

# Understanding Baloch: Genesis and Continuum of their grievances

Bipin Kr. Tiwary & Akansha\*

## Abstract

Pakistan has been a multi-ethnic nation. All the ethnic groups feel marginalised vis-à-vis Punjabis. Within this marginalisation, the Baloch ethnic group is the most exploited one. With a unique combination of largest area and smallest population, Balochistan is rich in natural resources. Due to its trivial population, Pakistan has constantly exploited it at every level. This is one of the most troubled and exploited areas of South Asia, which needs a thorough analysis of the inception of their grievances and the failure of Islamabad government to address them even after almost 75 years of Pakistan's creation.

**Keywords:** Balochistan, Ethnicity in Pakistan, Grievances of Baloch, Sardari system

Ethnic politics in Pakistan is a story of ambiguous, often turbulent relations between the center and the provinces and the net result of political, economic, and cultural alienation of minority ethnic groups. At another level, it is a tale of majority-minority bickering, exacerbated by rapid demographic changes propelling new economic forces and contestations over census statistics, quotas, and jobs.

This research paper is focused on the historical analysis of the problem that this marginalised group is facing at the hands of the Pakistan government. The various reasons for the discontent of this minority group are analysed and how Islamabad had failed to address the grievances at every level, be it political, economic, or social.

The Balochistan region and Baloch ethnic identity are quite complicated and intertwined with many factors like fractured leadership, historical grievances, and economic exploitation. Nationalism is generally seen as an effect of industrialisation and print capitalism by the modernists, but

---

\* Dr. Bipin Kr. Tiwary is Associate Professor at Department of Political Science, University of Delhi

\* Dr. Akansha is Assistant Professor at Department of Political Science, Indraprastha College for Women, University of Delhi

Baloch ethnonationalism refutes this claim as it is a highly fragmented tribal society with the least industrialisation and least literacy rate. It is seen as a response to alien domination, first by British colonialists and then by the Pakistani state (Bansal, 2006, p. 5).

### **Historical Overview of Balochistan**

The tribal setup of the Baloch group has a long history that needs a thorough analysis to understand their psyche. The genesis of ethnonationalism can be traced by considering many variables constituting its identity. The existing issues can be understood when placed in the background of their historical development, as the historical narrative provides a context to view the colonial and contemporary stereotypes of the Baloch.

### **Geographic Location and Strategic Importance**

Balochistan is significant for Pakistan due to its geopolitical setting and its strategic importance. In the words of Carol Mc C. Lewin, "Occupants of a frontier area on the crossroads between the Indian Subcontinent, Central Asia, and the Iranian plateau, the Baloch presently sit astride the boundaries of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. Moreover, as an eastward extension of the Iranian plateau, Balochistan presents an arid and rugged terrain, traditionally supporting various combinations of nomadic pastoralism, date palm cultivation, dry-crop agriculture, raiding, and (on the Arabian Sea coast) fishing. As a result, Balochistan has been a pawn in several versions of the geopolitical 'great game' in Asia, notably played by Russia, Persia, and Britain in the nineteenth century and the Soviet Union and the United States in the 1980s. In both instances, the warm waters of the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Oman, that is, the southern boundary of Balochistan, have been an issue" (Lewin, 1996, p. xv).

Balochistan is a land of contrast. It has lofty and rugged mountains under Chiltan, Takatu, Sulaiman, Sultan, and plains stretching hundreds of miles. It has fertile land like Nasirabad and tracks that have been thirsty for centuries, and even a bush could hardly be sighted like the Pat section of

Sibi District and Dasht-e-Makran in Makran Division. It has the hottest places in the country, like Sibi and Dhadar, where temperature shoots up to over 120 degrees Fahrenheit, as well as coldest towns like Quetta, Kalat, Ziarat, Kan Mehtarzai, where mercury falls much below freezing point (Khan, 2012, pp. 200-223).

Balochistan comprises 347,190 sq. km, constituting around 44 percent of Pakistan's total landmass. The Baloch homeland is divided into three countries of Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. In terms of area and population, Pakistan is, by far, the largest Baloch territory. Its hugeness makes it hard to defend, and its location, stretching from the Afghan border all the way along the Iranian border to the sea, makes it strategically inviting. And not to forget the long coastline at the mouth of the Gulf of Oman, through which pass almost 80 percent of the world's oil supplies (Kukreja, 2006, p. 29). It is also rich in mineral and gas deposits, uranium, and copper. The Sui natural gas field in the Bugti area produces about 40 percent of Pakistan's natural gas (Khan, 2012, pp. 200-223). According to a newspaper report of 4th April 2005, "Mineral deposits usually occur within minerogenic zones (of non-metallic minerals) and metallogenic zones (of metallic minerals)." Of nine such zones in Pakistan, five are located in Balochistan. Base metal deposits, such as copper, lead, and zinc, are found in Chagai, Khuzdar, and Lasbela Districts. In association with Saindak copper ore, silver and gold have recently been re-assessed (Dawn, 2005).

Balochistan also hosts numerous sizeable sub-bituminous coalfields in the Quetta-Harnai-Duki region. It has 49 percent of the total livestock in the country. In 2003 it produced 1.4 million tons of fruit. In 2002, 121,212 metric tons of fish were caught. However, only 11,575 metric tons were consumed locally, whereas 109,655 metric tons were available as exportable surplus (Dawn, 2005).

In the above context, if we see the statement made by Ghaus Baksh Bizenjo, the Kalat State National Party leader in the lower house of Parliament of State of Kalat in 1948: "They say we must join Pakistan for economic reasons. Yet we have minerals, we have petroleum, and we

have ports. The question is, what would Pakistan be without us?" (Bansal, 2006, p. 3) we can see the dilemma that has been plaguing the Pakistani policymakers since its inception. The prospects of survival without Balochistan look bleak even today as they appeared in 1948. Balochistan never got the merited return for what it contributed to the economic growth of the country.

### **Descent**

Baloch, anthropologically speaking, constitutes an ethnic amalgam, speaking a language class, along with Pashtu and Kurdish, in the Iranian division of the Indo-European language family. A traditional view, supported by ancient verse, posits that the Balochs were a tribe dwelling in Aleppo (now Syria) before the time of Muhammad. The earliest historical reference points towards the Balochis living in the region around Kerman during the Arab conquest. Later on, with the advancement of Turks from Central Asia, they moved further east to Seistan and Makran. Furthermore, by the fifteenth century, they had reached Sindh and Punjab. Under Mir Nasir Khan, the newly emerged Khanate (a centralised tribal confederacy) in Kalat expanded its frontiers into Iran and Punjab in the eighteenth century. The British confronted the Khanate with its emergent Baloch identity. The two negotiated a treaty in 1854, according to which British political agents were deputed for the next 20 years in Kalat (Lewin, 1996, p. xvi). Balochistan was important to the Portuguese, the Russians, and the British from the point of view of both strategy and trade, as it lay on the crossroads of the routes joining Central Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia. Due to local resistance and the rivalries of the European powers in the Persian Gulf, the Portuguese attempts to control the Baloch coastal area failed. Britishers made the most successful attempt to turn Balochistan into an object of colonial exploitation and a pathway for penetration into Central Asia.

All through this period of settling down, the Balochs never ceased in their tribal strives for a more stabilised life. It was not until the time of Sardar Miroo Khan Mirwari- the founder of Kalat state- that the people of Balochistan could ultimately breathe in peace with a certain amount

of confidence and means of defending their hearths and homes against foreign invasions (Baluch, 1975, pp. xiii-xv). The Sardari system so profoundly engrained in the Baloch ethnic groups grew out of tribal homogeneity and loyalty towards the tribe. The hierarchy includes tribe-Sardars-Grand Sardar-Head of Confederacy (Khan of Kalat). From 1666 to 1839, the Khan ruled the 'nation-state' with absolute sovereignty. By 1876, the Britishers established their rule in Balochistan with the help of the Treaty of Gandamak signed in Afghanistan (Pande, 2005, p. 48). It points to the transnational affinities of the Baloch people. They follow the nomadic and semi-nomadic pastoral lifestyle, rooted in tribalism and sub-tribalism, with a societal emphasis on loyalty to the Sardars (Pande, 2005, p. 47).

### **Religious Orientation**

The Baloch people have followed a resilient secular attitude despite the growth of religious radicalism elsewhere in Pakistan. The Baloch generally adhere to the Hanafi School of the jurisprudence of Sunni Islam and are generally casual about religious observance. Religious leaders play a marginal role in Baloch society. Baloch society has two authorities: Secular authority (vested in their elected leaders or traditional chiefs/sardars) and Spiritual authority (vested amongst Saints). The Baloch society follows a strict hierarchical pattern characterised as feudal militarism. The Sardari system is firmly rooted amongst the tribes like Bugti, Marri, Zarakzai, Mengal, and Achakzai. Inayatullah Baloch observes, "The Baloch people differ from those of Punjab and Sind and the Muslims of India in their notion of a religious state. They regard religion as the individual's private affair. An interesting story exemplifies the Baloch approach to religion: once, a Baloch was asked why he did not keep the fast of Ramzan (the holy month for Muslims). Baloch replied that he was excused, as his chief is keeping it for him" (Baloch, 1987, pp. 70-71). One more incident which shows the Baloch psyche was when a Baloch asked a practising Muslim about his evening prayers, "what are you doing?" he was answered: "Praying in fear of God." Baloch said: "Come along to my hills where we do not fear anything." A Baloch proverb says, "God will not favour a person who does not plunder and rob." It is said that in the late

19th century, when Britishers asked Baloch and Pashtuns how they wanted their civil cases should be decided, Baloch replied: "Rawaj" (Baloch customary law); the Pashtun answered: "Sharia" (Islamic law) (Baloch, 1987, p. 71).

While talking about the secular tendencies of his tribe, Baloch said, "In 1947, when the Indian subcontinent suffered under the effects of Muslim-Hindu riots, it was only the Baloch society where Hindu minorities remained untouched and lived in peace; their neighbors did not influence the Baloch. Throughout Baloch history, the Baloch people did not fight religious wars against India, except for Nasir Khan the Great, and the factors behind the Baloch invasion of India under Nasir Khan were more economical and political than religious" (Baloch, 1987, pp. 71-72).

Regarding the Two-Nation theory based on which India was divided into two parts, Nawab Khair Baksh Marri, in an interview, stated: "The Muslim nation or Pakistan ideology, of whom I am accused of being an opponent, (is) not, in reality, anything at all, how can I oppose them?... The 'Muslim nation' that does not exist in reality is simultaneously impracticable as a concept. For example, we do not give any (Muslim) Iranian, Afghan or Arab the right to vote in our country, nor can we appoint them to any high office here. However, on the other hand, we give the right to vote to Pakistan's Hindus, Christians, and Parsis, who can often be appointed to high positions. So it is obvious that this is an imaginary concept" (Baloch, 1987, p. 76). Sardar Mengal expressed similar views in another interview.

### **Causes of the Discontentment**

There are many reasons for the Baloch's discontentment with the Pakistan establishment. The beginning of their problems with the government started with the creation of Pakistan and then, later on, the treatment met to the minority ethnic group. The causes of their grievances which went unheard and unanswered, led to many insurgencies in Pakistan by the Baloch people.

## Merger with Pakistan

The roots of the crisis in Balochistan go back to the inception of Pakistan. The incorporation of the Baloch into Pakistan came as a traumatic blow to nationalist leaders who had campaigned clandestinely for an independent Balochistan during the last decades of the British Raj. During the time of the partition of India and Pakistan, many Balochs never wanted to join Pakistan in the first place. In the 1930s, some Baloch leaders, foreseeing the eventual departure of the British, started to advance claims for independence. Nevertheless, on the eve of departure, Britishers played a neat trick with the Baloch people. They composed a voting college- *Shahi Jirga*, Grand Council (to crush the 'anti-social elements' among tribes, *Jirga* was introduced. The British authorities nominated the *Jirga* members. In tribal areas, the Sardar was the head of the *Jirga*, known as *Sardari Jirga*, assisted by the selected elderly man of the tribe. Above these was the *Shahi Jirga*. Its task was to settle the intertribal conflicts and other important matters, such as revolts against the government and tribal chiefs. The cases were conducted under the 'Balochistan Penal Code' and the Frontier Crimes Regulation. The chiefs and the official *Jirgas* were entitled to pronounce a death sentence, life imprisonment, the forfeiture of property, and whipping. All Baloch national uprisings were crushed under this *Jirga* system), which would determine the future of British Balochistan. But this college limited the voting exercises to specific loyal British and Muslim League clients by excluding the representatives of the Balochistan state and the elected members of the Quetta municipality (Dhar, 2006, p. 9).

An agreement signed between the British government, Kalat state, and the government of Pakistan (proposed) was announced on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1947 regarding the establishment of the independent Kalat as proclaimed by the Khan of Kalat. After the establishment of Pakistan on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1947, the government of Pakistan, in contravention of the agreement dated 11<sup>th</sup> August 1947, pressurised the Khan to announce the merger with Pakistan (Dhar, 2006, p. 180).

Moreover, When Balochistan forcibly 'agreed' to join Pakistan, the Pakistan government agreed to pass a law that only Baloch would be recruited to government jobs in the provincial administration under the provincial quota policy. However, only non-Balochs, mainly Pakhtun and Punjabis re-settled in Balochistan, are recruited against this federal quota.

### **Division of Population**

Despite its homogeneous name, Balochistan is heterogeneous like other provinces, with every third Sindhi and every fifth Punjabi claiming Baloch descent. Pakhtun-Baloch rivalries are inter-tribal dissensions that do not allow a well-defined, cogent, distinct Baloch ethnonationalism, especially as there are more Baloch in Karachi than in the province itself. The Baloch diaspora cannot overlook the parallel existence of three Balochi national identities in three sovereign countries- Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. Therefore, any irredentist claims on Baloch areas of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, or South-western Balochistan would entail more problems than solutions. The province has also been threatened by a large influx of Afghan refugees, leading to significant alterations in the province's demography.

Of the total population of Balochistan, which is merely 5-6% of Pakistan's population, the Baloch numerically dominates the south of the province. The Pakhtuns are in the majority in and around Quetta and the northern part of the province. Many Punjabis have occupied fertile land in the east and are prominently present in industrial complexes in the Sui gas project, Port Gwadar and Port Qasim facilities, and other military installations. The majority of the professional workforce in the province originates from Punjab and Sind.

### **Regional Imbalances**

The authoritarianism and inter-regional imbalances, uneven development, and demographic changes caused by immigration led to increased political tensions in Pakistan. It has continuously fiddled with ethnicity, and the martial-law regimes of the 1960s and 1980s have played a crucial role in ethnic marginalisation. With varying degrees of

assertiveness, some Baloch leaders have pressed for greater autonomy and, at times, for independence. The Pakistani state has, when necessary, employed all the force at its disposal to suppress such demands.

Islamabad has supported the 'Talibanisation' of Balochistan and sought to eliminate the secular identities that are organic there. Senator Sanaullah Baloch, in a seminar in 2006, explained that the Pakistani army has 69 paramilitary cantonments, six heavy weapon cantonments, six naval bases, and three nuclear, biological, and chemical weapons testing facilities in Balochistan. The central army has approximately 700 checkpoints in the region, preventing the free movement of people and goods. He said that the army's presence (in 2006) was about 150,000, and they are conducting a ruthless operation against the Baloch people, and the international community should strive to stop it (Bigham, 2006).

The gas produced from Balochistan is high-heat compared to the gas produced in the Panj Pir area of Punjab. Whereas the Baloch are paid a royalty of a meager Rs.47 per cubic foot for their superior quality gas, the Punjabis are paid Rs.222 per cubic foot for their inferior quality gas. Even this meager royalty is not being paid regularly. The Federation owes Balochistan a sum of trillions of rupees on account of royalty since 1953. Whereas the government has no difficulty finding funds for the armed forces, it does not have funds to clear the past dues to the Baloch people, who are afraid that these dues may ultimately be written off (Talpur, 2007).

Moreover, The Sui gas is the single largest source of energy supply for industries, power generation, agriculture, commerce, and domestic use all over Pakistan. The gas is also used in the manufacturing of fertilisers and chemicals. While all the cities, towns, and many villages in Pakistan enjoy the gas produced in Balochistan, only the military cantonments, four of the 28 districts, and 250 of the 28,000 villages of Balochistan enjoy the benefit. Next to gas, Balochistan has the largest reserve of coal in Pakistan. All the mining and refining contracts have been awarded to Punjabi companies. Ninety percent of the coal mine workers are from Punjab (Talpur, 2007).

## Feeling of Alienation

Balochistan is a strategically important region of Pakistan that has been wrecked by insurgency since its birth. There is a general alienation of the population due to many underlying factors. The Baloch perceive the government as an alien government as they have been denied their due representation. There are hardly any Baloch in the army or in top federal jobs; even most local jobs are held by outsiders. As a result, the unemployment ratio is relatively high in Balochistan compared to other provinces. Baloch has virtually no representation in the army and very little in bureaucracy. In the central bureaucracy, though a province-wise quota had been earmarked commensurate to the provincial percentage in the total population, most of these positions have gone to non-Baloch under the 'domicile clause' of the quota system.

Ethnicity intervened with a sense of political isolation, and relative economic deprivation continues to be a potent force in evoking Baloch mobilisation. As far as the channeling of funds is concerned, it had been mainly in the hands of non-Baloch, predominantly Punjabi bureaucracy. The other dispute is between Baloch and the local Pakhtun population in the province. There is a feeling among Baloch that with the patronage of the central government of Pakistan, Pakhtun are trying to outnumber them; this fear had increased in the Zia regime and continued after that. The lack of an effective urban middle class among the Baloch and inter and intra-clan conflicts are all being exploited by Islamabad to hold the insurgency in check.

To show the level of alienation in Balochistan, let us take the example of New Kahan, a settlement outside Quetta city. It is home to the Marri tribal people who fled to Afghanistan in the 1970s. After the Taliban came to power in the mid-1990s, they returned to Pakistan. Finally, they settled near Quetta, naming New Kahan after their original homeland in the remote eastern part of Balochistan. People over there live in pathetic and relatively primitive conditions. Many in the village live in tents made up of animal hide or thatch. People often have to share living quarters with animals, especially in cold weather. The more prosperous villagers live in hard-dried mud homes (BBC News).

### **Education and Health Facilities**

Education and health facilities are inadequate in Balochistan. The 1998 census shows Balochistan had the highest illiteracy rate in Pakistan (excluding FATA); eight of the most illiterate districts were in Balochistan. It had its first university in the early 1970s (Phadnis, 1984, pp. 188-189). The unemployment rate is the highest in Balochistan; the literacy ratio of 10+ is the lowest of all the provinces. The plight of these unfortunate people is also an indicator of the lack of medical facilities in the region and the government's and provincial government's callous inhuman treatment of the people of Balochistan. The drought-stricken pastoral economy cannot provide enough food for even the small regional population. The data for 2018 does not show any indication of improvement in the condition of Baloch. It still has the lowest literacy rate in Pakistan. The human development index also ranks lowest in the province.

### **Language Policy of Government**

The primary grievance of the Baloch intelligentsia is that the language movement in Balochistan has been marginalised and ignored rather than suppressed. The imposition of the Urdu language also led them to get threatened about their cultural heritage as they consider language as part of their identity. One interesting aspect is that since the Baloch are educated in Urdu, the language used in the urban areas, and are prone to expressing themselves more often in Urdu than Balochi or Brahvi. The significant achievement of the language movement in Balochistan is that it has made people conscious of their identity (Rehman, 1996, pp. 170-171).

### **Human Development Index Report**

In the Human Development Index (HDI) ranking in 2015, according to the 2017 UNDP report, Punjab comes first in the ranking with an HDI of 0.732, higher than Pakistan (0.681); Sind has the second rank, with an HDI of 0.640; Kyber Pakhtunkhwa third with an HDI of 0.628; and Balochistan fourth at 0.421 (Pakistan Human Development Index Report, 2017). The condition of human rights in the province is getting worse day by day.

International agencies are not allowed into Balochistan even during quiet periods, leave alone in conflict times.

The Human Development Index indicators show the Baloch people's pathetic situation in general and in particular if compared with the people of the remaining provinces. According to the Pakistan Integrated Household Survey 2001-02, Balochistan has the highest poor population, with 48 percent, and the worst in rural areas, with 51 percent living below the poverty line. Despite the human rights given by Pakistan's constitution guaranteeing everyone the right to be informed of the charges against them, to be brought before a magistrate within 24 hours, to have legal assistance and to see their families, and most importantly, everyone has the right to be treated per law and to enjoy the protection of the law, disappearances are some of the most distressing human rights violations happening in the region. People are held in detention secretly, and the authorities refuse to reveal their whereabouts. They are described as having been 'disappeared', which often goes hand-in-hand with tremendous torture and ill-treatment.

In Pakistani secret dungeons, Baloch prisoners are told they have no right to meet anyone, see a lawyer, or do anything except what the police and agencies tell them. It was revealed that when one prisoner asked for a lawyer, he was punched, kicked in the stomach, handcuffed, and struck with a foreign object more than ten times. He was also threatened with beheading or amputation, and he was whipped, estimated 20 or more times, while chained to the floor in a crouching position with bareback. Later on, he alleged that he told a magistrate in the court that he wanted a lawyer and he had been mistreated and that the magistrate responded. "I will ask the officials," and handed him back to the police. Afterward, the Pakistani police accused him of 'making them look bad' in court and shackled his hands to a chain hanging from the ceiling for several hours. As mentioned in the Human Rights Watch, "Even if the president or chief justice tells us to release you, we won't. We can torture you, or kill you, or keep you for years at our will. It is only the Army chief and the [intelligence] chief that we obey." This is what a Pakistani official said to Bashir Azeem, the 76-year-old Secretary General of the BRP (Baloch

Republican Party), during his unacknowledged detention in April 2010 (Human Rights Watch, 2011).

The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan(HRCP) went to the Supreme Court with the list of 'disappeared' people and comments that over 70 percent of the list comprises people who could not be labelled jihadist, meaning that they were not wedded to the aggressive Islamism or Talibanisation that General Musharraf talked about. They were innocent Baloch and belonged to the secular local Baloch nationalist politics of the province (Amnesty International, 2008).

### **Role of Centre**

The other grievances included the Baloch perception of the exploitative attitude of the centre in harnessing the natural resources of the province. They feel that Punjabis were reaping the benefits of the vast untapped natural resources without any benefit to Balochistan. Until now, it is the least developed province of Pakistan and gets the least amount of funds from the federal government. The deposits of natural gas in the province were discovered in Sui in 1953. Since then, the national economy has benefitted enormously from this cheap source of energy (Ansari, 2007, p. 25). Seventy percent of Pakistan's gas supply comes from Balochistan, and around 40 percent of the gas supply is from the Sui gas fields in the Dera Bugti area. Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) produces 720 to 750 million cubic feet of gas per day from its 80-plus wells. The gas reserves discovered were estimated at 9,625 trillion cubic feet. Balochistan produces natural gas worth Rs.85 billion annually but gets a meager royalty of Rs. 7 billion from the Federal Government (Talpur, 2007). The royalty is based on well-head value, not the market value, whereas Punjab is paid a royalty for the gas produced in its territory at market value. The center is exploiting the gas and mineral resources at the expense of the province, resulting in the abject poverty of the minority group. Baloch believes that without economic autonomy and self-sufficiency, political autonomy is meaningless.

It is believed that China is participating with the Punjabis in plundering the natural resources of Balochistan. Chinese firms have been given

contracts to exploit the coal reserves in Saindak. The Chinese firms transmit 50 percent of their profits to China, provide 48 percent to the Federal Government and give only two percent to the Balochs towards royalty (Talpur, 2007). The Ormara naval base in Balochistan employs 10,000 civilians, of whom only 40 are locals. The remaining are from Punjab, many of them Punjabi ex-servicemen (Talpur, 2007).

In addition to the FC, 44,000 Pakistan Army troops are deployed in Balochistan, thus making a total of 79,000 members of the security forces deployed in Balochistan to suppress the Balochs, almost the same number as General Pervez Musharraf claims to have deployed in the Federally-administered Tribal Areas (FATA) against Al Qaeda and the Neo Taliban. In Balochistan, there is one member of the Federal Security forces for every 36 civilians, much higher than the ratio when NATO occupied Afghanistan and the US-occupied Iraq. The US reportedly objected to the Pakistan Army diverting some of the helicopter gunships against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in the FATA to Balochistan for use against the Baloch nationalists. Following this, the Pakistan Army received some helicopters from China to use in Balochistan (Talpur, 2007).

### **Role of Chieftains or Sardars**

According to Urmila Phadnis, the feeling of relative deprivation has existed in both Pakhtun and Baloch but with greater intensity in the latter. However, this feeling has not been sufficient but rather an essential condition for the collective mobilisation of these communities. She further says that if the population dispersal of the Baloch has been an added constraint in such a mobilisation, so has been the fragmented character of its leadership. The province of Balochistan has the lowest literacy rate in Pakistan, and education is a provincial matter. Regarding the role of tribal chiefs in the Baloch community, the questions that need to be answered are who keeps the masses illiterate? Why is the trickle-down effect not working? Why don't sardars allow schools in their area? Where do they spend all the royalty? It is said that the Sardars are responsible for the backwardness and non-development of Balochistan. As Musharraf says: "A few sardars have been manipulating and blackmailing every Pakistani for decades, using the militant mercenaries

that they maintain as their local militia force. They have also kept their tribes suppressed under their iron grip through indiscriminate use of force" (Musharraf, 2006, p. 59). However, a significant change that has come with the latest spell of insurgency is that now it has gone beyond the hands of Sardars, and the new middle-class intelligentsia is leading it.

The establishment continues to treat Balochistan as a conquered colony of Pakistan where Baloch can enjoy only those rights that are allowed to them. Whenever Balochistan's economic backwardness is discussed, officials in Islamabad also tend to repeat that it is due to the tribal chieftains, particularly Sardar Khair Bakhsh Marri, Sardar Attaullah Mengal, and the late Nawab Akbar Bugti. Musharraf had dubbed them impediments to constructing "mega-projects in particular and development in the province in general".

Kalim Bahadur talked about some of the leading social, economic, and political issues that need a solution. Some of them are: the Sardari system, which is the relic of the feudal system, should be abolished; the implementation of the 1973 constitution's provisions of center-province relations; the announcement of the National Finance Commission award; the implementation of the resolutions of the Provincial Assembly; restoration of the right of the Provincial Assembly to legislate on local government laws; Balochis must be given the administration and control of the mega projects; jobs for the indigenous Balochis under the constitutional job quota; concurrent list to be abolished and provinces should be delivered right to legislate freely; gas royalty formula should be worked out based on equity for all provinces; no voting right for settlers for ten years (Bahadur, 2006, p. 27).

The killing of Akbar Bugti in 2006 may still be fresh in many minds. If one reads the narrative of Baloch nationalist historiography, their roadmap would have signposts like the hanging of Nauroz Khan's two sons in 1960 in Sukkur and Hyderabad jails. Prisons of Sindh coincidentally become places of choice to incarcerate agitating Baloch high-profile leaders. Akbar Bugti ironically was on the side of Z.A. Bhutto during the military operation in Balochistan in the mid-1970s when the triumvirate of Marri, Mengal, and Bizenjo was tried on charges of treason in Hyderabad jail.

Federation in name but an excessively over-centralised state in practice, run mainly by the army, has often been incapable of negotiating political solutions with the representatives of the constituent units forming Pakistan. Balochistan is the arch-example of a province that is marginalised in the current political economy of Pakistan.

The problems in the province are multi-dimensional, which includes political segregation, economic exploitation, and cultural alienation. The unaddressed grievances have led to various spells of resistance movements in the province, which were crushed repeatedly by the respective governments, leading to a strong sense of ethnic consciousness in the Baloch population. The Islamabad government's constant denials of any serious problem in Balochistan have estranged the group even more. The blames put on the Indian government by Pakistan for igniting the Baloch issues have no grounds but rather just an attempt to divert attention from the gross injustices happening to the minority ethnic groups in the country. The unaddressed grievance of Baloch will have implications not only for Pakistan or India but for the whole South Asian region.

While the Balochs, since the beginning, have fought for a separate state or at least autonomy and fair representation, none of the uprisings has gained them much. With the Pakhtun-dominated Taliban forming government in Afghanistan after 20 years, it will also have a spillover effect in the region of Balochistan, as the northern part of the province is majorly resided by the Pakhtun tribe. This issue has remained unsolved, rather unacknowledged, for a very long time. The alternating democratic and army regimes have failed to provide any answers to the grievances. The Afghanistan crisis in the neighborhood of this area might backfire for Pakistan. The violence in the region will increase due to the Baloch-Pakhtun rivalry in the province. It may turn out to be a significant security threat to the internal dynamics of Pakistan. The last nationalist movement of Baloch has been going on for around 20 years with varying intensity. Assimilation of the demands is the need of the hour. However, democracy in Pakistan could not develop under firm army control. Armies do not give autonomy, and they run strictly on hierarchy and chain of command. Baloch, sadly is at the lowest level of that hierarchy.

## References

- Amnesty International. (2008, 23rd July). Pakistan: Denying the Undeniable: Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan. Retrieved from file: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa33/018/2008/en/>
- Ansari, Massoud. (2007). Between Tribe and Country: The Crisis of Balochistan. *Himal South Asian XX*, No. 5, p. 25.
- Bahadur, Kalim. (2006). The Crisis in Balochistan. *World Focus XXVII*, No. 10, p. 27.
- Baloch, Inayatullah. (1987). *Problem of Greater Balochistan: A Study of Baloch Nationalism*. Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden.
- Baluch, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan. (1975). *Inside Balochistan: Political Autobiography of Khan-e-Azam*. Karachi: Royal Book Co.
- Bansal, Alok. (2006). Balochistan: Strategic Importance & A tale of Ethnic Marginalization. *World Focus XXVII*, No. 10, p. 5.
- BBC News. Photo Journal: Life in a Tribal Balochi Settlement. Retrieved from file: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/picture\\_gallery/06/south\\_asia\\_life\\_in\\_a\\_tribal\\_balochi\\_settlement/html/1.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/picture_gallery/06/south_asia_life_in_a_tribal_balochi_settlement/html/1.stm)
- Bigham, Alex. (2006). Balochistan at the Crossroads. The Foreign Policy Centre. Retrieved from file: <https://fpc.org.uk/baluchistan-at-the-crossroads/>
- Dawn. (2005, 4th April). Minerals Resource Development in Pakistan. Retrieved from file: <https://www.dawn.com/news/387626>
- Dhar, Maloy Krishna. (2006). Balochistan: Curses of History. *World Focus XXVII*, No. 10, p. 9.
- Human Rights Watch. (2011, 28th July). We Can Torture, Kill, or Keep You for Years: Enforced Disappearances by Pakistan Security Forces in Balochistan. Retrieved from file: <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/07/28/we-can-torture-kill-or-keep-you-years/enforced-disappearances-pakistan-security>
- Khan, Mahrukh. (2012). Balochistan: The Forgotten Frontier. *Strategic Studies*, 32 (4), pp. 200-223.
- Kukreja, Veena. (2006). Balochistan After Bugti. *World Focus XXVII*, No. 10, p. 29.

- Musharraf, Pervez. (2006). *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir*. New York: Free Press.
- Nayak, Pandav. (1984). *Pakistan: Society and Politics, South Asian Studies Series-6* (Ed.), New Delhi: South Asian Publishers.
- Pakistan Human Development Index Report 2017. UNDP, Pakistan. Retrieved from file: <https://www.pk.undp.org/content/pakistan/en/home/>
- Pande, Savita. (2005). *Politics of Ethnic and Religious Minorities in Pakistan*. Kolkata: Shipra Publishers.
- Rehman, Tariq. (1996). *Language and Politics in Pakistan*. Hyderabad: Orient Longman.
- Talpur, Mir Mohammad Ali. (2007, 1st February). Militarisation of Balochistan. The Post.
- Titus, Paul Brian. (1996). *Marginality and Modernity- Ethnicity and Change in post-colonial Balochistan*. (Ed.), Karachi: Oxford University Press.