

Baloch Ethno-Nationalism: An Enduring Source of Threat to Pakistan State Integrity

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ABSTRACT

After the separation of East Pakistan and creation of Bangladesh in 1971, the growth of Baloch ethno-nationalist movement has represented the strongest centrifugal force in the perennially fragile state of Pakistan. If the rising incidence of extrajudicial abductions and enforced disappearances in Pakistan's Balochistan province in the past decade is anything to go by, it seems that the military campaign to stifle the Baloch strive for independence has so far yielded precious little. Instead, the Baloch self-consciousness has grown strong under conditions in which the ethnic loss is imminent. Reflective of this, the issue of Baloch continues to be viewed in the state discourse as narrow provincialism or tribalism, regional backwardness or problem of terrorism, and never as an ethno-political one. Apart from identifying a host of factors accounting for the emergence of the Baloch collective movement, the article also aims to explain how refusal to recognize the centrality of Baloch particularism (ethnocentrism) by the Pakistani establishment has left little space for a negotiated settlement of the festering conflict.

Key Words : Baloch Ethno-Nationalism, Tribalism, Problem of terrorism

INTRODUCTION

Numbering between 9 and 10 million people worldwide, Balochs are a distinct ethnic group spread across a region of South and West Asia, encompassing eastern Iran, southwest Pakistan and Afghanistan. Historically, the area known as Balochistan or the land of Baloch was carved out during the 16th century between the two powerful empires, Mughal to the east and Persian to the west. It emerged in the early 18th century as a unified entity with the trappings of modern state under Nasir Khan, the sixth Khan of Kalat, which, though precariously, lasted until the British annexation of the Baloch-inhabited region and its subsequent fragmentation into seven parts. While nearly one-fourth of the area in the far west was assigned to Persia in 1871 and a small strip in the north was transferred to Afghanistan in 1893, part of it was designated as British Balochistan to be centrally administered by British India. The rest of it was

divided into a 'truncated remnant of the Kalat state and three smaller puppet principalities'¹.

Although power of the Khanate was considerably reduced, the British as per the treaty of 1876 accepted the contractual notion of sovereignty, implying that it had direct relationship with the British government. Believing that large chunk of Balochistan, especially Khanate of Kalat was never a part of the British India, the Baloch nationalists declared independence in August 1947. Coming under mounting pressures including the threat of military offensive from the newly formed Pakistani government, the Khan, however, signed the instrument of accession in March 1948, bringing an end to Kalat's short-lived independence. Predictably, Pakistan's forceful accession of Kalat triggered off popular resistance, marking the beginning of a long-drawn-out Baloch nationalist struggle, which has since then gone through three distinct phases: rejection of the forced merger, demand for provincial autonomy and finally, drive for

independence from Pakistan.

Despite the sustained military campaign by the Pakistani security forces to stifle the Baloch national movement, it has shown no signs of petering out. If the outbreak of violence in the wake of the killing of Baloch leader Akbar Bugti in 2006 and the recent surge in bloody attacks on the Chinese engineers working for the Gwadar development plan as part of Beijing's ambitious BRI project are anything to go by, the Baloch struggle for independence has emerged as the strongest centrifugal force in the perennially fragile state of Pakistan. Strangely, however, much of the literature pertaining to this long-running conflict seems to be in sync with the Pakistani state narrative, which portrays the Baloch collective movement in terms of narrow provincialism or tribalism², regional backwardness or problem of insurgency, and never as an ethno-political one³. While several scholars, for example, argue that Pakistan's Baloch tangle has more to do with poor governance and weak institutions, authoritarian federalism⁴ and the hegemonic control of the military-led establishment⁵, others attribute it to 'foreign conspiracy' against Pakistan's territorial integrity. Few others lay the blame for the failure to resolve the conflict at the door of the 'reactionary *sardars*', tribal chiefs in Balochistan⁶, describing them as 'ethnic entrepreneurs' engaged in politicizing the ethnicity in pursuit of their political and material interests⁷.

All such facile conclusions ignore the saliency of the Baloch ethnicity as a factor both in conflict causation as well as its prolongation while underplaying the role played by Pakistan state through its policy of coercion and co-option and more important, its official narrative that denies Baloch agency as well as its historicity. Drawn on the theoretical literature related to the concept of ethno-nationalism, this article seeks to examine the ethnic bases of Baloch national movement and the function of the homogenizing state project of Pakistan in awakening and politicizing the Baloch ethnic consciousness.

Conceptualising Ethno-Nationalism

The concept of ethno-nationalism, which became popular in the 1980s and 1990s, refers to the role played by ethnicity in the formation of nations⁸. Those who subscribe to this viewpoint are broadly known as the primordialists. Unlike the modernists or contextualists who see nation as a kind of territorialized and autonomous legal-political community and a product of industrial capitalism, urbanization and modern state⁹, the

primordialists claim that nations are organic communities united by common ancestry, shared religion, language and custom. As defined by Anthony Smith, a leading proponent of primordialist approach, nation is a 'self-defining community where members cultivate shared memories, myths and values, inhabit and are attached to historic territories or 'homelands', create and disseminate a distinctive public culture, and observe shared customs and standardized laws'¹⁰.

According to Smith, the French term *ethnie* (ethnic community) has six attributes: a collective distinctive name; a myth of common ancestry; shared memories; common culture; an association with a specific homeland; and a sense of ethnic solidarity¹¹. It is the diffusion of the myths, symbols, historical memories and central values that accounts for the durability of the ethnic identity, which, when politically mobilised, gives rise to ethno-national movement. In most cases, ethnic consciousness has grown strong under conditions in which the ethnic loss is imminent. The process of mobilisation by 'activists who can show the link between the present threats, the authentic past, and the future destiny'¹² transforms ethnicity into nation. Arguably, the Baloch collective movement fits well into the ethno-national category wherein ethnic identity of the community developed over the past 2000 years constitutes the cohesive basis.

Ethnic Bases of Baloch Nationalism

The ethno-genesis of the Baloch has been the subject of several hypotheses, though the Baloch nationalists claim that they are the direct descendents of 'the ancient Babylonian king Balus', who is also known as Nimrud.¹³ Based on the linguistic evidence showing that the Baloch language is one of the descendants of the ancient Iranian dialects associated with the Median and Parthian civilizations, historians generally concur that areas around the southern coasts of the Caspian were the original Baloch homeland¹⁴. Between the 6th and 14th centuries, the Baloch initially migrated to the area what is now eastern Iran or Iranian Balochistan and later, towards what is now the Balochistan province of Pakistan. The history of Baloch, however, begins in a more verifiably way with the formation of Baloch tribal confederacy in the 12th century onwards¹⁵, which eventually culminated in the rise of the powerful Baloch principality of Kalat under Nasir Khan in the 18th century. Apart from incorporating Makran, Las Bela, and Kharan as its provinces, Kalat also brought for the first time most

of the Balochistan including those areas which are now part of Afghanistan and Iran under a single centralised authority of the Khan¹⁶.

As claimed by nationalist historians¹⁷, the entire region stretching from the Indus River in the east to the Iranian province of Kerman in the west became known to the surrounding peoples as Balochistan or the land of Baloch during the mass movement between 6th and 15th centuries. While the Arab writers in the 9th century, for instance, referred to the inhabitants of eastern Iran as Baloch, the term 'Balochistan' figured in the commentaries of Mughal emperors by the 16th century. Moreover, ruler of by Kalat, Nasir Khan used the designation 'Balochistan' in his official communications with neighbours in the mid-18th century¹⁸. It is, indeed, the increasing awareness of the historicity of the land of Baloch and admiration for its natural features that have greatly influenced the Baloch national imagination and profound love for the homeland. Reflective of this is an 'ancient Baloch expression *wa-e-watan o hoshkindar*' (I will always love my land even it is void and barren)¹⁹. Likewise, contemporary Baloch poets and singers describe 'the *mulk Balochi*' as 'the *bahesht-e ru-e zameen* (the paradise on the earth) or the *gul-e zameen* (the flower of the world), and its necessity for the Baloch is compared to that of the body's to the soul'²⁰.

While the folk stories, poetry, music and dance reveal an embedded Balochs' attachment to the *mulk Balochi*, the 'consciousness of their language and cultural heritage constitutes another significant foundation of their nationalism'²¹. Even though Balochs of various regions speak different dialects often with an overriding influence of the neighbouring areas, 'the dialects are more or less mutually intelligible'²². For all its dialectical differences, Selig Harrison observed, 'the Baluchi language - - - together with a widely shaped folklore tradition and value system, have provided a unifying common denominator' among major Baloch tribal groupings. 'This tradition', he further added, 'has been strong enough to subsume and absorb the Brahui linguistic subgroup within Baluch society'²³. In any case, Baloch identity, as argued by an analyst, 'is not based upon Balochi language, notwithstanding that Balochi was declared Kalat's official language in 1947; it is rather based upon the cultural identification of the Baloch people with the ideals of *Balochmayar* (Balochness), a Baloch code of honour, which then politically is translated into a composite political identity'²⁴.

In sum, Baloch ethnic identity is a unique combination of objective factors (common ancestry, shared history and culture, attachment to territory) and subjective dimension of self-identification. This has morphed into a collective ethno-national movement consequent to the political mobilization under conditions characterized by alien domination, brutal suppression and marginalization and above all, policy of forced assimilation.

Emergence of Nationalist Movement

With a loose bureaucratic structure and a unified Baloch army, the Kalat confederacy enjoyed sovereign status despite internal dissension until the British intervention in the first half of the 19th century to safeguard the supply routes to Afghanistan²⁵. It is argued by some historians that 'had the British not intervened in Afghanistan, Kalat might well have recovered under an effective khan'²⁶. Together with the dismemberment of the Khanate and colonial division of Balochistan, the imposition of indirect British rule under the Sanderman system of administration²⁷ and introduction of economic changes undermining the nomadic pastoral social life militated against the evolution of an overarching Baloch political identity²⁸. This, arguably, explains the absence of any organised Baloch resistance movement until the end of the World War I barring sporadic revolts by tribal chiefs against the British authorities at different parts of eastern Balochistan²⁹.

It was the formation of the underground political groups in the 1920s and the launching of *Anjuman-e-Ittehad-e-Balochistan* (Organisation for the Unity of Baloch) in the 1930s that marked the emergence of a secular, non-tribal nationalist movement. Its weekly magazine called *Al Baloch* from Karachi, for example, published a map in 1932 showing independent Balochistan comprising the Baloch areas of Iran, the Khanate of Kalat, British Balochistan and parts of Sindh and Punjab³⁰. In the following years, members of the *Anjuman* formed the first political party in Balochistan, the Kalat State National Party (KSNP), which played a key role in the struggle for an independent and sovereign state for the Baloch people. Even though the Party was banned in 1939, it persisted with its efforts to forge a united Baloch front to strive for the Greater Balochistan. In later years, it took the lead in opposing accession of Kalat to Pakistan on the ground that the legal status of the Baloch State, like the British protectorate of Nepal, was different from

other princely states of the British India³¹.

Resistance in Western Balochistan

During this period, Baloch nationalism had also developed as a response to the aggressive Persian nationalism and forceful incorporation of the western part of Balochistan in 1928 by Reza Shah Pahlavi of Iran. The western Balochistan, officially known as 'Siestan and Balochistan' (*SiestanwaBalochistan*) with Zahedan as its capital is Iran's poorest and the most underdeveloped region. Predominantly Sunni Muslims, Baloch make up around 3 per cent of Iran's total population of over 82 million³². In the decades following its incorporation, the Pahlavi monarchical regime promoted Persianization of national identity, while the post-revolution Islamic Republic of Iran turned the homogenizing project into a unique version of Shiite Islam. Imposition of the Shiite Persian ideology led to an increasing alienation of the minority Baloch, which, together with the systematic discrimination and suppression created conditions conducive to the rise of radicalized forces resistant to the Iranian state³³. There was, however, no strong nationalist organizational base in Western Balochistan partly because of the domination of the Baloch tribal chiefs and Sunni clerics and partly, brutal repression under the Pahlavi dynasty. 'Except for a brief upsurge from 1969 to 1973, encouraged by Iraq', Harrison wrote, 'the Iranian Baluch were politically quiescent until the erosion of centralized authority accompanying the overthrow of the Shah opened the way for an outpouring of suppressed political energies'³⁴.

Although the region was witness to a number of major insurgencies in the post-revolution Iran, most of them were 'non-political in nature'³⁵. It was in 2004 that a politically motivated, well organized Baloch Sunni Islamic group called *Jundallah* 'soldiers of God' emerged for the first time, challenging the Islamic Republic's policy of assimilation and religious discrimination³⁶. The *Jundallah* founder Abdulmalek Rigi was quoted as saying that 'his group has taken up arms in an effort to highlight the plight of the Baluch people in Iran, who he sees as victims of an ongoing genocide'³⁷. The group, which Teheran designated as a terrorist organization, was responsible for staging a series of deadly attacks on both government and civilian targets including prominent Shia mosques³⁸. Following the execution of Rigi in 2010, the *Jundallah* split into two major factions: the *Jaish al-Adl* (Army of Justice) and the *Harakat*

Ansar Iran (Movement for the Partisans of Iran)³⁹. Of them, the former has been active in the past several years, carrying out several attacks on the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) in 2018, posing a formidable security threat to Iran. While the Iranian government has accused the US, Pakistan and Israel of supporting the violent ethno-sectarian movement in the remote Iranian province, the recurring phenomenon of Baloch insurgency on both sides of Iran-Pakistan border remains a major source of concern for both Teheran as well as Islamabad.

From Resistance to Demand for Autonomy

In contrast to the western (Iranian) Balochistan where the Baloch resistance against the autocratic central government has turned into an ethno-sectarian movement, the eastern (Pakistan) part of Balochistan has seen a secular ethno-nationalist struggle taking shape since the Baloch rejection of the forced merger of the state of Kalat in 1948⁴⁰. While the integration of British Balochistan was settled in June 1947 with the council of tribal chiefs, the *Shahi Jirga* and the Quetta municipality voting in to join Pakistan, the Khan of Kalat declared independence of Kalat on 15 August 1947, one day after the creation of Pakistan. It was the culmination of the Baloch nationalist struggle since the early 1930s for an independent sovereign state on the ground that it had treaty relations directly with Whitehall and not with the colonial government in India. In a memorandum to the 1946 British Cabinet Mission, the Khan maintained that with the termination of the Treaty of 1876 the 'Kalat State will revert to its pre-treaty position of complete independence, and will be free to choose its own course for the future'⁴¹. According to Baloch nationalist historians, the Standstill Agreement between Balochistan, Britain and Pakistan reached during the Round Table Conference on 4 August 1947 accepted Kalat as an 'independent State, being quite different in status from other states of India'⁴².

In the months following Kalat's declaration of independence, Pakistan demanded the integration and complete merger of Kalat despite the latter's offer for special relations in the areas of defence, foreign affairs and communication. Meanwhile the government of Pakistan had managed to secure support from several sardars of the Kalat confederacy for accession to Pakistan, undermining the independent assertions of the Khanate. Fearing Pakistan's military action, the Khan declared unconditional accession to Pakistan on 30 March

1948⁴³. The Khan's capitulation thus ended 227 days independence of the state of Kalat after the British withdrawal. During its short-lived independence, Kalat had all the key state institutions in place including a flag, a written constitution, upper and lower house and an embassy in Karachi. The memory of an embryonic independent Baloch state eclipsed by Pakistani betrayal and conspiracies planted the seeds of the collective movement, which began with the nationalist revolt led by Abdul Karim, the younger brother of the Khan, rejecting Kalat's forced accession and proclaiming its independence.

After the merger, the state of Kalat was directly ruled by the Centre through a Governor General's advisory council, which effectively brought to an end the legal authority of the Khan. With the imposition of the One Unit scheme in 1955, which amalgamated the four provinces of Western Pakistan, 'whatever territorial identity Balochistan had left was eliminated'⁴⁴. In an open defiance of the Central government's ban on political activism, the Baloch organized a violent resistance movement against the One Unit scheme while demanding for the formation of a unified Balochistan province and the restoration of Khanate. The unrest spread to other Baloch-inhabited areas when Pakistani army moved into Kalat and arrested the Khan in October 1958. Incensed by the Khan's arrest and the bombing of Baloch villages, Nauroz Khan, the chief of the Zehri tribe led a guerrilla war against the Pakistani army for more than a year, calling for the Khan's return to power and withdrawal of the One Unit plan⁴⁵.

While the state of Kalat in south Balochistan remained the epicenter of resistance, Baloch ethno-nationalism gradually expanded in the 1960s and early 1970s to other parts of Balochistan, especially areas dominated by the Marris, Bugtis and Mengal tribes who had earlier opted to align with Pakistan. The spread of Baloch nationalism at the core of which lay the rejection of the idea of Pakistan and aversion to the Punjabi as state's 'dominant core' became an enduring source of concerns for the post-independence Pakistani elite. Nowhere was this more evident than in the latter's centralist tendencies and unwillingness to concede to the Baloch demand for provincial autonomy. The Baloch resistance to the centralized control rendered Balochistan a potential conflict zone despite the status of a province granted after 23 years and formation of a democratically elected government in 1972 led by the National Awami

Party (NAP), a regional party representing the interests of ethnic minorities⁴⁶. The dismissal of the NAP provincial government by the country's civilian Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto in 1973 acted as a trigger for the flare-up of a bloody conflict between Baloch nationalists and the Pakistani military that lasted four years, resulting in over 5000 Baloch guerrilla fighters killed and hundreds of civilian casualties⁴⁷.

Strive for Independence

It was only after the ouster of the Bhutto government in a military coup in 1977 that the military operation in Balochistan ended. Due to internal and external compulsions, General Zia ul-Haq took conciliatory steps by releasing the imprisoned Baloch leaders and engaging the nationalists politically. In the following two decades, the movement lost much of its momentum as Baloch leaders either chose to stay in exile or were co-opted by the state. By playing on 'the deep traditional rivalries between the tribes and between sub-tribes of the same tribe, even usually through a mixture of force and concessions to the sardars of the rebel tribes'⁴⁸, the Pakistani state was, doubtless, successful in conflict containment during this period. However, the core issue of Baloch fear of ethnic loss fuelled by marginalization, under-representation, demographic dilution and state repression remained unaddressed.

No wonder, the Baloch movement became active under General Musharraf in 1999 following his announcement to start exploration of Balochistan's energy resources and construction of a deep-water port at Gwadar in southwestern Balochistan as part of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. The violent protests it triggered was initially confined to in Marri and Bugti tribal areas, which in the wake of the dastardly killing of Akbar Khan Bugti in 2006 turned into an armed struggle for separation. The killing of Bugti, a leader of great stature for the Baloch cause and that too in a military operation in which US weapons meant for fighting terrorists were used 'created a furore in Balochistan and fanned the fires of the insurgency, which expanded from attacks and bombings of government installations and pipelines, to attacks against Punjabi settlers and the security agencies'⁴⁹. As the unrest spread to other parts of the province in 2006, the Khan of Kalat organised a *Grand Jirga*, which condemned the killing of Bugti and at the same time, raised the Baloch cause internationally by making an appeal to The Hague-based International

Court of Justice against the ‘violation of ... territorial integrity, exploitation of Balochistan’s natural resources’⁵⁰.

Over the past years, the nature of Baloch nationalist movement has undergone change in terms of leadership composition, objectives and strategies. The tribal factor may not have totally disappeared, but it has lost its centrality. Barring some popular leaders belonging to this category like Bugtis and Marris, the movement is mostly led by the educated middle class⁵¹. The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Balochistan Republican Party (BRP) are led by Marri and Bugti tribal chiefs respectively, whereas a non-tribal heads the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF)⁵². Regardless of their political differences, they have all opted for armed struggle as the strategy and separation as their objective. Apart from targeting the Pakistani security forces and infrastructure, they have resorted to intimidation, kidnapping and indiscriminate killing of civilians and foreigners, particularly Punjabis and Chinese workers and engineers⁵³.

The Pakistani military has responded by adopting the policy of ‘zero tolerance’ that involves such repressive tactics as brutal killing and dumping, abduction and inhuman torture as documented by the International Human Rights Organizations⁵⁴. Justifying the dirty war strategy as part of the campaign against the Baloch nationalists, General Musharraf once warned in a televised interview, ‘Don’t push us, It is not the 70s, when you can hit and run, and hide in mountains. This time you won’t even know what hit you’⁵⁵. After the killing of Akbar Bugti, Musharraf presented his death as a decisive victory by asserting that the past governments ‘have made deals with them and indulged them. My government is determined to establish its writ. It will be a fight to the finish’⁵⁶.

Role of Pakistani State

In analyzing the intra-state conflict causation, especially of the ethnic variety, some scholars contend that politicization of ethnicity by leaders of ethnic group accounts for the conflict formation. In other words, the so-called ethnic entrepreneurs are the causers, and the state, at the best, the precipitator. For, the ethnic elite use the collective memory of perceived or actual injustice as an instrument to whip up discontent and mobilize the group against the state. The case of Baloch ethno-nationalism as explained above, however, shows that the conflict in eastern Balochistan has more to do with Pakistan’s

deception, manipulation and above all, its policy of co-optation and coercion of the former. While the accession of the Kalat Agency and its three peripheral states is based on legally as well as historically untenable claims, the idea of Pakistan either as a state for Muslims or as an Islamic state has few takers in Balochistan even after seventy years of its creation. This is unambiguously articulated by a prominent Bloch nationalist, Ghaus Baksh Bizenjo, who says, “We have a distinct civilization and 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 we are Muslims requires us to join Pakistan then Afghanistan and Iran should amalgamate with Pakistan”⁵⁷.

Baloch opposition to the Pakistani foundational ideology and its Muslim identity is grounded in the belief that they serve to legitimize the ‘dominant core’ represented by the Punjabi and Muhajir ethnic factions. This explains why majority of Baloch remain impervious to the Islamist ideology despite the state appropriating it during Zia ul-Haq’s military rule⁵⁸. The Islamic fundamentalist groups like the *Jama’at-I Islami* have, in fact, found it difficult to penetrate Balochistan because these political outfits are seen as the agents of the Punjabi-Muhajir establishment, and the Pan-Islamic ideology they preach run counter to the particularist assertions. Thus, the imposition of dogma of homogeneity under the hallowed cover of Islam has alienated the Baloch, who rather feel proud of their historically distinctive ethnic identity as the descendants of a single ancestor. The Baloch sense of exclusion is further reinforced by the Pakistani national narrative, which does not feature their history, culture or legendary heroes as prominently as it does to the dominant core. This is as much reflected in the Baloch exclusion from political and economic structure of the state since the loss of Kalat state.

After its forced accession, Balochistan was ruled by the central government through its political agents similar to the British colonial system. Even after Balochistan was granted status of a province in 1972, the provincial governments were never allowed to complete full term. Parallel to their subordinated role in the province, their under-representation at the national level with only 17 seats in the lower house of the national assembly shows how Baloch exclusion from the decision-making process is structurally embedded. In the administrative set-up, likewise, Baloch have a negligible

presence with barely 4 per cent of their representation in the bureaucracy as compared to the Punjabi who makes up over 50 per cent of the population. It is their exclusion from policy-making and arbitrary imposition of the economic development projects like the CPEC without sufficiently guaranteeing the absorption of native Baluch that have spurred the latest nationalist resistance.

Put it differently, the Baluch resistance to the CPEC's Gwadar port project owes precious little to the disproportionate influence of reactionary sardars and their material interests as the Pakistan's ruling elite and analysts with pro-Pakistan leanings would like us to believe. It is, instead, the risk of losing majority status in their homeland with the influx of what they call 'settlers' and along with it, the depletion of Balochistan's rich mineral and energy resources by external agencies that provoked Baluch leaders to call for separation. For them, the CPEC project is a part of the broader 'colonial plot', a conspiracy for 'occupation' and marginalization of the native Baluch population. It requires mentioning here that Balochistan though Pakistan's largest province accounting for 43 per cent of the country's territory it is the least developed province with a population of 6.51 million. The province is rich in natural gas, gold, copper, coal, limestone and marble quartzite but registers minimum growth rates and ranks in the bottom compared with other provinces. With over 1.6 trillion cubic feet reserves, the Sui gas field located in the province is Pakistan's major source of natural gas supply. Although Sui gas was discovered way back in 1952, over 70 per cent of Balochistan's provincial population remain deprived of this resource, and 78 are without electricity⁵⁹.

While the gross negligence of the periphery, which, together with discrimination and indifference on the part of the Pakistani elite has induced a psychological distancing among Baluch from Islamabad, its portrayal of the latter in terms of tribalism, social backwardness and unyielding sardari system as a major roadblock to modernization serves to justify the state use of raw power to pacify the 'rebellious Baluch.' Pakistan's repressive measures including aerial bombardment, killing and dumping, extrajudicial torture and disappearance⁶⁰ have all significantly contributed to the political mobilization of the Baluch under different nationalist banners. Commenting on the long-term impact of the Pakistani air raid on the thousands of Baluch guerrillas between 1974 and 1977, Harrison writes, 'The wanton use of superior fire power by Pakistani and Iranian forces, especially

the indiscriminate air attacks on Baluch villages, had left a legacy of bitter and enduring hatred. Since nearly all Baluch felt the impact of Pakistani repression, the Baluch populace has been politicized to an unprecedented degree'⁶¹.

In the past decade, particularly since the killing of Bugti in 2006, Pakistan's hard-handed response against the radical nationalists has turned Balochistan into the country's land of mass graves. The Edhi Foundation is reported to have buried mutilated bodies beyond recognition. 'Engraved on their bloodied chests with sharp knives', Akbar Ahmed describes, 'were messages such as 'Pakistan Zindabad' or 'Long Live Pakistan'. Baluch scholars, journalists, and leaders were being deliberately targeted. This was akin to the decapitation of an entire society'⁶². The repressive tactics adopted by the state has given rise to a 'trans-tribal Baluch nationalism'⁶³, transforming the Baluch movement for autonomy into a drive for independence from Pakistan.

Conclusion

Based on the above analysis of the evolution of Baluch collective movement since 1948, it is safe to contend that the latest phase of Baluch struggle for independence is not about the conventional centre-periphery relations, nor can it be reduced to the generic issue of conflict management or conflict containment. It is, instead, the ethno-national basis of the movement that accounts for its durability and increasing virulence despite the state brutalities under the cover of counter-insurgency policy. The movement is the product of Baluch collective consciousness about their common ancestry and culture, shared memories, association with a specific homeland and above all, the ideals of *Balochmayar* or Balochiness. It is not the political activism of Baluch ethnic leaders but the exclusionary policies of the post-independence Pakistani state elite combined with their psychotic fear of the loss of territorial integrity since the forced merger of historically Baluch-inhabited areas, which has created conditions conducive to the process of ethnic politicisation. As argued by an analyst, 'ethnic conflict emerges as a result of political factors, gaining significance as a response to the actions and policies of the state'⁶⁴.

In other words, the politicization process is the consequence of the state policies and practices at the core of which lay denial, exclusion and suppression of the historically and ethnically distinct identity of Baluch, which has transformed the collective movement into a

struggle for independence. The raw power deployed by the Pakistani establishment to crush the Baloch nationalist movement has spawned a vicious cycle of violence, turning the Baloch aspirations for separation more ardent. In any case, Baloch, like the Kurds in West Asia, are a nation without state since 1948. While state is a legal concept with such universally recognized attributes as sovereignty, delineated territory and centralised authority, nation 'is a social group which shares a common ideology, common institutions and customs, and a sense of homogeneity'⁶⁵. Depending on the configuration of factors, both internal as well as regional, Baloch struggle for separation may fructify, culminating in the independent statehood though the Baloch irredentist dream of 'Greater Balochistan' entails the risk of alienating other ethnic groups, notably Pashtuns and Hazaras, who may eventually press for their own homeland.

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8. The term 'ethnic' was first used by Max Weber, who used it to define a group's subjective belief in their common origin because of similarities in both material and immaterial aspects of life. <https://ebin.pub>
9. The modernist school includes both the contextualists as well as the instrumentalists have either dismissed ethnicity or at best considered it as a supplementary factor in the study of nation and nationalism. For details, see Benedict Anderson (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso; Ernest Gellner (1983), *Nation and Nationalism*, Oxford: Blackwell; Eric Hobsbawm (1990), *Nation and Nationalism since 1780*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; John Breuilly (1993), *Nationalism and the State*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, <https://research-repository.st-andrews.ac.uk/>.
10. Anthony D. Smith (2009). *Ethno-Symbolism and Nationalism: A Cultural Approach*, Abingdon: Routledge, p. 16. www.politicalstudiesreview.org
11. Anthony D. Smith (1986). *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, pp. 22- 32, <https://balochwriters.wordpress.com>
12. David Brown (2000). *Contemporary Nationalism: Civic, Ethnocultural and Multicultural Politics*, London & New York: Routledge, p. 8, <https://books.openedition.org>
13. The followers of Nimrud were known as Belusis, which was pronounced by Arabs as 'Balos'. Taj Muhammad Breseeg (2004). *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, Karachi: Royal Book Company, p. 75, <https://balochwriters.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads>. However, others point out that Baluch is a Persian word, which means 'vulgar'. 'If it is spelt as 'Baloch', it means 'tough'. The Balochistan Government in 1990 officially adopted the spelling of Baluch as Baloch and Baluchistan

- as Balochistan.' Imtiaz Ali (April 2005), 'The Balochistan Problem', *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 58, No. 2, p. 42, <https://pr.hec.gov.pk>.
14. Inayatullah Baloch (1987). *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan: A Study of Baluch Nationalism*, Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, pp. 89-125
 15. Mir Chakar Khan Rind was one of legendary founders of the Baloch tribal confederacy, which encompassed southeast Persia (Mekran), present-day Balochistan, south Afghanistan, Sindh and the Punjab up to the south of Multan. According to the Baloch sources, Mir Chakar ruled from his capital in Sibi between 1487 and 151. Selig S. Harrison (1981), *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations*, Washington, D. C. : Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, pp. 12-20,
 16. Nasir Khan's reign, which lasted for almost 50 years, was the golden age of Kalat. Nina Swidler (1972). "The Development of the Kalat khanate," in William Irons and N. Dyson Hudson, eds., *Perspectives on Nomadism*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, pp. 115-21
 17. Gul Khan Naseer, Inayatullah, Taj Mohammad Breseeg, and Malik Muhammad Saeed Dehwar are, among others, the eminent historians who have made significant contributions to Baloch history. <https://api.research-repository.uwa.edu.au/ws/api/524/api-docs/index.html>
 18. Breseeg (2004). *Baloch Nationalism*, p. 76, <https://balochwriters.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads>
 19. Ibid., p. 78
 20. Ibid., P. 92
 21. Ibid., p. 85
 22. J.H. Elfenbein (1966). *The Baluchi Language: A Dialectology with Text*, Vol. 27, London: Asiatic Society Monographs. P. 3, cited in Selig S. Harrison (1987) "Ethnicity and Political Stalemate in Pakistan" in Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner, eds., *The State, Religion and Ethnic Politics: Pakistan Iran, and Afghanistan*, Islamabad: Vanguard, p. 272, <https://archive.org>. According to the linguist Elfenbein, there are six major Balochi dialects, and majority of people in the Pakistani, Iranian and Afghanistan parts of Balochistan speak Balochi. In the Central Balochistan occupied by the Brahui tribes, people speak both Brahui as well as Balochi. The former is largely Dravidian, whereas the latter is of Indo-European origin. Even though the Kalat principality is predominately Brahui speaking, Balochi was declared as the official language in 1947. Originally Kalat was an alliance of Brahui and Baloch tribes. In any case, nationalist scholars claim that Balochi language has its own grammar, and is rich in vocabulary, idioms, lullabies, folk stories and folk songs. Breseeg, *Baloch Nationalism*, p. 88, <https://balochwriters.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads>
 23. Harrison (1987). "Ethnicity and Political Stalemate in Pakistan", p. 272, <archive.org>
 24. Salman Rafi Sheikh (2018). *The Genesis of Baloch Nationalism: Politics and Ethnicity in Pakistan, 1947-197*, London & New York: Routledge, pp. 21-22, <https://ebin.pub>
 25. Fred Scholz (2002). *Nomadism and Colonialism: A Hundred Years of Baluchistan, 1872-1972*, Karachi: Oxford University Press, p. 91
 26. Nina Swidler (August 1992). "Kalat: The Political Economy of a Chieftdom", *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 553-570
 27. The system was named after Sir Robert Grove Sandeman, a British Army Officer who was later deputed as political agent to look after the administrative affairs of Balochistan. Typical of the British colonial policy of indirect rule, Sanderman introduced a system according to which the Khan of Kalat was recognized as its nominal head but without political control over the tribal chieftains. Instead, they were granted immense administrative powers over their respective tribes and a few of them were carefully selected to become members of the newly created *Shahi Jirga* (Grand Council) in exchange for their allegiance to the British. M. Kupecz (2012), "Pakistan's Baloch Insurgency: History, Conflict Drivers, and Regional Implications", *International Affairs Review*, Vol.20, No. 3, p. 99; Surat Khan Marri, (2014). *The Servile: Baloch Resistance*, Quetta: Gosha-e-Adab.
 28. Adeel Khan (2005). *Politics of Ethnicity: Ethnic Nationalism and the State in Pakistan*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, p. 113-114
 29. After the fall of Kallat and martyrdom of the Khan in 1839, the region was witness to sporadic acts of armed resistance against the British by the tribal chiefs individually or collectively involving the powerful Marri, Bugti, Mengal and Zehri tribes. Mary Anne Weaver (2010). *Pakistan: Deep inside the World's Most Frightening State*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux
 30. Harrison (1981). *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, p. 22-23. <https://balochwriters.files.wordpress.com>; <https://www.e-ir.info>
 31. Baloch (1987). *The Problem of Greater Baluchistan*, pp. 151-156
 32. Ahmad Reza Taheri (2012). "Baloch Insurgency and Challenges to the Islamic Republic of Iran", *Issue Brief, SSPC*, New Delhi, p. 7
 33. Robert Czulda (2017). "Iran's Problem with Non-State

- Actors: A Case Study of Sistan&Balochistan” in M. Riegl and B. Dobos, eds., *In Unrecognized States and Secession in 21st Century*, Switzerland: Springer, pp. 137–152
34. Selig S. Harrison (Winter 1980-81). “Baluch Nationalism and Super-Power Rivalry”, *International Security*, Vol. 5, No. 3, p. 160, <https://balochwarna.com>
 - The Baloch political activism became increasingly visible in the 1960s with the formation of the Baloch Liberation Army, which rose against the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi until the 1979 Iranian revolution. The Baloch nationalists also rejected the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which recognized only Shiism as the state religion and Farsi as the only official language. <https://balochwriters.files.wordpress.com>
 35. Taheri (2012). “Baloch Insurgency”, p. 1.
 36. Audun Kolstad Wiig (July 2009). ‘Islamist Opposition in the Islamic Republic : Jundullah and the Spread of Extremist Deobandism in Iran’, *FFI-rapport*, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI)
<https://www.ffi.no/en/publications-archive/islamist-opposition-in-the-islamic-republic-jundullah-and-the-spread-of-extremist-deobandism-in-iran>
 37. Chris Zambelis (July 2009). “A New Phase of Resistance and Insurgency in Iranian Baluchistan”, *Combatting Terrorism Centre Sentinel*, Vol. 2, Issue No. 7, p.2; ctc.westpoint.edu
 38. Global Terrorist Database (2010). “Incidents over Time”, http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/Results.aspx?page=1&casualties_type=b&casualties_max=&start_year=2003&start_month=1&start_day=1&end_year=2011&end_month=12&end_day=31&criterion1=yes&criterion2=yes&criterion3=yes&ctp2=all&sAttack=1,0&country=94®ion
 39. Critical Threats (14 December 2018). “Iran File: Iran’s Armed Forces Prepare for Sunni Insurgency in Baluchistan,” <https://www.criticalthreats.org/briefs/iran-file/iran-file-irans-armed-forces-prepare-for-sunni-insurgency-in-baluchistan>
 40. Balochistan that Pakistan inherited consists of three types of territory: British administered province (British Balochistan) comprising the Marri, Bugti, Khetran and Chagji Tribal Areas along with a strip of territory separating Baluchistan from Afghanistan; Lasbela and Kharan Special Areas; the Khanate of Kalat and its feudatories including Jhalawan, Kachhi and Makran. Ainslie T. Embree (1977), ed., *Pakistan’s Western Borderlands: The Transformation of a Political Order*, Durham, North Carolina: Carolina Academic Press
 41. M. A. Y. K. Baluch (1975). *Inside Baluchistan: A Political Autobiography of His Highness Baiglar Baigi, Khan-e-Azam-XIII*, Karachi: Royal Book Co, p. 268 quoted in Farhan Hanif Siddiqi (2012), *The Politics of Ethnicity in Pakistan: The Baloch, Sindhi and Mohajir Ethnic Movements*, Oxon: Routledge, p. 58. <https://balochwriters.files.wordpress.com>
 42. Baluch (1975). *Inside Baluchistan*, p. 148. It requires mentioning that the Kahn of Kalat had sought the services of Mohammad Ali Jinnah, founder of Pakistan, as the Legal Adviser to argue in favour of Kalat’s independent status before the British. In reciprocating Jinnah’s legal services, the Khan showered Jinnah’s Muslim League with all kinds of assistance from monetary and material to finance. Ibid., pp. 130-136
 43. What prompted Pakistan’s military action against the Khan of Kalat State was a news bulletin broadcast by All India Radio on 27 March 1948 that the Khan had contacted the Indian Government for merger, but the latter had rejected in view of Kalat’s geographical position. Although Jawaharlal Nehru later apologized for ‘an error in reporting’ in a statement in Indian Parliament, the radio report provided Pakistan government the pretext to prepare for a showdown. Harrison (1981), *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, p. 25
 44. Khan (2005). *Politics of Identity*, p. 116, <https://balochunity.org>
 45. Unable to contain the guerrilla activities led by the 90-year-old Nauroz Khan, Pakistan government agreed to a negotiated settlement to end the fighting. When Kahn came down from the mountains for talks he was arrested, and later died in prison, while his son and five others were hanged on treason charges. Khan (2003), “Baloch Ethnic Nationalism”, p. 286, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631360301655>
 46. Provincial autonomy involves, among others, indigenization of provincial administration through repatriation of the Punjabi and other non-Baloch administrative staff, control over the natural resources and non-interference of the central government. Certain actions and policy decisions of the nationalist NAP government in these spheres were viewed by the Bhutto government as a threat to the integrity of the state. Siddiqi (2012), *The Politics of Ethnicity*, pp. 65-66
 47. Pakistani official narrative maintains that Prime Minister Bhutto’s action was prompted by the discovery of arms and weapons at the Iraqi Embassy in Islamabad, which Pakistan government alleged that they were destined for secessionist forces in Balochistan. While the government failed to provide any proof, the Iraqi government later

- clarified stating that the seized weapons were destined for Iranian Balochistan where it was then supporting Baloch guerrillas fighting the Iranian Shah in retaliation against the latter's support to the Iraqi Kurdish rebels in the north. Harrison (1981), *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, p. 35, <https://ipfs.tech>.
48. Anatol Lieven (2011). *Pakistan: A Hard Country*, London: Penguin Books, p. 348
 49. Yunas Samad (2014). "Understanding the Insurgency in Balochistan", *Commonwealth & Comparative Politics*, Vol. 52, No. 2, p. 295; <https://www.tandfonline.com>. Nawab Akbar Bugti was killed in his hideout in the Bambore Mountains along with 60 others in August 2006
 50. *International Crisis Group* (2007). "Pakistan: The Forgotten Conflict in Balochistan", 22 October, Asia Briefing No.69, p. 12. <http://internationalrelations.org>;
 51. Frederic Grare (April 2013). "Balochistan: The State Versus the Nation", *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, p. 9, carnegieendowment.org/2013/04/11/balochistan-state-versus-nation-pub-51488;
 52. L. Sellin (22 March 2018). "The Iran-Pakistan Border is a Geopolitical Powder Keg", <http://www.southasiaathudson.org/blog/2018/3/22/the-iran-pakistan-border-is-a-geopoliticalpowder-keg>; <https://journals.sagepub.com>
 53. Mickey Kupecz (2012). "Pakistan's Baloch Insurgency: History, Conflict Drivers, and Regional implications", *International Affairs Review*, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 95-97, <https://www.iar-gwu.org/print-archive/8er0x982v5pj129srhre98ex6u8v8n>; Anatol Lieven (2017), "Counter-Insurgency in Pakistan: The Role of Legitimacy", *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, pp. 183-184, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.1266128>
 54. *Human Rights Watch* (2012). "Testimony of Ali Dayan Hasan before the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs Regarding Human Rights in Balochistan", <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/08/testimony-ali-dayan-hasan-us-house-committee-foreign-affairs-regarding-human-rights>; <https://journals.sagepub.com>
 55. Roedad Khan (2012). "Our Descent into Chaos", *The News*, Pakistan, 19 February quoted in Akbar Ahmed (2013), *The Thistle and the Drone: How America's War on Terror became Global War on Tribal Islam*, Washington, D. C. : Brooking Institution Press, p. 136, <https://archive.org>.
 56. Roshena Zehra (2017). "Death of Akbar Bugti: How Baloch Leader's Killing Rocked Pakistan", *The Quint*, New Delhi, 26 August, www.thequint.com.
 57. Mir Md Ali Talpur (March 28, 2016). 'Balochistan: An Unnecessary Tragedy', *Baluch Sarmachar*, <https://baluchsarmachar.wordpress.com>
 58. Ishtiaq Ahmed (1991). *The Concept of an Islamic State in Pakistan: An Analysis of Ideological Controversies*, Lahore: Vanguard Books
 59. Shakoor Ahmad Wani (2016). "The Changing Dynamics of the Baloch Nationalist Movement in Pakistan", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 56, No. 5, 2016, p. 818. <https://www.e-ir.info>
 60. Although the exact number of disappearances conducted by the security forces in the province is contestable, according to Voice for Baloch Missing Persons (VBMP), a human rights organisation, more than 6,000 people are still missing from Balochistan. Even after the country's transition to democracy, Pakistan has still not criminalised, nor ratified the UN convention against the enforced disappearances. The military, on the contrary, continues to justify this as an essential tool of national security.
 61. Harrison (1996). 'Ethnicity and Politics in Pakistan: The Baluch Case' in John Hutchinson and Anthony Smith, eds., *Ethnicity*, Oxford University Press: Oxford. 275, <https://balochwarna.com>
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 64. Siddiqi, *The Politics of Ethnicity*, p. 4
 65. Walker Connor (April 1972), "Nation-Building or Nation-Destroying", *World Politics*, Vol. 24, No. 3, p. 333, <https://balochwriters.files.wordpress.com>
