely on study themes. The paper through study is intended to explain the problem that has not been dealt with the way the present study does.

Review of Literature

The history of the people of Baluchistan province includes colonial subjugation, forcible annexation, the refusal of sub-state ethnic claims, interference in local affairs, and the inability of Islamabad to

deliver genuine development. On the other, tribalism and factional conflict have kept the Baloch from advocating a coherent set of demands. In the context, there are two most intriguing scholars of the Baloch political history and nationalism. Inayatullah Baloch and Selig S. Harrison, through their painstaking studies and credible scholarship maintained the nationalist methodology-Baloch in nationalist history and Harrison in modern Baloch nationalism. Baloch in his book, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*², introduced the Western methodology and models to approach the Baloch history and historiography. His contribution to the consolidation of nationalist beliefs in Baluchistan was central to his work. Another person of prominence on the topic is Selig S. Harrison, who remained in close contact with the Baloch national movement leaders in 1970s and had an access to rare and invaluable documents, relating to history and politics. In his famous work, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*³, he analyses the Baloch nationalistic movement of the 1970s, which led to armed conflict during 1973-77.

There are several other writers who have given their important contribution to Baloch culture, language, society, and economic condition. In the context there are no separate matters of Pakistani Baloch and hence their culture, along with other things, closely related to the general Baloch. In the entire Baloch history and culture, national sentiment remained continuously a prime factor. The Baloch possesses a rich body of folklore, in the form of Balochi proverbs, common sayings, puzzles, songs and stories. The Balochi literature constitutes an important source of inspiration for nationalist feelings and emotions. Sabir Badalkhan, through his scholarly article in an edited book, *The Studies of the Ethno-Religious Images in Jhalawan and Las Bela Provinces in Balochistan*⁴, maintained that the Baloch tribes through a numerous legends, proverbs, poems and songs, all oral form of literature, have developed more sophisticated cultural heritage. Songs, in particular, have been a cultural link and a means of expression of the Baloch. *Worlds*

² **Baloch I.**, *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan: A Study of Baluch Nationalism*, Stuttgart, Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1987, p. 75.

³ **Harrison S.**, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baloch Nationalism and Soviet Temptation*, New York and Washington, Carnegie Endowment, 1981

⁴ **Maeda K.**, *The Studies of the Ethno-Religious Images in Jhalawan and Las Bela Provinces in Baluchistan*, University of Wako, 1999, pp. 83-85.

*Music Vol. 5 (2000)*⁵, *Dictionary of Oriental Literatures Vol. 2 (1974)*⁶, the first monthly periodical in Balochi, *Ouman (1951)*, all certify the above facts that Baloch epic songs transmit the Balochi history, talk about Baloch customs and traditions, and remind us values. Since 1948, as Balochistan became a part of Pakistan, a more favorable environment led to the growth of such cultural institutions as the *Balochi Literary-Society* and the *Balochi Language Association* which have functioned ever since.

Among scholars, there are two opinions on Baloch society and social organization. One group accepts the fact that the politics of development and modernization are profoundly influenced by the patterns and process that mark groups and class relationships⁷, while others including Philip S. Khoury and Joseph Kostiner view that despite modernization and urbanization the importance of tribes and tribal organizations have not destroyed⁸. But over the course of time, the Baloch society and organization as well have changed to a great extent and now there is a widespread Baloch national consciousness that cuts across tribal divisions⁹. According to Mahmud S. Ali's book, *The Fearful State: Power, People and the Internal War in South Asia*¹⁰, "in the absence of traditional leaders the dynamic of socio-economic change has precipitated a new kind of leader- younger men of 'common', non-sardari, descent". In short, although the Baloch has devised a nationalist ideology, yet tribal support remains a crucial ingredient to any potential success in Baluchistan.

Earlier during colonial era, the British despite neglect, brought about some changes in Balochistan, and encouraged commerce, trade, administration and created an abundance of new professions. With the annexation (1948), Balochistan remained on the whole extremely

⁵ *Worlds Music*. South Asia: The Indian Subcontinent, New York and London, 2000, vol. 5, p. 773.

⁶ *Dictionary of Oriental Literature*, London, 1974. vol. 2, pp. 56-58.

⁷ **Bill J., Springborg R.**, *Politics in the Middle East*. (3rd edition). Glenview, Little Brown and Company, 1990, p. 86.

⁸ **Khoury Ph., Kostiner J.** *Tribes and State in the Middle East*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990, p. 136.

⁹ **Harrison S.**, *Op. cit.*

¹⁰ **Mahmud A.**, *The Fearful State: Power, People and Internal War in South Asia*, London, 1993, p. 153.

deprived. Since the early 1950s, the Pashtuns took control of most of the commercial life previously controlled by Sindhis. Politically as well, this province of Pakistan continued to be unrepresented/underrepresented for a long time. As indicated in documents of Balochistan government, the wide disparities between urban and rural Baloch caused a major concern¹¹. Apart from rich minerals and natural resources, the province saves a large number of foreign exchange¹². *The New York Times*¹³ and *Dawn*¹⁴ have also maintained that among other grievances, the Baloch contended that they had not been benefited from the mineral resources of their homeland. Economic grievances of Balochistan were also supported and certified by Mir Khuda Bakhsh Marri Balochi's, *A Judge May Speak*¹⁵, Janmahmad's *Essays on Baloch National Struggle in Pakistan*¹⁶ and Mozaffar Shaheen's book, *The Politics of Cabinet Formation in Pakistan: A Study of Recruitment of the Central Cabinet*¹⁷. The continued negligence of the province Balochistan in all walks of life has deepened the sense of deprivation against Islamabad.

In order to review the literature, the study has relied mainly upon secondary sources which helped a lot in terms of explaining different aspects such as society, culture, language, economy, politics, etc. of the Pakistani province, Baluchistan. These endeavors helped me to get some concrete information and insight relating to the problems of Baluchistan, and explain problem.

Elements of Baluchistan

Formation of the Province. Baluchistan, the province of today's Pakistan, originally comprises of three areas: One, the Chief Commissioner's Province of Balochistan directly ruled by the British

¹¹ Government of Baluchistan, Development Statistics of Baluchistan, 1981, vol. 1, no. 10, Quetta.

¹² **Brailvi M.**, Baluchistan-What is the Issue?, Quetta, 1984.

¹³ *The New York Times*, New York, February 15, 1980.

¹⁴ *Dawn*, February 1, 1946, p. 4.

¹⁵ **Bakhsh Marri Kh.**, A Judge May Speak. Lahore, Ferozsons, 1990, p. 166.

¹⁶ **Janmahmad**, Essays on Baloch National Struggle in Pakistan. Emergence, Dimonision, Repercussions. Quetta, Gosha-e-Adab, 1989, p. 273.

¹⁷ **Mozaffar Sh.**, The Politics of Cabinet Formation in Pakistan: A Study of Recruitment to Central Cabinets, Ohio, Miami University, 1980, p. 180.

India, which in August 1947, immediately became part of Pakistan, two, the four princely states of feudalistic nature, namely Makran, Kharan, Las Bela, and the Khanate of Kalat, which decided to accede to Pakistan in March 1948. The Khan of Kalat agreed to join Pakistan under the condition that only defense, currency, foreign relations and finance would be controlled by the federal government. The third part was the enclave of Gwader, purchased from the Sultanate of Oman in 1958. In line, the four princely states together formed the Balochistan States Union in October 1952. Three years later in October 1955 “One Unit” system was introduced which resulted in the merger of Balochistan States Union and the Chief Commissioner’s Province of Balochistan. The enclave of Gwader, which was still part of the Sultanate of Oman, was purchased in October 1958 and all together formed the then province of West Pakistan. Again the province was officially dissolved in 1970 and the former Balochistan States Union and the former Chief Commissioner’s province of Balochistan were combined to form the new province of Balochistan. In 1977, the then Balochistan province was expanded and Gwader was incorporated. Thus now, in its present form, it includes the three-the Chief Commissioner’s province, the Balochistan States Union and the enclave of Gwader. In total the country Pakistan is comprised of four provinces-Baluchistan, Gilgit Baltistan, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Sindh two centrally administered areas, a territory and a capital territory.

The province Baluchistan is one of the four provinces of Pakistan located in the southwestern region of the country. Its provincial capital and largest city is Quetta. It shares border with Punjab and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) to the northeast, Sindh to the southeast, the Arabian Sea to the south, Iran to the west and Afghan to the north. Most of the province’s inhabitants are Baloch people, Pashtuns and Brahuis, although there are small communities of Hazaras, Sindhis, Punjabis, and other settlers such as the Uzbeks, and Turkmens. It covers an area of 347,190 square kilometres, and is the largest province by area, constituting 44% of Pakistan’s total landmass. In addition, it also borders the geopolitical regions of the Middle East and Southwest Asia, Central Asia and South Asia. The climate of the upper highlands is characterized by very cold winters and hot summers. In the lower highlands, winters

vary from extremely cold in northern districts to milder conditions closer to the Makran coast. Winters are mild on the plains, with temperature never falling below freezing point. Summers are hot and dry, especially in the arid zones of Chagai and Kharan districts. The desert climate is characterized by hot and very arid conditions.

Social Composition. Gradually but very slowly the social composition of Pakistan's province Baluchistan is changing and getting a focus worldwide. Originally it is constituted from a number of kindred groups. It has many subdivisions or clans who claim to have blood relations with one another through common ancestors. Kinship, which has its characteristic form in clan and family structure, provides the basic ordering mechanism for society. Even in the 19th century as modernization and urbanization reduced the importance of tribes and tribal organizations, the influence of tribal pattern is not destroyed¹⁸. The tribal patterns are existent and paternalistic methods of control through family networks continue to have relevance. Another expert on international economic development Dr. Nek Buzdar, also confirms that the Baloch society, by and large, adheres to traditional ways of life. He believes that despite the emergence of political parties in Balochistan, tribal organization and political leadership still play a dominant role in local and provincial administration¹⁹. Tribes in Balochistan are divided into *Shahri* (Sedentary) and nomadic units. The Shahrīs were the backbone of the feudal order, which was predominant in central and southern Balochistan (Makkoran), while the nomads were the cornerstones of the tribal order prevailing mainly in the northern tribal areas. Both groups, however, were bound together by a set of historically evolved relationships based on economic, social, political, military, and lingual interactions²⁰. Of the both, the Baloch tribal system is segmentary which means that it is a set of equal lineages allied relatively and contingently for political action, decisions being made by assemblies and councils, with no offices and

¹⁸ **Khoury Ph., Kostiner J.**, Op. cit.

¹⁹ **Buzdar N.**, Social organization, resource use, and economic development in Baluchistan, *Balochi Labzank*, Baluchistan (monthly), 2000, March-April, p. 82.

²⁰ **Swidler N.**, Brahui Political Organization and the National State, in *Ainslie Embree, ed. Pakistan's Western Borderlands*, Durham, Carolina Academic Press, 1977.

hierarchy of authority, and thus no top²¹. Therefore, centralized authority is absent in such a system. Keeping the fact in view, the colonial government exercised control over the Baloch tribes, the British themselves were light on the ground, and in return for the chieftains, loyalty, gave them a free hand to keep the tribal way of life largely unchanged.

Baloch Social Organizations. In traditional Baloch society the most widely known institutions are the *Sardari* and *Jirga*. Under these systems, every tribe had its separate *Jirga* (council of elders) which acted as a court of law²². *Jirga* at the tribe's level operated under the leadership of *Sardar* and dealt with important matters concerning the tribes and disputes arising among them, the election of a new Khan or the eventual external threats. Providing the Baloch society a historical, social and political structure, the *Jirga* remained intact for a long time and helped the Baloch deal with the situation of anarchy, chaos and emergency. In line, the constitution and powers of traditional *Jirga* was changed under the British rule in 19th century when Sir Robert Sandeman introduced a new kind of *Jirga*, called "Shahi *Jirga*" where only *Sardars* and aristocrats could sit. The meeting of *Shahi Jirga* was usually held once or twice in a year. Its powers were expanded in comparison to earlier and now it could impose taxes in property and labour and only the Political Agent could review the decision²³. The new system was considered as a shrewd mechanism of indirect rule with powers vested in a few carefully selected tribal elders loyal to the British and ready to act against their own people.

Another traditional Baloch social system, "Sardari" appears to have had its origin in the Mughal period of Indian history. In contrast to the system of *Jirga*, *Sardari* system is highly centralized and

²¹ **Salzman Ph.**, Why tribes have chiefs: A case from Baluchistan, in Richard Tapper (ed.), *The Conflict of Tribe and State in Iran, and Afghanistan*, London, 1983, p. 267.

²² **Mohammad Usman H.**, *Baluchistan: Mazi, Hal aur Mustaqbel*, Karachi Indus Publications, 1976, pp. 174-175.

²³ **Dehwar M.M.S.**, *Contemporary History of Baluchistan*. Quetta, Third World Publication, 1994, p. 260.

hierarchical²⁴. Under it, at the apex of the system is the sardar, the hereditary central chief from whom power flows downward to waderas, the section chiefs, and beyond them to the subordinate clan and sub-clan leaders of the lesser tribal units. The sardar's extraordinary authority within this structure probably stems from the essentially military character of early Baloch tribal society. However, modernization has changed much of the tribal system. It was first challenged by the setting of international boundaries which partitioned into three states, dividing some of the large tribes between countries and prohibiting the traditional summer and winter migrations of nomads and semi-nomads.

The second challenge occurred between the world wars, when the British and Persians largely pacified Balochistan. The termination of the traditional nomadic economic system devastated the tribes and as a result they move into cities and towns. This increased chieftains' distance from the tribe. Over the course of time, the traditional social organization of the Baloch to a great extent has changed and now there is a widespread Baloch national consciousness that cuts across tribal divisions²⁵. In a tribal society, a political ideology such as Baloch nationalism would hardly gain support, because loyalties of tribal members do not extend to entities rather than individual tribes. Within the tribes, an individual's identity is based on his belonging to a larger group. This larger group is not the nation but the tribe.

Pakistani Baloch. In the post-colonial period when Balochistan made an integral part of newly-formed state Pakistan, it also became the land where 70% of the total Baloch people began to live. Historically, Balochistan with its tribal and semi-tribal social structure has had a strong politico-economic strangle hold by a chieftains and tribal Sardars. Typical domination of the tribal lords on the politics of the province marred the overall development and evolution of the political process that could pave the way for the greater political participation. On the other, from the very beginning, Pakistan has not been a smooth democracy and thus, the electoral politics has failed to prevail the political economy of

²⁴ **Barth F.**, Pathan identity and its maintenance", in Fredrik Barth (ed.), *Ethnic Group and Boundaries*. Boston, 1969, pp. 117-134.

²⁵ **Harrison S.**, Op. cit.

the country. In the phase of controlled democracy that intermitted the direct military rule or dictatorial regime the nature and style of the governance remained unaccommodating. The actual political and economic powers always cling on to the centrist forces and never devolved to the regional or provincial representatives. This led to the dysfunctional political process especially at provincial level that further consolidated the already stronghold of local elites. Unlike other provinces of Pakistan where a teeming middle class has been emerging with assertive political and economic ambitions, the social structure in Balochistan is sharply divided between a tiny but extremely powerful class of tribal chieftains and legal business tycoons and remaining lower class and a small group of public sector employees. Consequently a vibrant middle class is missing in Baloch society.

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 teaching supersedes those of the Prophet Mahammad. Baloch society is stratified and has been characterized as “feudal militarism”. The significant social tie is that between a leader, the Hakim, and his retinue, consisting of pastoralists, agriculturalists, lower-level leaders, and lower level tenant farmers and descendants of former slaves. Baloch has long been accustomed to indirect rule, a policy that leaves local elite with a substantial measure of autonomy. The upsurge of 1970s saw precipitous deterioration in relations between Balochistan and the central government. The conflict touched the lives of most Baloch and, for the first time, politicized those long accustomed to accepting the status quo. Original demands for greater regional autonomy escalated into a full-scale movement aimed at restructuring the government along the federal lines. In coming decades/years the traditional cleavages among hakim, minor leaders, and hizmatkar had declined in importance as the Baloch increasingly thought of themselves as a unified group in opposition to Pakistan, or Punjabi, hegemony.

Economy. Closely connected to social set up is its economy. The economy of Balochistan is largely based upon the production of natural gas, coal and minerals. Agriculture and livestock also dominate the

Baloch economy. Horticultural development is a fairly recent, yet growing phenomenon. Other important economic sectors include fisheries, mining, manufacturing industries, trade and other services being rendered by public and private sector organizations in the province. Tourism remains limited but has increased due to the exotic appeal of the province. Limited farming in the east and fishing along the Arabian Sea coastline provide income and sustenance for the local population. Due to the tribal lifestyle of many Baloch and Brahui people, animal husbandry and trading bazaars throughout the province are important. People choose to live in regions that have water, roads, hospitals, electricity, and a congenial climate. Therefore, the population is concentrated around the highlands of Quetta and Kalat and in the districts bordering the plains of Punjab and upper Sindh. The other well-populated districts are along the Makran coast and in the Kirthar hill ranges along the western border of Sindh. Lack of adequate rainfall throughout the province and availability of water only in certain belts of land decides the occupation of the people.

Today, the Baloch, despite occupying a vast and resourceful territory has failed to keep the pace of socio-economic development and modernity with other fellow nations in the region. The economic grievances of the Baloch dates back to the British era. As the British developed industries and agriculture in Sindh, Punjab, and NWFP, they ignored Balochistan. There is a widely held view that the British rulers neglected the economic development of Balochistan²⁶. A section of them also view that it was not merely a case of neglect, but what might be called purposeful sidetracking, even suppression. Of course the British had their own imperial interest to protect. Aijaz Ahmad, a Pakistani Marxist, wrote, "The British imperialist interest in Balochistan was not primarily economic; rather it was of a military and geostrategic nature"²⁷. Military experts also expressed the same view and maintained that Balochistan was the chessboard on which the Great Game was played²⁸.

²⁶ Dawn, February 1, 1946.

²⁷ **Ahmad A.**, The National Question in Baluchistan, Pakistan Forum, **3**, 8-9, 1973, 4-18.

²⁸ **Ahmad S. I.**, Baluchistan: Its Strategic Importance, Karachi, Royal Book Company, 1992, pp. 70-85.

The British rulers probably thought that an economically and politically enervated Balochistan would lend itself to be used more easily. On the other hand, a prosperous and united Balochistan could become recalcitrant and forge relations with undependable principalities in the neighborhood²⁹. However, despite this neglect, in the course of time, the British rule encouraged commerce and trade and the administration had created an abundance of new professions. All these developments led finally to the rise of Baloch national consciousness and nationalism in eastern Balochistan in the 1920s.

As earlier, with annexation in 1948, Balochistan remained on the whole extremely deprived. Since the early 1950s, the Pashtuns took control of most of the commercial life previously controlled by Sindh Hindus. Provincial administration was predominantly Punjabi and few of the higher civil servants were Baloch. According to preliminary surveys, underground water as well as mineral resources were available in large quantities in Baluchistan. But the underdeveloped infrastructure of the province made them difficult to exploit. As a result in the 1970s, compared to the other three provinces Punjab, Sindh and NWFP, Balochistan was the most neglected and impoverished province in Pakistan. In 1976, the annual per capita income was 54 dollars as compared with the 80 dollars for Punjab, 78 dollars for Sindh, and 60 dollars for NWFP³⁰.

In 1977 the life expectancy in rural Balochistan was 42 years as compared with the national average of 60 years. Similarly, the national literacy average was 16 percent, while that of Balochistan was 6 to 9 percent³¹ (Harrison, 1981). To the Baloch such an economic gap can hardly be justified in the light of Balochistan's rich maritime resources along the several hundred miles of coast as well as its land-based mineral resources. According to Baloch nationalists, the people of Baluchistan were not the beneficiaries of the huge resources and income the province provided to the Federal exchequer. The continued negligence has deepened the sense of deprivation and feeling of hatred against

²⁹ **Mansergh N.**, *The Transfer of Power 1942-47*, vol. 12, London, Her Majesty's Stationary Office, August 2, 1982, p. 480.

³⁰ **Burki Sh.**, *Pakistan Under Bhutto*, London, Macmillan Press, 1980, p. 94.

³¹ **Harrison S.**, *Op. cit.*

Islamabad. A section of the Baloch nationalists believe that the centralist nature of Pakistani federation is such that small nationalities like the Baloch would find it hard to accommodate within the federation.

Thus, the basic issue related to the economic claims of the Baloch is the right distribution of natural resources between the centre and the province. Balochistan is the richest unit in the federation of Pakistan as far as the natural resources like various types of minerals, particularly natural gas, copper, marble and gold. At the same time it has a very significant geographical and coastal position³². Now the problem is that Ports and Shipping are not only a federal subject but they are totally operated from Islamabad. The local population has always been complaining against their deprivation of the royalties concerning natural resources and their lack of participation in the development.

Baloch Religion and Culture. The state religion in Pakistan is Islam, which is practiced by about 95-98% of the people of the nation³³. The remaining 2.5% practice Christianity, Hinduism and other religions. Muslims are divided into different sects: the majority of them practice Sunni Islam, while 5.20% are Shias and 2.2% are Ahmadi Muslims. At large, Baloch differ from their neighbors not only in their language, literature, religion, and feelings, but also in their traditions and habits. For example, Arab Islam failed to assimilate the Persians into Arab traditions. Iranians fought and resisted Arab domination and though they converted to Islam, they formed a new sect (Shia) in Islam. They maintained their separate language, literature and traditions. Turks and Afghans also refused the domination and influence of Iranian Islam. The same is true of the Baloch, who maintained their own traditions and customs, which are different from Punjabi, Sindhi, Iranian and Afghan Muslims. Likewise, in sphere of religion the Baloch people have a different perception than other nations in Middle East. They are not fundamentalist

³² **Imran M., Akram-ul-Haq M.,** Pakistan federation and Baloch nationalism: A prospect for economic development and political challenges, *Canadian Social Science*, 2016, 12, 3, 56-61,
<http://www.cscanada.net/index.php/css/article/view/8252>

³³ Country Profile: Pakistan, Library of Congress Country Studies on Pakistan, February, 2005.

and do not believe in mixing religion with politics³⁴. The overwhelming majority of the Baloch adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam of the Hanafite rite. It is important to note that before succumbing to Islam the Baloch were mostly Zoroastrians. The remnants of some Zoroastrian tradition are still evident among some Baloch tribes³⁵. The conversion of the Baloch to Islam had a sterilizing effect on their sense of nationhood. Especially since the Nasir Khan's era, the term "Balochistan" has meant more than just geography. It also refers to Baloch culture and is therefore social and political concept as well.

Language, culture, and perception are intimately intertwined and hence language has been a key element contributing to a sense of national identity as one scholar puts it, "Baloch identity in Baluchistan has been closely tied to the use of the Balochi language in inter-tribal relations". In spite of almost half a century of brutal assimilation policy, both in Iran and Afghanistan, the Baloch people have managed to retain their culture and their oral tradition of story telling. The harsh oppression of the governments has strengthened the Baloch's will to pass on their heritage to coming generations. The Baloch language is both proof and symbol of the separate identity of the Baloch, and impressive efforts are made to preserve and develop it. In Pakistan the Balochi is generally classified as Eastern Balochi and Western Balochi. Eastern Balochi is spoken mainly in the north eastern area of the province of Balochistan in Pakistan and in neighboring areas of the province of Punjab and Sindh. Western Balochi is spoken in the Western and southern areas of the Pakistani province of Balochistan as well as in Karachi and other parts of Sindh and other parts of the region.

Balochistan, despite its scarce population, has an uncommon racial and tribal diversity. Most of the people in the cities and towns understand and speak more than two languages. In addition to Balochi, Pashtoo and Brahvi, the majority of the population understand and speak Urdu, the national language. In Kachhi and Sibi districts, people speak Seraiki and Sindhi. Quetta city, the confluence point of all linguistic

³⁴ **Baloch I.**, *Op. cit.*

³⁵ **Qaisarani Sh.**, *Baluchistan Iarikh Wa Mazhab*, Quetta, Edarch Tadriss, 1994, p. 259.

groups accommodates not only Urdu, Balochi, Pashtoo, Brahvi and Sindhi speaking people but Darri and Persian speaking ones as well.

In fact, Baloch culture is opposite to the general perception about it. Though Balochistan is an area of barren lands, deserts and mountains, the Baloch culture is full of traditions, arts and crafts. Balochistan is also known for its tribes and festivals. Another distinct feature of Baloch culture is the storytelling tradition. Poets and storytellers are highly respected in Baloch culture. In Baloch culture marriages are different and unique than in the other provinces of the country. The marriages are according to the Islamic principles in presence of a Maullana along with the presence of witnesses. Usually the marriages are done in young ages but are arranged in early childhood or at birth. There is a very low or negligible ratio of love marriages as this is not appreciated across the culture in all tribes. Likewise, divorce rate is very low in Balochistan as compared to the other provinces of Pakistan. However, dress, festival, music, food, and sports are almost the same as of other provinces of the country.

Government and Politics. Balochistan is one of the four provinces of Pakistan, located in the southwestern part of the country. Its provincial capital and largest city is Quetta. In common with the other provinces of Pakistan, Balochistan has a parliamentary form of government. The ceremonial head of the province is the Governor who is appointed by the President of Pakistan on the advice of the provincial Chief Minister. The Chief Minister, the province's chief executive, is normally the leader of the largest political party or alliance of parties in the provincial assembly. The unicameral Provincial Assembly of Balochistan comprises 65 seats of which 11 are reserved for women and 3 reserved for non-Muslims. The judicial branch of government is carried out by Balochistan High Court which is based in Quetta and headed by a Chief Justice. For administrative purpose, the province is divided into six divisions. The six divisions are further subdivided in 32 districts.

The government of Pakistan has been dealing with animosity among the tribes of Balochistan since the time the country came into existence in 1947. The causes of the conflict with Balochistan include a ripe ethnic nationalism along with feelings of economic and political

exclusion³⁶. Demographically though it constitutes a mere 3.6 percent of the total population of Pakistan, it is strategically extremely important to the country because of the high concentration of natural resources including gas, oil, copper and gold. However, despite the richness in natural resources, Balochistan continues to remain the poorest province of Pakistan. In addition, following the capture of Kalat on April 1, 1948, cases of military atrocities have been a recurrent occurrence in the province. Acts of ill treatment by officials in the region included torture, arbitrary, arrests executions and acts of indiscriminate violence. As a result, the people of Balochistan fell a sense of separate identity on account of a shared history, language, and other cultural aspects. This shared culture among the Balochs led to the ripening of a strong sense of nationalism that propounded for a larger political autonomy and a separate state for Balochistan.

In Pakistan's Balochistan province, insurgencies by Baloch nationalists have been fought in 1948, 1958-1959, 1962-1963, 1973-1977 with an ongoing and reportedly stronger, broader insurgency beginning in 2003. Baloch separatists allege that the central government of Pakistan is systematically suppressing development in Balochistan to keep the Balochs weak, while their opponents argue that international business interests have been unwilling to invest in the region due to continuing unrest³⁷. Of the five Pakistan faced the first insurgency in 1948 when on April 1, the military invaded Kalat and Yar Khan, the then ruler of Kalat, signed a treaty of accession, submitting the federal government. At the time Yar Khan's younger brothers, Princes Agha Abdul Karim Baloch and Muhammad Rahim, refused to lay down arms and in coming years continued unconventional attacks on the army until 1950. Second conflict took place from 1958 to 1959 against the "One Unit" policy of the government which decreased their representation in government. This guerilla war was fought by Nawab Nauroz Khan and his followers and they were arrested, charged with treason and subsequently hanged on the charges. It followed the tension continued to grow amid consistent

³⁶ The Indian Express, August 18, 2016.

³⁷ **Kemp G.**, *The East Moves West: India, China and Asia's Growing Presence in the Middle East*, Brookings Institution, 2010, p. 116.

political disorder and instability at the federal level. Further, Sher Muhammad Bijrani Marri led like-minded militants into guerilla warfare from 1963 to 1969 by creating their own insurgent base. This insurgency ended in 1969, with the Baloch separatists agreeing to a ceasefire. In 1970 Pakistani President Yahya Khan abolished the "One Unit" policy, which led to the recognition of Balochistan as the fourth province of West Pakistan. In the fourth conflict (1973) which led to armed insurgency Pakistani military lost 300 to 400 hundred soldiers while a large number of Baloch militants and civilians were killed. The current conflict started in 2004 with an insurgent attack on Gwadar port and their stated demands include greater control of the province's resources and a moratorium on the construction of military bases in the area. In the context Pakistan accused India, and occasionally the US of supporting Baloch rebels.

Conclusion and Pathways

Basically, the root causes of the conflict are both historical and political. Besides the historical and political reasons, the social factors such as ethnicity and religion have also played a vital role in the continuance of the conflict. Examination of the nature and causes of conflict in Balochistan reveals a great deal of similarity with other conflicts taking place around the world. These causes are inequality, discrimination, resentment, the perception of inequality, socio-economic factors, marginalization, and the lack of freedom, democracy and the rule of law. Baloch grievances started within the federation when the federal government concentrated all power, including political and socio-economic power in its hand. This milieu compelled the Baloch people feel that the federal government's behavior towards them is totally exploitative. In Pakistan's case it is crucial to mention that, without the accountability that comes through sustained mass political participation, the State will fail to provide solutions to basic grievances such as provincial autonomy, control over natural resources, educational access and basic needs of the province. In a nutshell, these economic, socio-political and cultural grievances among most deprived groups of the Baloch have provoked conflict over the last six decades. Today the

Baloch grievances are causing them to reassert their ethno – nationalist identity, thereby posing a challenge to the concept of Pakistani nationalism.

Conflict resolution in any region of the world requires taking into account the sources of conflict for addressing root causes which may lead to prevent violence. They emerge mostly from the unfulfilled demands of the people living in the conflict area and these demands are usually related to their religious, ethnic, linguistic or political identities. The conflict in Baluchistan is also an expression of such divergence about various activities in the system including differences about allocation of resources, centralization of power, and undemocratic political structure. In the context, it is imperative that the needs of Balochs must be heard, understood and fulfilled. In this regard, the following recommendations can be useful in reaching out a conflict resolution.

- The federal government should ensure the implementation of NFC Awards, the Aghaz-e-Huqooq-e-Baluchistan package, and the 18th Constitutional Amendment in letter and spirit.
- The government must improve security situation of the province.
- All accused persons, detained or missing, should either be released or produced before the court on account of Habeas corpus principle.
- Rule of law should be adhered, illegal detentions should be discouraged.
- The fundamental need of economic opportunities must be met.
- Pak-China Economic Corridor and Gwadar should engage the natives in these projects.

Thus, even today, a needs-based solution is within reach. Connecting with their needs, rather than using enemy images and labeling, may prove successful in Baluchistan.