



From Khanate to Colony: The Struggle for Balochistan

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Abstract

Balochistan, Pakistan's largest province by area and home to diverse ethnic, tribal, and linguistic groups and extensive valuable natural resources, has experienced vast societal and material changes over the past three centuries. The Khanate of Kalat loosely united the Baloch people under a single banner, established a national identity with a flag and currency, and maintained relations with bordering empires from 1666 until the British invaded in 1839, who immediately began meddling in its domestic affairs. The British separated the land, controlling the north while granting four areas the status of princely state. The Pakistan Movement swallowed former Khanate land after a series of disputed negotiations between Muhammed Ali Jinnah and the Khan, a merger that many have argued was forceful in nature and did not genuinely consult or represent the will of the Baloch people. Balochistan's accession has triggered an insurgency that has significantly flared up five times in the past seventy years, with the modern movement stretching from 2004 to today. Every phase of the insurgency has grown and developed in intensity, strategy, scope, and intentions. Simultaneously, the average Baloch citizen suffers from severe poverty, economic exploitation, and extrajudicial violence targeting dissent comparatively with the rest of Pakistan. With China's Belt and Road Initiative using Balochistan as the lynchpin for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the conflict has the potential to become a major destabilization point for the region and threaten global interests. China's investment also represents an opportunity for the U.S. to flex its diplomatic muscles, capitalize on the anti-China sentiments of the Baloch, and crowd out Chinese influence in South Asia. The United States should broker a negotiated settlement between Baloch militants and the Pakistani government, encourage the creation of a new power-sharing agreement between the central and provincial governments, work to improve the material realities for the average Baloch citizen, and invest in international awareness and cultural resurgence programs for Balochistan.

Introduction

On July 8th, 2022, the body of 23-year old Saqib Karim Baloch was found floating in the Caspian Sea off the shores of Baku, Azerbaijan.¹ Saqib had been granted asylum after two of his brothers, Tariq and Asim, were abducted, tortured, and murdered by the Pakistani

¹ Rahul Kumar, "Is a Watery Grave for Three Baloch Activists a Coincidence or Murder?" India Narrative, 8/7/2022, <https://www.indianarrative.com/world-news/is-a-watery-grave-for-three-baloch-activists-a-coincidence-or-murder-38777.html>.

Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) years earlier.² Azerbaijani officials ruled his death as accidental, much to the behest of his community in Pakistan, insisting their family was being targeted by Islamabad.

On December 21st, 2020, 34-year old Karima Baloch was found in Lake Ontario near Toronto, Canada.³ Karima was a well-known dissident from Pakistan who was granted asylum in Canada and made BBC's Top 100 Inspirational and Influential Women List in 2016. Toronto Police also ruled her death as accidental, while her friends and family were convinced the ISI orchestrated her death.⁴

On April 23rd, 2020, 39-year old Sajid Hussain was found in the Fyris River north of Stockholm, Sweden after going missing for almost two months.⁵ The founder of a Pakistani newspaper titled *The Balochistan Times*, Hussain was granted asylum in Sweden in 2017 following police raids on his home and multiple death threats.⁶ His official cause of death? Of course, it was an accident.

The similarities of these deaths are shocking. All the victims originated from the modern state of Pakistan, all were outspoken critics of the government, all died in the same manner thousands of miles away from their indigenous homeland, and all were suspected to have been killed by the same culprit. It is normal to ask yourself: what possible speech, in any form or content, could have represented *such* an existential threat to a nuclear-armed nation that they would risk executing three extra-judicial and extra-territorial murders, just to keep a few activists silent?

If you guessed a territorial dispute, you'd be correct, but not in the way you'd imagine. Balochistan in Pakistan's southwest is its largest province by land area, but smallest by population. It is also the ancestral home of all the deceased. Balochistan has long been the site of contestation between indigenous Baloch leaders and the Pakistani government. While the Balochis operated an independent state before British colonialism and maintain that they were promised independence by Pakistan in 1947, Islamabad annexed the territory soon after its own

² Ibid.; Asian Human Rights Commission "Pakistan: Five More Disappeared Persons Bullet Riddled Bodies Are Found in Balochistan." Asian Human Rights Commission, 5/13/2011, <http://www.humanrights.asia/news/urgent-appeals/AHRC-UAC-094-2011/>.

³ Kumar, "Is a Watery Grave for Three Baloch Activists a Coincidence or Murder?"; Mary Lynk, "The Kill List: Episode 1 Transcript." CBCnews, 1/17/2023. <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/podcastnews/the-kill-list-episode-1-transcript-1.6716954>.

⁴ Bianca Bharti and Jelena Maric, "Police Say Death of Pakistani Activist Karima Mehrab in Toronto Was 'non-Criminal' but Others Have Doubts." National Post, 12/22/2022, <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/karima-mehrab-pakistani-separatist-activist-found-dead-in-toronto>.

⁵ Kumar, "Is a Watery Grave for Three Baloch Activists a Coincidence or Murder?"; BBC News "Sajid Hussain: Swedish Police Find Body of Missing Pakistani Journalist." BBC News, 5/1/2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52506938>.

⁶ BBC News "Sajid Hussain: Swedish Police Find Body of Missing Pakistani Journalist."

creation. Since then, two interrelated developments have persisted. First, Balochistan has endured alarming economic neglect, underdevelopment, political suppression, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial violence at the hands of each Pakistani administration.⁷ Second, multiple waves of insurgency and fighting between Baloch militants and the Pakistani military have intensified over time, threatening provincial stability and punitive counter-measures on all Balochis. Now, increased Chinese investment in the province threatens to exponentially magnify the ferocity of the Baloch insurgency while representing a new target for militants to latch onto.⁸ This report aims to (1) examine the economic, geo-political, geographic, and social importance and potential of Balochistan in relation to global interests and (2) understand the history of Balochistan's people, historical government, militant movements, and human rights grievances while analyzing the role of the U.S. in ameliorating the Balochistan conundrum.

Balochistan: The Most Important Place You've Never Heard Of

The historic land of Balochistan spans across the modern states of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, with the majority of historic Balochistan within Pakistan. In Pakistan, it is the largest province by land area, constituting 44% of Pakistan's territory, but the smallest by population, representing 5-6% of the nation's total population.⁹ The people of Balochistan are made up of three main ethnic groups. The Pashtuns, an Indo-Iranic people and the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan and Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Province, account for approximately 36-40% of Balochistan's population and are concentrated in the north of the region. The Brahui, an ethnic group who speak a language in the Dravidian language family that is common in Southern India, are mostly found in the center of Balochistan and account for

⁷ Inayat Kalim, Syeda Zohra Jabeen Naqvi, and Muhammad Mubeen, "Socio-Economic Disparities in Balochistan: Assessing Structural Etiology." *Global Economics Review* 3, no. 1 (2018): 152. [https://doi.org/10.31703/ger.2018\(iii-i\).14](https://doi.org/10.31703/ger.2018(iii-i).14); Manan Bhatt, "The Untold Story of Human Rights Violations in Balochistan: Unveiling the Historical Context." DNA India, 5/28/2023, <https://www.dnaindia.com/world/report-the-untold-story-of-human-rights-violations-in-balochistan-unveiling-the-historical-context-3044953>.

⁸ Muhammad Azam, "How China's Presence in Balochistan Is Intensifying Regionalist Tendencies." *The Diplomat*, 3/2/2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/03/how-chinas-presence-in-balochistan-is-intensifying-regionalist-tendencies/>.

⁹ Manzoor Ahmed and Akhtar Baloch, "The Political Economy of Development: A Critical Assessment of Balochistan, Pakistan." *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 7, no. 6 (2017): 274-275. <https://doi.org/10.6007/ijarbss/v7-i6/3063>; Hamida Bibi, "Genesis Of Baloch Alienation: Diagnosis and Prognosis." *Pakistan Vision* 21, no. 2 (2015): 174.; Umbreen Javaid and Javeria Jahangir, "Balochistan: A Key Factor in Global Politics." *Journal of South Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (2015): 92.

12-20% of the population.¹⁰ Prominent minorities in Balochistan include the Dehwars, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Sindhis, and Punjabis.¹¹ The Baloch, another Indo-Iranian ethnic group, are the largest ethnic group, accounting for 40-52% of Balochistan's population living mostly in east, west, and south of Balochistan. Their genetic origins are unclear with various scholars claiming the Baloch descend from ancient Aryan, Arab, or Kurdish populations, amongst many other theories.¹² However, most Baloch historians argue that they have remained a distinct ethnic community with their own language and ideas of territorial belonging, which developed alongside non-Baloch ethnic groups present, producing many cultural and traditional similarities with Balochistan's ethnic minorities, especially the Brahui.¹³ The extensive interactions between Baloch and Brahui have 'Balochified' the Brahui language, while the Brahuis established the Khanate of Kalat, an independent state in Balochistan prior to Pakistan and British colonialism that ruled over a Baloch majority. Given this historic context, the term 'Baloch' is used to refer to ethnic Balochis, Brahuis, and groups that developed close similarities with Baloch traditions and customs.¹⁴

Balochistan's topography and location is highly mountainous and mostly desert land, connecting the vast Iranian Plateau with South and Central Asia, as well as opening access to the Arabian Sea in the Indian Ocean. Specifically, it's home to Gwadar Port which was given to Oman by the Khanate of Kalat and bought back by Pakistan in 1958.¹⁵ Gwadar holds strategic importance for its commanding distance from the Strait of Hormuz which sees 17 million barrels of crude oil daily, and is now the recipient of massive investments from China under their Belt and Road Initiative and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.¹⁶ Balochistan's geographic proximity to the Middle East, Central and South Asia, and the Indian Ocean has made it the site of various

¹⁰ Saman Salah, "The Problems of Baloch Ethnicity in Balochistan: Paving Way Towards Betterment Through Political Consensus." *Balochistan Review* 47, no. 1 (2021): 40.; Hemant Singh, "Balochistan Province of Pakistan: Facts on Its Geography and Economy." *Jagran Josh*, 7/22/2020, <https://www.jagranjosh.com/general-knowledge/balochistan-province-1567507454-1>.; Pakistan Climate Change Portal. "Subnational Info: Balochistan." CSCCC | Pakistan Climate Change Portal. Accessed June 30, 2023. <https://climateinfo.pk/sub-national-info?id=946>.

¹¹ Pakistan Climate Change Portal. "Subnational Info: Balochistan."

¹² Manzoor Ahmed and Gulawar Khan, "The History of Baloch and Balochistan: A Critical Appraisal." *Journal of South Asian Studies* 32, no. 1 (2017): 39-45.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 41-42

¹⁴ Hammad Aslam, "The Federated Khanate: Development of Baloch Sub-Nationalist Conflict in Pakistan 1947-1958." Princeton University Senior Theses (2017): 2-4.

¹⁵ Azhar Ahmad, "Gwadar: A Historical Kaleidoscope." *Policy Perspectives: The Journal of the Institute of Policy Studies* 13, no. 2 (2016): 149-150. <https://doi.org/10.13169/polipers.13.2.0149>.

¹⁶ Javaid and Jahangir, "Balochistan: A Key Factor in Global Politics.," 91-93.; Ahmed and Baloch, "The Political Economy of Development: A Critical Assessment of Balochistan, Pakistan.," 283-4.; Binesh Bhatia, "China Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Security Dilemma in South Asia." *Himachal Pradesh University Journal for Humanities and Social Sciences* 10, no. 1 (2022): 64-65.

crusades and travelers pursuing great power competition over its long history. Due to this, it is always directly affected by regional and global geopolitics as global powers have sought to dominate sea lanes of communication and land pipelines to control international trade, and thus global power dynamics. Balochistan also has special value as a military route due to its potential for quick deployment to Central and South Asia, the Middle East, China, and Russia. Its geographic proximity creates the ability to monitor regional military activity as well as use force to implicate and enforce global trade norms.¹⁷

However, perhaps the most important aspect of Balochistan as a strategic territory is its incredible abundance of natural resources. Balochistan contains vast deposits of gas, coal, copper, gold, marble, iron, chromite, gypsum, marble, lead, zinc, barite, ochre, silica sand, mercury, and silver, indicating the sheer wealth of resources in province that is not alike Pakistan's other provinces.¹⁸ Despite Balochistan's resource abundance, it remains the least economically developed province in Pakistan, ranking significantly lower in virtually every economic category.¹⁹ A main contributor to this problem is the siphoning of resources from Balochistan's land to the people of Pakistan's large cities. For example, the Sui gas field in the Dera Bugti district of Balochistan is the largest in Pakistan and the 7th largest in the world. It holds 76% of all of Pakistan's gas, but despite being located in Balochistan, the citizens of Balochistan didn't have access to any gas from the field until the 1980's, nearly 30 years after its discovery.²⁰ Resource disparities are visible across the board, evidenced by the fact that the province supplies 36% of the country's energy needs, among other examples.²¹ While Balochistan's natural resources are treated with the utmost importance today, Baloch society has a long tradition of tribalism that implicates their resource situation today.

The Origins of Baloch Society

¹⁷ Javaid and Jahangir, "Balochistan: A Key Factor in Global Politics.," 93.

¹⁸ Aziz Ahmed, Noor Mohammad, and Abdul Wadood, "Balochistan: Overview of Its Geo-Economic and Socio-Economic Perspectives." *Review of Applied Management and Social Sciences* 3, no. 2 (2020): 240. <https://doi.org/10.47067/ramss.v3i2.58>; M. Sadiq Malkani et al. "Mineral Resources of Balochistan Province, Pakistan." Government of Pakistan: Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Resource, Information Release No. 1001 (2017): 3-31.

¹⁹ Ahmed and Baloch, "The Political Economy of Development: A Critical Assessment of Balochistan, Pakistan.," 280-1.

²⁰ Ahmed, Mohammad, and Wadood, "Balochistan: Overview of Its Geo-Economic and Socio-Economic Perspectives.," 239.; Ahmed and Baloch, "The Political Economy of Development: A Critical Assessment of Balochistan, Pakistan.," 282-3.; The Express Tribune, "Annual loss of rs14b in Balochistan: SSGPL." 9/24/2022, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2378341/annual-loss-of-rs14b-in-balochistan-ssgpl>.

²¹ Tiffany Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency." University of Maine Honors Thesis (2019): 32.

Baloch society is distinctively tribal and hierarchical, with specific tribes living in particular areas and the tribal system constituting political leadership for centuries in the area. Tribes are led by a 'sardar,' meaning commander, and is determined through family lineage, with tribes exhibiting extreme loyalty to their groups thus generating political capital for each sardar to bargain for their goals.²² For centuries, this tribal-political makeup was subject to frequent power shifts and empires like the Greeks, Arab Caliphates, Mongols, Ghaznavids, Ghoris, Mughals, and many more.²³ However, the first successful attempt at unifying the Baloch people under one national banner occurred in 1666. With the Mughals waning ability to defend territory far from the Empire's metropolises, a Brahui tribe known as the Ahmedzai established the Khanate of Kalat as a loose confederation of tribal leaders to align their mutual interests with one another.²⁴ Mir Ahmed Khan of the Ahmedzai tribe was elected as the Khan by the Jirga.²⁵ A jirga is an assembly of leaders that make decisions according to traditional Baloch social code, known as Rivaj, translating closely to a court system.²⁶

However, the state lacked an organized military force and political framework in the 17th century.²⁷ This led to Mir Ahmed pursuing friendship with the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, who financially supported the Baloch state against Iran's invasion. This mix of weak state structures and constant pressure from neighboring states lead to the Khanates' status as a client state of much larger and influential powers in Afghanistan, India, and Iran.²⁸

This all changed with the leadership of Nasir Khan I who ascended to power in 1751. Nasir Khan I is hailed as the hero of Balochistan, and is likely the most powerful, popular, and influential leader in Baloch history.²⁹ Under his reign, Balochistan was transformed from a vassal

²² Aslam, "The Federated Khanate: Development of Baloch Sub-Nationalist Conflict in Pakistan 1947-1958.," 4-5.

²³ Javaid and Jahangir, "Balochistan: A Key Factor in Global Politics.," 92

²⁴ Taj Mohammad Breseeg, "Chapter Three: Historical Development." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 2004), 163-4.; Aslam, "The Federated Khanate: Development of Baloch Sub-Nationalist Conflict in Pakistan 1947-1958.," 10-11.

²⁵ Breseeg, "Chapter Three: Historical Development." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 164.

²⁶ Rizwan Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan." The University of Western Australia Doctoral Thesis (2015): 54-55.; Adil Zaman Kasi, Dr. Abdul Qadir Khan, and Abdul Qadir, "Change in the Behavior and Character of the Jirga System in the British period (A Case Study of Balochistan)" *Balochistan Review* 33, no. 2 (2015): 115-116.

²⁷ Aslam, "The Federated Khanate: Development of Baloch Sub-Nationalist Conflict in Pakistan 1947-1958.," 10-11.

²⁸ Aslam, "The Federated Khanate: Development of Baloch Sub-Nationalist Conflict in Pakistan 1947-1958.," 11.; Breseeg, "Chapter Three: Historical Development." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 165-8.

²⁹ Aslam, "The Federated Khanate: Development of Baloch Sub-Nationalist Conflict in Pakistan 1947-1958.," 11-12.; Breseeg, "Chapter Three: Historical Development." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 165.

state to a serious political force to be reckoned with. He created a 25,000-30,000 strong army which expanded their territory east towards Iran, North towards Quetta, South towards Karachi, and West to the limits of Punjab. He organized the Khanate's political system and relationship with regional sardars, establishing the Wazir to be a functional Prime Minister, a national flag, and an independent currency. Most importantly, this political and military expansion away from a loose confederation of leaders was sanctioned by the sardars, who agreed to pay taxes and support the military.³⁰ However, the Khan was unhappy with their relationship with Afghanistan, specifically being treated as a junior partner in trade and geopolitics, triggering Nasir Khan I to declare Balochistan as fully independent. This caused Afghan forces to invade Balochistan for 40 days, ending with the withdrawal of Afghan soldiers and the Treaty of Kalat, which recognized Balochistan's independence.³¹ It is important to note that Sunni Islam played a central role in all political, social, and economic interactions in Balochistan. It also transformed the Baloch-Afghan relationship from adversarial to productive, viewing Shia-majority Iran as a threat to both nations and collaborating on that basis.³²

The peak of the Khanate's existence ended in 1795 with Nasir Khan I's death. The political and tribal systems that maintained the state's stability slowly unfolded as Mahmud Khan I failed to sustain economic partnerships and military prowess. This unraveled Balochistan's alliance with Afghanistan, incentivizing foreign intervention in the vitally important region. Mahmud's son, Mehrab Khan II attempted to stabilize the state, but the British were already on the scene, meddling in Balochistan's internal affairs for their own interests.³³

Balochistan during British Imperialism

The intervention of the British in Balochistan kick-started latent anti-colonial struggles and the fomenting of Baloch nationalism. Britain was concerned with increasing Russian involvement in Central Asia and focused on countering their influence.³⁴ Balochistan was essential to the British at the time, as they were preparing to invade Afghanistan and needed to secure the passage of resources to sustain the war effort. However, Mehrab Khan II didn't allow

³⁰ Aslam, "The Federated Khanate: Development of Baloch Sub-Nationalist Conflict in Pakistan 1947-1958.," 11-12.; Breseeg, "Chapter Three: Historical Development." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 165-166.

³¹ Breseeg, "Chapter Three: Historical Development." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 170.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid., 171-4

³⁴ Hassan Hamdam, "The Baloch Right of Self-Determination." In *The Right to Self-Determination under International Law and Politics: The Case of the Baloch People* (Bloomington: Trafford Publishing, 2020), 112-3.; Aslam, "The Federated Khanate: Development of Baloch Sub-Nationalist Conflict in Pakistan 1947-1958.," 15-16.

the British to pass through Balochistan to secure their resources. In turn, the British felt forced to invade Kalat in 1839 simultaneous to the First Anglo-Afghan War. Mehrab Khan's forces fought back, but couldn't maintain stability when surrounded by existential threats on all sides, and Mehrab Khan II eventually perished in these battles. After their victory, the British placed a 14-year old relative of Mehrab Khan II as the new Khan and devised plans to divide Balochistan and give land to Balochistan's neighbors as a way to appease the regional players and support their colonial efforts in the subcontinent. The specter of swift British victory and superiority was short lived, as tribes revolted against the new Khan as soon as the British left, placing Mehrab Khan's son, Nasir Khan II, as the rightful successor.³⁵ The British eventually recognized Nasir Khan II as the rightful successor in 1841 in exchange for the Khan accepting British occupation, indicating that the British were learning that their forceful forward posture would continue to be unsuccessful while adapting to a new, softer strategy to subdue the region into its control. In the early 1850's, the Shah of Iran launched a successful campaign to capture Western Balochistan into its territory, which worried the Khan that the rest of Balochistan would fall next. This led to the 20-year treaty signed in 1854 in which Quetta was returned to the Khanate and the Khan was given quasi-independence in exchange for loyalty to the British.³⁶

In this time, the Baloch became extremely hostile to British intervention to the extent that they caused civil unrest and organized fights between Balochis and Britain's army in 1847, 1867, and 1898 respectively. Balochistan lost all of these battles, as British military superiority became instantly clear. Thousands of Balochis died indiscriminately, and it is said that virtually every single Baloch fought to the death in the face of foreign occupation. This extremely coherent civil unrest caused the division, annexation, and occupation of Derajat, Khangarh, Pishin, Zhob, and Loralai in the late 1870s.³⁷ In 1871, Iran was facing serious unrest in Western Balochistan and asked the British to help them with this problem, being the other benefactor of Baloch land. Britain helped Iran suppress the dissenters in Balochistan by drawing the Goldsmith line, which is the modern border between Iran and Pakistan, as it forwarded their interests in countering Russian influence.³⁸ This move outraged many Baloch leaders, as they were not consulted in any form regarding the demarcation of land and borders.³⁹ Again, in 1876,

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Breseeg, "Chapter Three: Historical Development." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 178-80.

³⁸ Hamdam, "The Baloch Right of Self-Determination." In *The Right to Self-Determination under International Law and Politics: The Case of the Baloch People*, 112-3.

³⁹ European Foundation for South Asian Studies, "Balochistan: Colonial and Post-Colonial Governance, Insecurity, and CPEC." EFSAS, October 2022.

<https://www.efsas.org/publications/study-papers/balochistan-history-and-cpec/>.

another treaty was signed by the Khan and the British which was intended to prop up the Khan, allowing for British forces to be stationed in Kalat, British agents to mediate disputes in the Khan's court, the Balochistan Agency run exclusively by the British, and forced the Khan to be dependent on British payments, compelling his loyalty.⁴⁰

However, the two most important developments from this treaty were the cemented division of Balochistan and what has been called 'the Sandeman system.' Balochistan was divided into four princely states alongside 'British Balochistan,' which included Quetta, the Bolan Pass, Nasirabad, Chagai, Marri-Bugti, and the rest of northern Balochistan. The princely states were located in Kalat, Makran, Lasbela, and Kharan, all of which maintained a semblance of independence and internal authority over their citizens.⁴¹ However, the British intended to weaken each princely state's institutions over time through covert tactics. Theoretically, the Khanate was the sovereign ruler of the land, but the Wazir was to be appointed by the British and the Balochistan Agency had to approve budget appropriations. In effect, the political and tribal systems were circumvented or heavily influenced by British power, giving London effective ruling status.⁴²

Another development of this treaty that tilted the balance of control towards the British was the weaponization of the sardari system. After Nasir Khan I's death, a conflict between the sardars and Khan developed over land rights. The Khan's structure awarded allotted land to sardars contingent upon their loyalty to him, while sardars argued that their access to said land should be granted in perpetuity with no conditions.⁴³ It is important here to note again the structure of tribal identity in Balochistan and how it intersects with the jirga system. Tribal identity functions above national or ethnic association, but below sub-tribal and family identifications. All of these identities function in tandem, but heads of families typically have a shared loyalty to a tribe, which centralized power towards the sardars. The jirga system also complimented this set up, as it was intertwined with political power to legitimize someone's leadership. For instance, the Khan was the head of jirgas before the British. This means that both the sardari and jirga systems operated under the bounds of locally accepted norms and traditions, which were intrinsically infused with Islam.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 79-81.; Aslam, "The Federated Khanate: Development of Baloch Sub-Nationalist Conflict in Pakistan 1947-1958.," 16-17.

⁴³ Aslam, "The Federated Khanate: Development of Baloch Sub-Nationalist Conflict in Pakistan 1947-1958.," 19-20.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 18-20.

Robert Sandeman, the son of a Scottish General in the East India Company, was in charge of dealing with internal questions in Balochistan that dealt with British interests. In this time, he learnt of the power and influence that each sardar had over their population, and devised a method to weaponize the social structure to his benefit. Sandeman paid sardars to be loyal to the British if they wanted to maintain their relatively luxurious lifestyle, which eventually became a weapon to control popular rebellions in Balochistan. This system slowly normalized British control in Balochistan over time, as sardars were monetarily incentivized to make decisions that aided British interests and oppressed ordinary Baloch citizens. This was dubbed as the 'Sandeman system' and was unpopular amongst Baloch citizens.⁴⁵ Eventually, the British passed the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) of 1901 which appointed British agents to participate in jirgas. In effect, this law cemented and institutionalized tribalism and the sardari system in Baloch politics, as it removed responsibility for the public good from the state and transferred it to individual sardars while implementing little to no checks or accountability for sardars. The FCR was even more despised amongst Baloch citizens, as it took away their power and gave sardars and jirgas the ability to control political narratives.⁴⁶ This resulted in sardars making decisions based on personal interests and biases while also reaping disproportionate economic benefits. Pakistan eventually inherited the FCR as common law, sustaining the institutionalization of tribalism and preventing any possible development of Balochistan as a secular, democratic society.⁴⁷

Balochis were further outraged with the drawing of the Durand line, the modern border between Pakistan and Afghanistan, that did not consult Baloch communities while dividing their community further.⁴⁸ Their anger and fear would soon be justified with the increased popularity of the Pakistan movement.

The Beginning of the Pakistan Movement and Baloch Independence Movements

While local opposition towards the British existed for over a century, it varied in intensity over time and did not encapsulate the axiomatic understanding of every Baloch that foreign occupation was something to resist violently. However, with the continuing diminishing of the strong Baloch state that secured Baloch rights for centuries and World War I, Baloch thinkers

⁴⁵ Aslam, "The Federated Khanate: Development of Baloch Sub-Nationalist Conflict in Pakistan 1947-1958.," 15-16.; EFSAS, "Balochistan: Colonial and Post-Colonial Governance, Insecurity, and CPEC.," Breseeg, "Chapter Three: Historical Development." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 175-6.

⁴⁶ Aslam, "The Federated Khanate: Development of Baloch Sub-Nationalist Conflict in Pakistan 1947-1958.," 19-20.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

⁴⁸ EFSAS, "Balochistan: Colonial and Post-Colonial Governance, Insecurity, and CPEC."

began calling for nationalist and independence movements. These movements were suppressed by Iran and Britain, but that only incentivized mass participation in the independence movements. This fomented a much stronger, unified Baloch identity that had previously existed.⁴⁹

One of the most notable anti-colonial movements in Balochistan was the Anjuman-e Ittehad-e Balochan (Organization for Unity of the Baloch), which formed as a secular, non-tribal political party in the 1920s. These activists worked in the open and used existing newspapers and media to widely circulate their arguments and garner support. They called for political and social reforms, independence, the unification of historic Baloch land, and ending the sardari-jirga system as an institutional framework.⁵⁰ This movement was occurring alongside the Pakistan movement, spearheaded by Allama Iqbal and Muhammed Ali Jinnah, but saw much more immediate success and support as they didn't court supporters on the basis of ethnic connection, but religious unity. Proponents of the Pakistan movement didn't approve of Baloch independence, frequently dismissing it as British propaganda to divide the Muslims of India.⁵¹ Despite this, the Anjuman-e Ittehad-e Balochan held multiple conferences that included 200 delegates from modern Pakistan, the most notable being the All India Baloch Conference in 1932. Here, many resolutions were passed including the future of the Baloch government and Western Balochistan under the control of Iran.⁵²

The Khans saw diminishing power at this time, but that didn't stop Ahmad Yar Khan, who ascended to the throne in 1933, from supporting the goals of Anjuman-e Ittehad-e Balochan. He completed social reforms, increased social budgets and foreign exchange, and began to establish factories, all of which were in line with the Anjuman-e Ittehad-e Balochan's goals.⁵³ However, the British didn't take well to the movement, imprisoning their Attorney General Abdul Aziz Kurd for demanding the return of stolen land. Additionally, Mir Ali Magasi, a Baloch diplomat, was sent to Britain to discuss the future of Balochistan, where he was promptly ignored and not taken seriously. This increased the radicalism within the Anjuman-e Ittehad-e Balochan, as they switched their focus to be entirely about independence after the British left, transitioning into the Kalat State National Party (KSNP) in 1937.⁵⁴ While the Khan originally supported this party, they disagreed over abolishing the sardari system outright, causing the

⁴⁹ Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 211.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 221-224.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 227-228.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 228-229.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 231.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 235-6.

Khan to ban the party and asking the leaders to leave Kalat soon after their official establishment.⁵⁵ While the KSNP continued clandestine activities and controlled a substantial amount of public opinion at the time of their removal, their power slowly waned as the Pakistan movement grew to unimaginable proportions. One of the final blows to the Khanate at this time was the British recognizing Kharan as independent of broader Balochistan and disentangling Kharan's loyalty to the Khanate of Kalat in 1939. This blurred the line between 'Balochistan' as a historical land with unification and Balochistan as a diverse set of people, rulers, and kingdoms.⁵⁶

Becoming increasingly concerned that Baloch's visions for the future would be sidelined, the Khan hired a Karachi-born, Britain-educated lawyer to represent Kalat's interests. His name was Muhammed Ali Jinnah, and he would play a massive role in the future of Balochistan, but not in the way that the Khan could've ever predicted.⁵⁷

The Saga of 1947

Balochistan's Position in South Asian Decolonization

With the end of World War II and the ushering of the U.S.-led world order, Britain began devising a strategy to leave their colonial possessions in South Asia behind. In 1945, Britain sent a three-man Cabinet mission in order to consult various pro-independence groups on their desires and demands.⁵⁸ They soon realized that the differences in vision between the All-India Congress and the All-India Muslim League couldn't be reconciled, with the former advocating for an independent, unified India and the latter desiring the creation of a Muslim-majority state essentially surrounding a secular, majority-Hindu nation. Britain forwarded a plan to separate the North-West Frontier Province (later renamed KPK), Punjab, Sindh, Assam, and Bengal from the rest of India's states to cohere the basis of this Muslim-majority nation. This plan was quickly rejected by the All-India Congress and embraced by the All-India Muslim League, as it essentially gave a framework for the Muslim League's vision.⁵⁹ In March of 1946, the Khan approached the Cabinet Mission to argue that the 1876 treaty was independent of a future

⁵⁵ Ibid., 239-240.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 240.

⁵⁷ Anupma Kaushik and Dr. Harisingh Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?" *Indraprastha Shodh Sandarsh* 2, no. 3 (2021): 25.; Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 243.

⁵⁸ Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 242.; Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 94.

⁵⁹ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 94-95.

inheritor and that any changes required the Balochis to be consulted. The Khan openly desired independence, but still said and supported Pakistan's existence.⁶⁰ The British advanced this partition plan in February of 1947 through the June 3rd Plan, announcing a full transfer of power would be given to India in June of 1948. The plan also stated that the princely states of India were to accede to either Pakistan or India based on geographic coherence and/or the will of the people. Under this plan, British Balochistan essentially auto-joined Pakistan as a part of British-controlled territories, which angered the Khan. Because the Khan was unable to extract designated guarantees from Britain, he began crafting legal arguments to justify Kalat's independence.⁶¹

The Khan's arguments went as follows

1. Kalat was distinct and did not qualify as an Indian state, and resembled nations like Iran and Afghanistan much more, as well as the lack of designation of Kalat as an Indian state in previous treaties with the British. Thus, the future of Kalat and the other areas of Balochistan fell outside of the scope of the Cabinet Mission.⁶²
2. Other regional kingdoms, like Nepal, had independent and direct treaty relations with the British divorced from the dominant powers of the subcontinent and were granted independence. Thus, Kalat should be treated in the same manner given their multiple historic treaties with the British alone.⁶³
3. Kalat was the rightful owner of Makran, Lasbela, and Kharan, as well as British Balochistan. These lands were divided and given away by the British, and should be returned to the control of the Khanate.⁶⁴
4. British Balochistan was leased by the British and was to be returned to Kalat after a lapse of sovereignty, i.e. the departure of the British from the region.⁶⁵
5. The lack of direct British control in Balochistan indicated Kalat and the other princely states had the unequivocal right to declare independence.⁶⁶

⁶⁰ Iqbal Chawla, "Prelude to the Accession of the Kalat State to Pakistan in 1948: An Appraisal." *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 49, no. 2 (2012): 10.; Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 244.

⁶¹ Chawla, "Prelude to the Accession of the Kalat State to Pakistan in 1948: An Appraisal.," 16-17.; Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 244-245.

⁶² Chawla, "Prelude to the Accession of the Kalat State to Pakistan in 1948: An Appraisal.," 7.; Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 245-246.

⁶³ Chawla, "Prelude to the Accession of the Kalat State to Pakistan in 1948: An Appraisal.," 6.; Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 237-238.

⁶⁴ Chawla, "Prelude to the Accession of the Kalat State to Pakistan in 1948: An Appraisal.," 7.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ EFSAS, "Balochistan: Colonial and Post-Colonial Governance, Insecurity, and CPEC."

Pakistan's main argument revolved around the idea that they would be the inheritor of all prior British treaty obligations.⁶⁷ What exactly happened between February 1947 and April of 1948 is highly contested with scholars disagreeing about the nature of the negotiations and what exactly was said. However, we can still discern a fair amount about what happened as many of the distinct narratives of accession are corroborated by one another.

Negotiations Between Britain, Kalat, and Pakistan

After the June 3rd Plan went into effect, the Khan fought harder to regain control of British Balochistan, specifically the areas of Nushki, Bolan, and Nasirabad. The British-led Political Department of Balochistan actually agreed with the Khan's arguments here, stating that Kalat's arguments were indisputable given their treaties with the British.⁶⁸ However, Mountbatten dismissed these claims, reiterating that Balochistan had to pick India or Pakistan. This essentially made accession to Pakistan the only real option provided by the British, as a possible accession to India would leave Kalat surrounded by Pakistan only to become a flashpoint for tensions in the future. Baloch historians argue this was the first of many attempts by both Pakistan and the British to isolate Balochistan's options and force accession to Pakistan.⁶⁹ Another example of such a move was the Government of India Act of 1935 treating Balochistan as an Indian state, which couldn't be binding as it contradicted the 1876 treaty and didn't involve the consultation of the Khan.⁷⁰ Even more confusing was the British eventually re-affirming the validity of the 1876 treaty in 1939, essentially substantiating that Balochistan shouldn't be treated as an Indian state.⁷¹

Mountbatten called for a roundtable meeting with Pakistani and Baloch representatives on July 19th, 1947. In these discussions, Mountbatten acknowledged two things. First, that Lasbela and Kharan were separate and distinct from the Khanate's control. Second, Kalat technically did have the option to be independent, but even if they chose this route, they should nonetheless maintain friendly relations with Pakistan.⁷² Initially, this seemed like a real possibility, as Mohammed Ali Jinnah vowed to not interfere with the princely state's decisions on July 30th, 1947.⁷³ Because Balochistan had a much more complicated status than the rest of

⁶⁷ Chawla, "Prelude to the Accession of the Kalat State to Pakistan in 1948: An Appraisal.," 9.;

⁶⁸ Ibid., 7.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 245-246.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Chawla, "Prelude to the Accession of the Kalat State to Pakistan in 1948: An Appraisal.," 8-10.;

⁷³ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 98.

India's states and regions, the British held a referendum on Balochistan's future. The outcome of this referendum was viewed with extreme importance, as the NWFP had significant anti-partition sentiment, evidenced by the rise of Abdul Ghaffar "Bacha" Khan and the Khudai Kidhmatgar, and London feared that a decision against joining Pakistan would spill over to the NWFP.⁷⁴ On June 29th, 1947, the Shahi Jirga of Balochistan voted unanimously to join Pakistan. However, the members from Kalat were stripped of their ability to vote prior to the meeting. Additionally, the Khan argued the decision was flawed because it included sardars from the areas leased to Britain, and thus were loyal to British interests, and the leased areas should be returned to Kalat immediately.⁷⁵

Between late July and early August 1947, Kalat and Pakistan presented their arguments in a meeting with Mountbatten and British representatives. Kalat reiterated that the various historic treaties, especially regarding the leasing of British Balochistan, were between Kalat and Britain alone. They added that no provisions existed in the treaty that allowed for any other party to inherit these obligations. Mountbatten disagreed with Kalat's arguments on the basis of international law, which was in the process of being constructed by the world's major powers including the British, and had not yet been universalized by the international community. Mountbatten added that if an immediate agreement could not be reached, the two parties should sign a standstill agreement while negotiations continued. A first draft was created and verbally agreed to by Jinnah and Kalat's representatives, which stated that further negotiations were to be held on the question of defense, external affairs, and communication.⁷⁶

After a meeting on August 11th, Britain brokered a communique between the Khan of Kalat and Pakistan, which specifically included a clause stating that Pakistan recognized Kalat as an independent sovereign state with a different status than those of other Indian states and with treaty relations with Britain. However, they agreed to hold further discussions on their relations and delegation of external affairs, communication, and defense.⁷⁷ This was a pivotal

⁷⁴ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 96.; Breseeg, "Chapter Five: Post-Colonial Balochistan." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 266.

⁷⁵ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 97.

⁷⁶ Chawla, "Prelude to the Accession of the Kalat State to Pakistan in 1948: An Appraisal.," 8-12. Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 246-247.; Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 98-99.

⁷⁷ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 98-99.

moment in the negotiation process, as it affirmed Balochistan's independent status in both Pakistan and Britain's view.⁷⁸

Then, in an unexpected move and contrary to the standstill agreement, the Khan declared Kalat independent on August 15, 1947. The legislative bodies of Kalat reaffirmed the move for independence in September. The parliament explicitly didn't foreclose a special, friendly relationship with Pakistan.⁷⁹ He immediately made a declaration of independence, a constitution, political and social reforms, and held elections.⁸⁰ The Kalat State National Party won an outright majority claiming 39 of the 51 seats in Parliament, and Nawabzada Muhammad Aslam Khan was named Prime Minister.⁸¹ They also had their own flag and an embassy in Karachi.⁸² When asked about whether he had consulted Muhammed Ali Jinnah on this move, he said that Quaid-e-Azam was informed of the decision and had approved it himself, both of which were verifiably untrue.⁸³ This move perplexed and annoyed Jinnah, who began to change his strategy of soft diplomacy to allow accession to more hard-line measures.⁸⁴

The Khan and Jinnah met in October of 1947 to discuss Balochistan's options for the future.⁸⁵ While he was received as the King of Balochistan in Karachi, Pakistani politicians did not extend the same welcome, which is evidence that there was a clear shift in Islamabad's attitude towards the Khan.⁸⁶ The choices presented by Jinnah included accession to Pakistan, accession to India, joining Iran, joining Afghanistan, or becoming a British protectorate.⁸⁷ Most of these options were non-starters, as the Shah of Iran was already suppressing Baloch self-determination and a merger with India would be geographically incoherent, unpopular, and provocative. Merging with Afghanistan was considered, but Kalat's foreign minister Dougless Fell noted the imminent threat of Soviet invasion and their communist government, and the

⁷⁸ Ibid.; Chawla, "Prelude to the Accession of the Kalat State to Pakistan in 1948: An Appraisal," 12-13.

⁷⁹ Chawla, "Prelude to the Accession of the Kalat State to Pakistan in 1948: An Appraisal," 10.; Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 247.

⁸⁰ Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 247-248.; Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 102-103.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Kaushik and Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?," 26.

⁸³ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 100-101.

⁸⁴ Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 249-250.; Kaushik and Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?," 25.

⁸⁵ Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 249-250.; Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 103.

⁸⁶ Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 249-250.

⁸⁷ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 103-104.

option was promptly rejected by the religious Khan.⁸⁸ Becoming a protectorate was considered for a brief moment, but was vehemently rejected by Fell. Jinnah requested that the Khan accede to Pakistan swiftly, and that he would assuage Kalat's concerns. The Khan said he couldn't unilaterally make that decision, and would once again consult his community to decide. Both agreed to meet again in the future.⁸⁹

After this meeting, it's claimed that Pakistan began to prepare to use military force to coerce the Khan to accede.⁹⁰ Realizing the possibility of a military encounter, the Khan told his military to prepare and asked the British to give them arms. The military leaders expressed grave concern regarding rebuffing an incursion by the Pakistani army.⁹¹ Britain also refused to give Kalat arms without the express permission of Pakistan, which violated the 1876 treaty stating that Britain would aid the Khan from security threats.⁹² India and Afghanistan also expressed their unwillingness to get involved with arming Balochistan. While scholars dispute the claims of a premeditated military incursion, what is clear is that the relationship between the Khan and Jinnah was becoming adversarial and fraught with mistrust.⁹³

The Khan called Kalat's parliament for a joint session to discuss accession to Pakistan in December of 1947, which resulted in the parliament passing a resolution against acceding to Pakistan but advocating for a mutual friendship treaty with Pakistan.⁹⁴ Parliament rejected the idea because it contradicted the standstill agreement signed in August, as well as the idea that if religion was the sole basis for joining Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan should also be forced to join Pakistan.⁹⁵ It is unclear if the Khan initiated this process in the name of democratic statecraft, or if he was aware that the KSNP would never vote to join Pakistan and thus would further his interests. Regardless, it was well known that nationalists never entertained a merger, with famous KSNP politician Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo making the Iran/Afghanistan argument

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Chawla, "Prelude to the Accession of the Kalat State to Pakistan in 1948: An Appraisal.," 12-13.; Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 249-250.

⁹⁰ Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 250.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ibid.; Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 104-105.

⁹⁵ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 104-106.

and stating that accession would entail humiliation and a death warrant for 15 million (or 105 million according to some reports) Balochis.⁹⁶

Some reports claim that the Khan went back to Jinnah and said he tried to convince the sardars to join Pakistan, which is most likely not true given the Khan's decades-long insistence on independence. These reports state that Khan said the sardars accepted conditional accession to Pakistan as long as the Rivaj wouldn't be interfered with, the sardars would be present for any formal agreement, and Jinnah acknowledges the contributions of the Khan, sardars, and Baloch people in creating Pakistan.⁹⁷ It is possible the Khan was telling the truth about this consultation as a way to gain preferential treatment within Pakistan, but when Jinnah presented a new instrument of accession that explicitly adopted the the Government of India Act of 1935 and the Independence Act of 1947, the Khan essentially walked out of the room.⁹⁸ This development was perceived by the Khan as an aggressive act of takeover, contradicting Pakistan's obligation in the August 11th communique that Islamabad would recognize Balochistan's status as distinct from other Indian states in order to obviate subsequent agreements between the British and Baloch. After this meeting, Jinnah decided to stop being involved in direct negotiations with the Khan and delegated the matter to his ministry of foreign affairs.⁹⁹

During this time, letters from the leaders of Kharan and Lasbela to Jinnah indicated that both regions wanted to join Pakistan. Other reports state that in March of 1948, that the Khan of Kalat was creating trouble in Makran and spouting anti-Pakistan rhetoric in private.¹⁰⁰ While unconfirmed, what is clear is that Pakistan was growing tired of dealing with the Khan and wanted to conclude this chapter between Islamabad and Balochistan. They accepted the accession of Kharan, Lasbela, and Makran on March 17th, 1948.¹⁰¹

This development seriously hurt Kalat's ambitions to govern a functioning, democratic, and independent state, as Kalat was now landlocked within Pakistan.¹⁰² It also angered the Khan who viewed this as further humiliation for the long-neglected Baloch people, once again stripped of access to their ancestral lands and the sea.¹⁰³ The next day saw the Khan publicly

⁹⁶ Ibid.; Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 252.

⁹⁷ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 106-107.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.; Kaushik and Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?," 25.

¹⁰⁰ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 108-109.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

stating that this was an infringement on Kalat, that Makran was a district of Kalat, that the standstill agreement as well as the 1876 treaty designated Kalat to control Lasbela and Kharan's foreign relations.¹⁰⁴

On March 25th, 1948, the Khan summoned the sardars and attempted to persuade them to support his position and resist joining Pakistan. Unfortunately for him, no important sardars followed suit. He also tried to rally important individuals and Mullahs and persuade them with money, but he was unsuccessful.¹⁰⁵ Many reports state the Khan began to use potential accession to India as a threat and bargaining chip. While the Khan denied this development, a piece was aired on All India Radio on March 27th, 1948 that radically altered the nature of disagreement between Pakistan and Balochistan. The piece detailed a story of the Khan offering to accede to India only to be rejected by Jawaharlal Nehru. On the same day, the Khan unconditionally acceded to Pakistan.¹⁰⁶

The following day, March 28th, the Pakistani army began marching towards Kalat and occupied the province until the establishment of the One Unit Policy.¹⁰⁷ It is unclear whether the Khan already knew about this or if this development contributed to his decision to accede. Some historians are adamant that the Khan knew about this development, and thus he signed the instrument of accession under the threat of force, which is illegal.¹⁰⁸ This is especially true given that the Khan legally couldn't make a unilateral decision to accede to Pakistan. Kalat's parliament had already formally rejected a merger, so a unilaterally approved merger under the threat of force was definitely unlawful.¹⁰⁹ The Khan even admitted that he knew he didn't have the sole authority to approve the instrument of accession.¹¹⁰

While many scholars claim a different set of events, what is true is that this period was marked by permanent confusion and misunderstanding of intentions by all sides.¹¹¹ As negotiations continued, all sides began to feel more insecure about their bargaining position which created broad distrust. What is clear about this saga is that the accession of Kalat dissolved any pre-existing structure of the Khanate, ending almost 300 years of Baloch self-rule

¹⁰⁴ Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 242.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 251

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.; Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 109-111.

¹⁰⁷ Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 251.; Kaushik and Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?," 26.

¹⁰⁸ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 111-112.

¹⁰⁹ Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 251.; Kaushik and Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?," 26.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Chawla, "Prelude to the Accession of the Kalat State to Pakistan in 1948: An Appraisal.," 13-17.

or governance.¹¹² Members of the Khanate's government were arrested or exiled in the immediate aftermath of accession.¹¹³ While some Balochis were keen on joining Pakistan, it soon became evident that their role in the region was to exercise political control while maintaining British models of governance.¹¹⁴ Soon, this created a perception of Pakistan as a continuation of colonial rule rather than a break from it.

'A Constant State of War': The History of Insurgency and Crimes Against Humanity

Since the events of 1947 and 1948, there have been five distinct waves of insurgent conflict over the status of Balochistan and the treatment of indigenous Balochis. Over time, they have evolved and intensified dramatically, starting as a fringe movement involving a few hundred political elites and the Khan's younger brother.¹¹⁵ Now, it has developed into a small-scale conflict with large-scale geopolitical consequences. Islamabad's violent responses to the conflict have aggressively exacerbated the intensity, focus, and scope of the insurgents, who have developed war of attrition tactics and disunity among militant groups making leaders harder to track. These responses further alienate the population, and are driving the situation to look starkly similar to East Pakistan in 1971.¹¹⁶

Abdul Karim's Revolt: The First Baloch Insurgency (April 1948-1950)

The Khan's younger brother, Agha Abdul Karim, was ardently against accession to Pakistan under any circumstances, and vehemently opposed his brother's decision. His stance hardened after important KSNP figures were arrested under false charges after accession, including Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo.¹¹⁷ On April 15th, he began plotting guerilla attacks against Pakistan from the Jhalawan area. While Baloch nationalists gave their approval for his actions, it is disputed whether the Khan himself approved Karim's initiative.¹¹⁸ After brief skirmishes with Pakistan's army, Karim and the 'Baloch Mujahideen' who had roughly 100 members composed of former KSNP members and hardened Baloch citizens, set up camp in Afghanistan.¹¹⁹ During this time, this group implemented two important measures.

¹¹² Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 253.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ EFSAS, "Balochistan: Colonial and Post-Colonial Governance, Insecurity, and CPEC."

¹¹⁵

Kaushik and Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?," 26.

¹¹⁶ Breseeg, "Chapter Four: Nationalism in Practice." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 254.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 253.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 254.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

First, they made consultations and courting support of sardars a priority as a method to legitimize their struggle amongst the Baloch masses. Second, they ran propaganda campaigns to generate animosity and create a national liberation struggle.¹²⁰ This focused on both cultural and religious fronts of propaganda. The cultural front emphasized the cultural distinctiveness of Baloch society and the oppressive, suffocating rule of Punjabi and Muhajir-dominated Pakistan. The religious front included Islamic scholars who issued a fatwa against Pakistan for their crimes against Balochistan and urged all Baloch people and Pakistani Muslims, especially soldiers, to sabotage the Pakistani state.¹²¹

While Afghanistan was vocally-supportive of the Baloch cause, they refused to aid Karim politically or militarily. Afghanistan was also wary because of their prior relationship with the Khanate, and because their objective of uniting Pashtuns geographically overlapped with an independent Balochistan. The USSR was also vocally-supportive, but similarly refused to help Karim materially. Karim also approached sardars in Iran who were fighting for self-determination against the Shah of Persia, but they also turned him down.¹²² Eventually, on July 8th, 1948, Afghanistan asked Karim and his men to leave, forcing them to return to Balochistan.¹²³

After a battle near Harboi, Karim and his followers were arrested. They were tried by a special jirga in November, where they received various sentences ranging from fines to 10 years of prison. This concluded the first Baloch insurgency, crushed by an army who inherited and maintained the imperial structure of the army, treasury, and administration.¹²⁴

Scholars agree that Baloch nationalism was in infancy at this time, as many Baloch citizens didn't harbor national feelings of dishonor. Simultaneously, these events began a series of mistrust and misunderstanding.¹²⁵ It was the first material threat to the ideological and geographic frontiers of Pakistan.¹²⁶ It also indicated that, despite being a minority position, significant numbers of people within Pakistan were against the idea of Pakistan.¹²⁷ In these years, Agha Abdul Karim planted the seeds for a future struggle to determine Balochistan's reality and fate.

An Integration Problem: The Second Insurgency (1958-1960)

¹²⁰ Ibid., 255-256.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 256-257

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 257-258

¹²⁵ Ibid., 258-261

¹²⁶ Bibi, "Genesis Of Baloch Alienation: Diagnosis and Prognosis.," 176.

¹²⁷ Muhammad Muzaffar, Imran Khan, and Zahid Yaseen, "Issues and Conflicts in Balochistan: Implications for Pakistan." *Journal of Political Studies* 28, no. 1 (2021): 44-45.

From 1950 to 1958, a wide array of sentiments, actions, and policies from Islamabad demonstrated a fundamental lack of understanding of Baloch society, traditions, and grievances, which led to the second major revolt within a decade of Pakistan's existence.¹²⁸ This began when a Pashtun from the NWFP was appointed to run the provincial government, which was considered an insult to Baloch honor.

After accession, Pakistan went to work on integrating Balochistan into the nation-state. The local economy was integrated with the broader market-oriented economy with bureaucratic controls. Initiatives undertaken by Pakistan included the construction of roads with an emphasis on growing transportation routes, spreading commercialized agriculture and sustainable technology for growth, promoting land reforms, opening new industries, and promoting land reforms. However, the most significant effort was to deconstruct the traditional economic autonomy of the sardari system.¹²⁹ While such efforts were positive in theory, two problems existed.

First, economic growth was clearly not intended to aid development within the province. Even though the Sui gas fields were discovered in 1952, Balochis couldn't get gas from the very same field for another two decades.¹³⁰ Second, virtually none of Pakistan's efforts focused on long-term economic initiatives or short-term necessities for citizens. While roads and industries were being funded for national economic development, Baloch citizens were deprived of access to basic educational and medical necessities.¹³¹

Another rift that began to occur was political, and involved the threat perception of other ethnic and religious groups. The Two-Nation theory, maintaining that the Muslims and Hindus of India were entirely distinct nations that had divergent customs, ways of life, and traditions, functionally endorsed the creation of Pakistan and greatly strengthened the Pakistan Movement.¹³² In British India, the movement was most popular in cosmopolitan areas where Muslims perceived Hindu dominance as an immediate threat to their safety, which translated to demographic concerns of being a minority in a united India. However, Muslims on the periphery of India, namely Balochis and Pashtuns, usually didn't share this perception and thus disagreed

¹²⁸ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 121-122.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 125-126

¹³⁰ Breseeg, "Chapter Two: Cohesive Bases of the Baloch Nationalism." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 53, 114.; Ahmed and Baloch, "The Political Economy of Development: A Critical Assessment of Balochistan, Pakistan.," 282-3.

¹³¹ Ahmed and Baloch, "The Political Economy of Development: A Critical Assessment of Balochistan, Pakistan.," 283.

¹³² Breseeg, "Chapter Five: Post-Colonial Balochistan." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 265-266.

with Pakistan as an idea. Additionally, while Balochis and Pashtuns viewed partition as a struggle to maintain their homelands, Muslim Punjabis and Muhajirs viewed it as an existential threat to their well-being, triggering the largest migration in human history.¹³³ Despite Pakistani leaders promoting Islam as a method to obviate ethnic difference, these different perceptions and experiences further laid the ground-work for ethnic, historic, political, and economic incentives for conflict.¹³⁴

The Punjabi and Muhajir dominance in terms of demographics in West Pakistan immediately began to shape Pakistan's destiny as a state, creating numerous imbalances in language and culture between Punjab and the rest of Pakistan. While the capital of Pakistan was established in Sindh's Karachi, Punjabis began to control the civil and military administrations of both East and West Pakistan.¹³⁵ This was perplexing given the overall demographic majority of Bengalis. As a result, 55% of Pakistan's entire population spoke Bengali as a first language. Despite this, Urdu, a language that was the first language for only 7% of the country, was named the sole national language in 1948.¹³⁶ This angered Balochis, who were to only learn Urdu and English, and spoke a variety of different languages that were completely distinct from both languages.¹³⁷

During this time, an influx of Punjabi settlers began to move to Balochistan, mainly in the city of Quetta. This laid the groundwork for the widely-felt perception that Punjabi's intended to colonize Baloch land and culture for their own gain.¹³⁸ This feeling of 'internal colonialism' will be revisited later, but the perception of this power dynamic began during the 1950's and steadily took hold over time. By 1958, only 10% of Balochistan's government officials were indigenous, and only 20% of Balochistan's internal security forces and police were indigenous.¹³⁹

Frustration against Pakistan boiled over with the One-Unit scheme in 1954. While Prime Minister Muhammad Ali Bogra claimed the policy would integrate all of Pakistan's provinces into a single, national entity and create unity among all ethnicities, ethnic minorities viewed this as a way to side-step provincial and local perspectives on different policy areas.¹⁴⁰ Regardless of Pakistan's intentions, this plan would also create a demographic majority over East Pakistan by

¹³³ Ibid., 265-267.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 267-270.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 268

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 119-120.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Breseeg, "Chapter Five: Post-Colonial Balochistan." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 275-277.; Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 121-122.

merging West Pakistan into one entity. Additionally, it would also prevent alliances in West Pakistan between non-Punjabis, who would never be able to achieve any semblance of a demographic stronghold over the Punjabi population.¹⁴¹ From 1954 to 1955, the Balochistan States Union Assembly was dismissed, dissolved, and was merged with the federal government under this plan.¹⁴²

This policy enraged all ethnic nationalists and minorities in Pakistan, making the threat of assimilation to Punjabi culture closer and closer.¹⁴³ The National Awami Party (NAP) gained substantial popularity as a result, whose aims were to stay neutral in the Cold War, ending economic exploitation of Bengalis, Balochis, and other minorities, instituting universal suffrage, and abolishing the One-Unit scheme.¹⁴⁴ During this time, protests against Pakistan intensified in East and West Pakistan.¹⁴⁵

In October 1957, a group of elite sardars joined in protests, indicating a wider support base for Baloch grievances. In these demonstrations, over 300 protesters were arrested and the Pakistani army was sent to instill peace in the province. The next day, President Iskander Mirza and Prime Minister Ayub Khan abrogated the constitution, dismissed the central and provincial governments, dissolved all assemblies, banned political parties, and declared martial law.¹⁴⁶ Pakistan claimed that Abdul Karim was behind the protests and was working with Afghanistan to secede, but most historians have concluded this as false and solely used as a pretext to consolidate power through martial law.¹⁴⁷

**In 1958, various sardars leading around 1,000 men engaged in guerilla tactics and retreated to the mountains to attack government and military installations.¹⁴⁸ The group demanded the release of Baloch prisoners, abolition of the One-Unit scheme, and guarantees to maintain Baloch honor. Most impressive was the participation of Nawab Nauroz Khan of the Zarakzai tribe who was a vibrant symbol of resistance against colonialism, having escaped British captivity twice in 1926 and 1927. At the time of the second Baloch insurgency, Khan was 80 years old!¹⁴⁹ Pakistan's counterinsurgency efforts were particularly brutal with the

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Breseeg, "Chapter Five: Post-Colonial Balochistan." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 277-278.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 279-280

¹⁴⁵ Aijaz Qureshi and Nadeem Hussain, "The False Promise of One Unit." DAWN.COM, 7/4/2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1697958>.

¹⁴⁶ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 121-122.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 123-4

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

indiscriminate bombing of villages while blaming the militant's guerilla tactics as forcing the army's hand.¹⁵⁰ Between 1959 and 1960, leaders from both sides met multiple times to reach a ceasefire. In one such meeting, the Pakistani negotiators swore on the Quran that if the militants laid down their arms, they would receive considerable leniency in negotiations and punishment.¹⁵¹ The militant leaders ushered their forces from the mountains, where Pakistan subsequently denied making any such promise. 8 leaders were charged with treason, including Nauroz Khan. His sentence was altered to life in prison on account of his age.¹⁵² He eventually died in a Pakistani prison in 1964.¹⁵³ In July of 1960, the other leaders were executed by hanging in prison, including Nauroz Khan's son, Batay Khan.¹⁵⁴

These events shook Baloch society, as ordinary Balochis looked upon Pakistan as a raiding army, not an army that protected them. After the executions, army movements and installations in Balochistan intensified. Ayub Khan even threatened the Baloch with 'total extinction' when on a visit to Quetta in August 1962.¹⁵⁵ This spread the broad perception of neglect toward Balochistan as a land and Balochis as a people. Simultaneously, none of the militant's demands were respected or adopted, which further angered Baloch leaders under the current structure of Pakistan's government.¹⁵⁶ It is important to note that because Pakistan failed to genuinely address Balochistan's economic and political grievances, and rather treated Balochistan as a military problem, this insurgency would inevitably crop up again. Rather than re-evaluate their approach to the issue, they decided to double down.

Parari Networks: The Third Insurgency (1963-1969)

During the 1960s, Baloch nationalism was growing with increasing economic marginalization of the province and lack of basic infrastructure. Fueled by the unresolved demands of previous Baloch militants, Sher Mohammad Marri of the Marri tribe began to create

¹⁵⁰ Breseeg, "Chapter Five: Post-Colonial Balochistan." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 302.

¹⁵¹ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 123-124.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ali Baloch, "Balochistan: A Perfect Slaughterhouse of Pakistan's Military Butchers." Baluch Sarmachar, 4/12/2011, <https://baluchsarmachar.wordpress.com/2011/04/12/balochistan-a-perfect-slaughterhouse-of-pakistan%E2%80%99s-military-butchers/>

¹⁵⁴ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 123.

¹⁵⁵ Breseeg, "Chapter Five: Post-Colonial Balochistan." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 305.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 304

an organized infrastructure to force Islamabad adhere to their demands.¹⁵⁷ This was dubbed as the Parari network and included two command centers to organize movements and attacks. Pakistan responded by fighting the militants and attempting to break the sardars influence on Baloch citizens. During this time, Pakistan removed traditional sardars who had a hereditary claim to leadership with leaders who were sympathetic to and controlled by Pakistan.¹⁵⁸ Various Baloch tribes responded by killing the new sardar and reverting back to the old sardars. Both of these actions by Pakistan resulted in a stronger sense of unification among Baloch citizens.¹⁵⁹ Marri was inspired by popular and guerilla war from Algeria, Cuba, China, and Vietnam, and ultimately attempted to recreate these methods.¹⁶⁰

The group also published papers in multiple languages to spread knowledge of their cause, resulting in Baloch youth living in urban centers to join the movement. They were aided by the formation of the Baloch Student Organization in 1967.¹⁶¹ The BSO focused on press awareness and circulation on a much larger scale. It also helped unify the Baloch identity, as the Western and Eastern dialects of Balochi were diverging significantly, and the circulation of the BSO's work amended the differences that emerged. The success of their strategy was immediately evident, as they were organized, educated, and trained well enough to engage in a nine-year war of attrition.¹⁶² Simultaneously, Pakistan was attempting to rupture Baloch civil society. In a nine-year span from 1962 to 1969, 200 leaders were arrested and charged with rebellion by Pakistan, creating even more animosity between the center and periphery of the nation.¹⁶³

In March of 1969, Yahya Khan succeeded Ayub Khan and worked on negotiating a truce with the Parari fighters. In November of that year, Khan announced that the One-Unit scheme would be abolished and that universal 'one man, one vote' suffrage was established. He also released Baloch leaders who were imprisoned as an indication of good will.¹⁶⁴ These events were viewed as the first win for the Baloch self-determination movement in over two decades. Many Balochis experienced a sigh of relief, thinking that reinstating Balochistan as a province would allow them to use the provincial government as a means for addressing the material conditions of the citizens. However, only four years later, any cause for relief was dashed.

¹⁵⁷ Breseeg, "Chapter Five: Post-Colonial Balochistan." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 305-6.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 306.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 308

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 280-281

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 308

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 307

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 308-309

Soviet Arms in Iraq's Embassy: The Fourth Insurgency (1973-1977)

Following the struggle and success of the Parari fighters, the prospects for improving Balochis material conditions were considerable. From 1970 to 1972, sardars Attaullah Mengal, Akbar Bugti, and Khair Bakhsh Marri were elected to the Provincial Assembly of Balochistan.¹⁶⁵ However, such developments were short-circuited by the Bangladesh Liberation War in 1971, where Pakistan lost nearly half of its population and saw its pride and progress severely wounded.¹⁶⁶ After Bangladesh's independence, Punjabis became even more dominant politically and demographically, comprising an outright majority. Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in an attempt to ensure Pakistan's other provinces wouldn't take the Bangladesh route, met with Balochistan's sardars in March of 1972 to discuss their situation.¹⁶⁷ Some accounts of these meetings describe the sardars, specifically Mengal, as being abrasive.¹⁶⁸ Whether or not that is true, Baloch grievances were still visually present. Most civil servants and police officers in Balochistan were Punjabi or non-Balochis, which maintained the sense of foreign domination that many Balochis felt.¹⁶⁹ Mengal responded by forming the Balochistan Dehi Muhafiz as an indigenous police force, which angered the central government and was viewed as a potential prelude to secession. On top of this, Mengal refused Pakistan's coast guard access to the Makran coast, which fueled tensions with Islamabad.¹⁷⁰

Paradoxically, the provincial government declared Urdu as their official language in the same year. Some scholars argue that this happened because the provincial government was concerned that a decision against Urdu would cause Pakistan to treat Balochistan as it did with Bangladesh, who fought to maintain their language. Others argue that if Brahui and Balochi were declared the official languages that were distinct, then the Pashto-speakers of Balochistan would be the linguistic majority, thus reducing the control and influence Balochis had on the future of their province. Regardless, this declaration was intended to cool down tensions, which it undoubtedly did not do.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ Breseeg, "Chapter Six: Autonomy, Its Rise and Fall." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 318-20.

¹⁶⁶ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 133-134.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 139

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 140

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 140-141

¹⁷¹ Breseeg, "Chapter Six: Autonomy, Its Rise and Fall." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 319-22.

In December of 1972, Bugti tribesmen attacked the provincial secretariat in Quetta to demand the resignation of certain sardars. This prompted a tribal war between the Bugti and Marri tribes, which killed 40 people. Pakistan's army eventually intervened to institute peace.¹⁷² It is unclear whether this intervention was requested or not, with some scholars claiming that Quetta requesting army assistance was legal and others arguing that it was a breach of the constitution in any matter.¹⁷³ The security situation quickly heated up, with large protests against the central government being repressed with force, though Pakistan denied using violence against protesters.¹⁷⁴

On February 10th, 1973, Soviet weapons were discovered in Iraq's Embassy in Pakistan.¹⁷⁵ Pakistan claimed that these weapons were for Balochis in Iran, and was a deliberate plot by Iraq and the USSR to divide and dismember both Iran and Pakistan. Nothing was ever proved, and all evidence was circumstantial at best, and Iraq denied the claims. However, this was enough for Pakistan to dismiss and disband Balochistan's provincial government, arrest its leaders, and institute a 30-day period of presidential rule.¹⁷⁶ This response rapidly revived and unified Baloch militants, who resumed attacks on government property. Around 55,000 Baloch fighters fought 80,000 Pakistani soldiers.¹⁷⁷ This phase of the conflict was particularly disastrous for Baloch citizens and aspirations. Balochistan was fighting an army that was superior in virtually every regard, but Baloch fighters were skilled in guerilla warfare at this point while exercising their precise knowledge of the area to their advantage.¹⁷⁸

As the conflict continued, it grew in its intensity and brutality. Pakistan triggered a news blackout in the region to prevent its actions from becoming public knowledge and disrupt militant coordination.¹⁷⁹ By mid-1974, guerilla attacks had disrupted various railways and shipments to Pakistan's urban centers.¹⁸⁰ The army began bombing entire fields known for guerilla activity. Simultaneously, 7,000 National Awami Party members were detained in Balochistan under the auspices of collaboration with militants, and another 5,000-6,000 workers for the Baluch

¹⁷² Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 141.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 141-143.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 142.; Breseeg, "Chapter Six: Autonomy, Its Rise and Fall." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 332-33.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Breseeg, "Chapter Six: Autonomy, Its Rise and Fall." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 336.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 336-337, 339.

¹⁷⁹ Breseeg, "Chapter Six: Autonomy, Its Rise and Fall." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 342.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

People's Liberation Front, a group of militant students and political workers, were arrested.¹⁸¹ Army General Tikka Khan was determined to violently destroy the insurgency. In the Battle at Chamalang in the end of 1974, fighting lasted six days until the army began targeting the families of insurgents to lure them out of the mountains, knowing they would rush to defend their families.¹⁸² In the aftermath of this battle, 125 militants were dead and 900 were captured out of 1500 total fighters. By early 1975, Bhutto declared that the back of the insurgency was broken.¹⁸³ While insurgents continued to commit guerilla attacks, they lost significant momentum after these developments, and were nowhere near the level of action they were taking before the deliberate targeting of their families. In fact, the Marri tribesmen laid down their arms in 1974 in exchange for a full pardon, indicating the momentum shift towards Pakistan.¹⁸⁴ The conflict officially ended when Zia ul-Haq took control of Pakistan in 1977 and released imprisoned Baloch leaders. By the end of the conflict, 3,000-3,300 Pakistani soldiers, 5,300 Baloch fighters, and untold numbers of Baloch citizens were killed over the course of 340 clashes.¹⁸⁵

However, before Bhutto was removed and executed, he succeeded in banning a significant number of Baloch groups under the claim that they were in active plots to overthrow the government with the notable exception of the BPLF.¹⁸⁶ In 1975, he successfully banned the NAP with the help of the Supreme Court, who held that the NAP was plotting to create an independent Pashtunistan and Balochistan. This triggered the infamous Hyderabad conspiracy case in which Baloch and Pashtun members of the NAP were arrested along with some members from the Pakistan Peoples Party and Pakistan Muslim League.¹⁸⁷ While the tribunal goes beyond the scope of this paper, academics generally agree it was one-sided and motivated by personal belief rather than concrete evidence. All of this occurred despite the protests of Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo that Balochis no longer desired independence through conflict.¹⁸⁸

Another initiative Bhutto undertook was attempting to abolish the sardari system and somewhat addressing economic grievances.¹⁸⁹ Abolishing the sardari system seemed

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid., 342-343.; Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 146.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 146.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 147

¹⁸⁶ Breseeg, "Chapter Six: Autonomy, Its Rise and Fall." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 344-346.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 348-349.

¹⁸⁹ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 144.

paradoxical for Bhutto, who enjoyed their support, but also was unsuccessful in removing the influence and power that sardars exercise.¹⁹⁰ He nearly doubled federal funds for Balochistan in 1976, which saw greater revenue streams being shared in the province. He also began to provide the provincial government with a royalty for exports from the Sui gas fields.¹⁹¹ A variety of development projects began to improve communication networks, roads, hospitals, schools, banks, technical institutes, and health facilities.¹⁹²

The four years between 1973 and 1977 significantly deteriorated relations and perceptions between Balochistan and Islamabad. This conflict further entrenched the deep-seated resentment that was festering in the average Baloch citizen.¹⁹³ Baloch leaders were also becoming increasingly desperate for a solution, threatening to go the Bangladesh route if the situation continued to deteriorate.¹⁹⁴ Another byproduct of this conflict phase was creating wide support for Baloch self-determination. It represented a turning point in the conflict that it previously lacked; Up until this point, the struggle was viewed as a distinctly tribal one.¹⁹⁵ Now, it became political in nature where Balochis slowly started to understand that if the status quo continued and action was not taken, Pakistan would destroy their identity and make Balochis a relic of the past.¹⁹⁶ Balochis were also traveling to the metropole of the country to receive education, and began bringing back their knowledge, expertise, and passion back home.

An Undying Conflict: The Fifth Insurgency (2004-Present)

1977 to 1999 saw the longest and only real interval of peace in Balochistan. For a conflict that was exploding every five to ten years, this was a feat to be proud of.¹⁹⁷ Despite splinters in the Baloch national movement, it was calm enough for militants to stay quiet and hope for positive developments at the hands of Islamabad. During this time, not a lot changed for the average Baloch citizen. Many Baloch began moving to larger cities in Pakistan or the globe in an effort to experience upward economic mobility.¹⁹⁸ These events coincided with the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.; Abdur Rehman, "The Tribal Administration of Balochistan." PT, 3/10/2023, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/03/11/the-tribal-administration-of-balochistan/>.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 152-156.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 151-152.

¹⁹⁶ Breseeg, "Chapter Six: Autonomy, Its Rise and Fall." In *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, 349-351.

¹⁹⁷ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 165.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

USSR's invasion of Afghanistan, which posed immediate and future threats to Baloch citizens, fearing their land or people would be used as a buffer zone between Afghanistan and Pakistan or the rest of South Asia. Divisions began to emerge between tribes and ideology in the context of the nationalist movement which splintered pragmatic steps and leadership. In fact, Bizenjo joined the Pakistan National Party as a way to maintain his political influence, and argued for the adoption of a loose federation solution for Balochistan, reminiscent of 1940's Lahore Resolution.¹⁹⁹ In the end, all major sardars concluded that there was no use in negotiation with Zia ul-Haq, as he had no desire to reach a meaningful understanding with Balochis during his tenure. Despite his decision to release Baloch prisoners, he did so in the name of political expediency and reducing future headaches rather than in the name of the well-being of Balochistan's citizens.²⁰⁰

This phase also saw sparse economic development in the province. Gas was being exported to Balochistan's larger cities like Quetta, allowing for connections between Quetta and the larger metropolises in Pakistan. Balochistan's airports were upgraded, T.V. stations were established, and roads were constructed in the busiest areas.²⁰¹ Despite these theoretically promising moves, there was a major lack of emphasis on improving infrastructure that exclusively supported basic human needs like clean water, major hospital systems, and education.²⁰² Balochis had also started to integrate themselves into mainstream Pakistani politics, evidenced by their increasing representation in the central government.²⁰³ Citizens and leaders of Balochistan had begun to address their historic and economic grievances through the central parliament, and many were starting to believe that working through Islamabad was the best and easiest solution to their problems. However, all hope was dashed with Pervez Musharraf's rule in Pakistan.

Musharraf gained control of the government in 1999 and immediately began unraveling the decades of peace sustained in Balochistan through power consolidation.²⁰⁴ He launched administrative reforms that were framed as acts of 'decentralization,' when in reality, it bypassed the approval of provincial governments and essentially obviated almost any influence they held. He also passed laws that altered the eligibility criteria for the participation of political parties in an effort to dethrone the parties popular in KPK and Balochistan. Through this act, he was able

¹⁹⁹ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 185.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 185-187.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 183-184.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid., 185-186, 191-194.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 198-199

to get his party's coalition members elected in those provinces.²⁰⁵ After the September 11th attack on the U.S, Musharraf also allowed America to use Pakistan's military facilities in Balochistan to occupy Taliban-controlled Afghanistan.²⁰⁶ All of these acts were viewed as insults at best, and part of a broad Punjabi exploitation of Baloch land and people at worst.²⁰⁷

Perhaps the most insulting unilateral move by Musharraf was signing an economic partnership with China over Balochistan's Gwadar Port in 2002.²⁰⁸ This move came without the consultation of Baloch politicians, sardars, or citizens, who opposed the projects due to concerns of increasing economic marginalization. This decision was yet another example in the laundry list of injustices faced by Balochis perpetuated by the Punjabi-dominated government, and strengthened the Baloch nationalist narrative that salvation could never and would never come from participating with a government of occupiers. The pot was boiling and Baloch leaders and citizens remembered why they were wary of integration within Pakistan to begin with. The agreement and subsequent construction of the port triggered a resurgence of militant movements against the state, although it was extremely sparse in the beginning, lacking the support from influential sardars.²⁰⁹

Then, during negotiations between the Sui gas administration and the provincial government over restructuring the royalty payments, Dr. Shazia, a doctor at Sui hospital, was raped by an Army captain in January of 2005.²¹⁰ Attacks by militants on the gas fields had already begun to pressure the administration to offer a better deal for Balochis, but this event blew the lid on the conflict. The crime occurred in the Bugti tribal area, and the Bugtis viewed the lack of retribution for the perpetrator as a form of collective dishonor.²¹¹ They weren't wrong in this perspective, as Musharraf declared that the accused was not guilty on national television.²¹² This massively intensified the modern insurgency, as the Bugti tribesmen started to coordinate attacks against Pakistani infrastructure.

This phase of the insurgency proved to be more serious and distinct from previous phases in a few ways. This is the second generation of a national movement and militant conflict, and many militants had parents and relatives who participated in earlier phases of the

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 200-201.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 201-202.

²⁰⁷ Salah, "The Problems of Baloch Ethnicity in Balochistan: Paving Way Towards Betterment Through Political Consensus.," 44.

²⁰⁸ Ahmad, "Gwadar: A Historical Kaleidoscope.," 161-162.

²⁰⁹ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 206.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 208.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² United Press International, "Musharraf Supports Rape Case Officer." UPI, February 25, 2005. https://www.upi.com/Top_News/2005/02/25/Musharraf-supports-rape-case-officer/24381109324391/.

conflict. Due to this fact, the developments within the insurgency that had occurred during the first four phases were present, like the perception of the issue being political rather than tribal, educated Balochis contributing to a middle-class supporting the insurgency, and the idea that non-Balochis were colonizing and exploiting Balochis. One key difference in this phase was the targeted killings of ethnic Punjabis, Muhajirs, and Chinese, who have collectively been viewed as foreign oppressors seeking to get rich from Balochistan while ignoring the land, history, and people.²¹³ When 3 Chinese engineers were killed by a bomb in Gwadar in May 2004, it signaled Baloch resistance to what they saw as a new colonizing force.²¹⁴

Another development is the organization of Baloch militants. Since the beginning of the conflict, militant groups were aligned and were born of certain tribes, but over time they developed into distinct organizations that differed in perspectives and objectives. However, intuitively, their paths would sometimes cross and inspire collaboration.²¹⁵ Such groups include the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Baluch Liberation Front (BLF), Baloch Republican Army (BRA), Baloch Students Organization (BSO), Baloch Liberation Tigers, and Baloch Musalla Defai Tandem.²¹⁶

Pakistan's approach to the conflict had changed very little, using brute violence and treating every Baloch as an enemy combatant, with one notable exception. Pakistan has since adopted a routine 'kill and dump' policy which sees the abduction, murder, and abandonment of Baloch leaders, activists, and nationalist citizens.²¹⁷ Simultaneously, Pakistan set up the Shujaat-Mushahid Committee to address Balochis grievances. However, they emphasized that inter-tribal conflicts were the cause of the rise of the insurgency rather than increased animosity against Islamabad.²¹⁸ This was corroborated by a WikiLeaks discovery from Pakistan's Embassy in the U.S., which stated that there was virtually no support behind the new insurgency beyond

²¹³ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 199.

²¹⁴ Muhammad Akbar Notezai, "Will Balochistan Blow up China's Belt and Road?" *Foreign Policy*, 5/30/2019, May 30, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/05/30/will-balochistan-blow-up-chinas-belt-and-road/>.

²¹⁵ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 200.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*,

²¹⁷ Pinal Patel and Saurabh Sharma, "Enforced Disappearances: A Major Human Rights Issue in Balochistan." *Journal of Social and Political Sciences* 5, no. 4 (2022): 27-28, <https://doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/9acfv>.; Ayesha Peeral, "Balochistan Is a Black Hole for Human Rights Violations." *PT*, 1/19/2023, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2023/01/19/balochistan-is-a-black-hole-for-human-rights-violations/>.

²¹⁸ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 209-210.

the Bugti tribe.²¹⁹ Nawab Akbar Bugti was the leader of this phase of the conflict, and was 79 years old.²²⁰ In 2005, he laid out a 15-point plan to successfully conclude the issue of Balochistan.²²¹ Despite the lack of a genuine response from Pakistan, the points illuminate the broad picture of Balochis grievances with Pakistan, and are valuable in determining how to end the conflict today. The plan included the following measures:

1. Grant Balochistan greater provincial autonomy to exercise self-determination
2. Grant Balochistan ownership of its natural resources
3. Address grievances with mega projects in the province
4. Give Balochistan a greater revenue share from mega projects and employ more Balochis for their operation
5. Non-Baloch officials should be replaced with indigenous officials
6. Pakistan should recognize the right of Balochis to run their own affairs
7. Cancel the construction of new military installations and return the land to Balochis
8. Re-adopt the original constitution that did not give additional Senate seats to Islamabad and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)
9. Abolish or reduce the role of ISI forces that create 'divide and rule' logic to Balochis
10. Release Baloch prisoners
11. Withdraw Pakistani Armed Forces
12. Transfer control of the civil armed forces to the provincial government
13. Grant the Baloch assembly law-making authority
14. No federal law should supersede provincial law in Balochistan
15. Resolve negotiations with gas companies swiftly

In 2006, Musharraf visited the Marri tribal area that was suspected of aiding the rebellion when insurgents attacked a helicopter, wounding two elite Frontier Corps members.²²² Musharraf took action to destroy the Parari camps that held insurgents, totaling around 53 camps. Musharraf also started to support less influential sardars to counterbalance the Bugti, Marri, and Mengal tribes. On August 24th, an anti-Bugti jirga was assembled in the Bugti tribal

²¹⁹ Wikileaks. "BALOCHISTAN (4): WHO'S WHO - THE BALOCH TRIBES." Wikileaks, 8/29/2006, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06ISLAMABAD16994_a.html.

²²⁰ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 211-213.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid., 213-214.

area where they declared their loyalty to the central government.²²³ This angered Bugti, who was tired of always being declared as enemies by their supposed countrymen, and intended to continue fighting even at his old age.

Two days later, Akbar Bugti was killed by the Pakistani army in a military operation.²²⁴ This appalled and angered nearly every Balochi, viewing this as dishonor in its highest form. Bugti's death was condemned by Pakistani and international politicians, as he was viewed as a long-time ally and supporter of integration within Pakistan.²²⁵ Musharraf tried to project Bugti as a vehemently anti-Pakistani and ruthless leader who was eliminated by their righteous 'War on Terror'.²²⁶ However, the damage was already done, as a new generation of Balochis began to fortify the division between Pakistani and Baloch identity. Pakistan's inhumane strategy of repression continued to splinter Baloch civil society, as Akhtar Mengal, sardar of the Mengal tribe, and 700 others were arrested the following month.²²⁷ Fueled by Pakistan's political and military suppression, many Baloch militants fled to Afghanistan in 2007 only to still face attacks from Pakistan. In November of 2007, the son of the Marri sardar, Balach Marri, was killed by a NATO drone strike in Afghanistan.²²⁸

Baloch militants' strategy of avoiding centralization of militants has been beneficial and detrimental to the insurgency.²²⁹ It allows for sparse military action with the same general principles in mind. The decentralization of militant groups helps keep the insurgency alive, as capturing or killing the leader of a certain group can't lead to clues on the whereabouts of other insurgents. However, this strategy has given Pakistan a larger justification for treating all Balochis as potential combatants, incentivizing their brutal actions against innocent Baloch citizens.²³⁰ In a sense, this strategy allows the insurgency to stay alive, but it increases the impacts felt by common Balochis and has galvanized future animosity towards Pakistan. This is evidenced by the fact that the current insurgency has outlasted the previous conflicts two times over.²³¹

In April 2009, three Baloch nationalist leaders, Ghulam Mohammed Baloch, Lala Munir Baloch, and Sher Mohammed Baloch, were kidnapped at gunpoint in Turbat by people speaking Farsi. Five days later, their bodies were found in Pidrak. This was known as the Turbat killings,

²²³ Ibid., 214-215, 217-218.

²²⁴ Ibid., 218-219.

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Ibid., 220.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency.," 19-20.

²³⁰ Ibid., 22-23.

²³¹ Ibid.

and Baloch militants accused Pakistan of the crime.²³² Regardless of the culprit, the event sparked increased protests and militant attacks. Pakistan continued their violent strategy of repression past Musharraf's administration, so Baloch militants responded with more brutal tactics, targeting teachers, students, and schools who were against teaching Baloch history and displaying Baloch culture.²³³ Later that year, militants killed a teacher who opposed reciting the Baloch anthem. They also kidnapped 19 police officers and killed all but one over the course of three weeks.²³⁴ In 2014, there was a brief conflict between the BLA and United Baloch Army, resulting in the death of 20 militants.²³⁵ Attacks continued from 2014 to 2018, when militants stormed the Chinese Consulate in Karachi and killed two Pakistani police officers and two Pakistani citizens. The BLA claimed responsibility, which indicated the resentment against perceived Chinese exploitation had not gone anywhere, and was still very present in the political imaginary of Baloch militants.²³⁶ Attacks continued to be sparse, gaining speed in 2018 and 2022 respectively, but cooling off after a period of a few months.

One notable attack since 2009 was the suicide bombing of Shari Baloch, a schoolteacher who studied zoology and education and a mother of two. She used an IED hidden in her burqa to kill three Chinese teachers and a Pakistani driver near Karachi University in April 2022. The Majid Brigade, an arm of the BLA that conducts suicide bombings, claimed responsibility for the attack.²³⁷ Up to this point, Pakistani leaders, scholars, and politicians had a very specific profile of who was most likely involved in the insurgency, as they targeted Baloch men who were painted as irrational, socially isolated, and angry with their material realities. However, this event highlighted a fundamental misunderstanding in Pakistan's perception of the Baloch national movement. Rather than militants being solely motivated by regaining power or a

²³² Asian Human Rights Commission. "Pakistan: Three Political Activists Are Found Murdered after Daylight Abduction." AHRC, 4/8/2009, <http://www.humanrights.asia/news/urgent-appeals/AHRC-UAC-041-2009/>.

²³³ Hari Prasad and Wil Sahar Patrick, "Pakistan Faces Rising Separatist Insurgency in Balochistan." New Lines Institute, 1/25/2023, <https://newlinesinstitute.org/pakistan/pakistan-faces-rising-separatist-insurgency-in-balochistan/>.

²³⁴ Human Rights Watch, "Testimony of Ali Dayan Hasan before the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs Regarding Human Rights in Balochistan." HRW, 10/28/2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/08/testimony-ali-dayan-hasan-us-house-committee-foreign-affairs-regarding-human-rights>.

²³⁵ Global Terrorism Database, "Incident Summary." GTD. Accessed July 3, 2023. <https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/search/IncidentSummary.aspx?gtdid=200907300006>.

²³⁶ Meher Ahmad and Salman Masood, "Chinese Presence in Pakistan Is Targeted in Strike on Consulate in Karachi." The New York Times, 11/23/2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/23/world/asia/pakistan-karachi-attack-chinese-consulate.html>.

²³⁷ Maha Hassan, "Assumptions in Counterterrorism: Understanding the Case of Shari Baloch." South Asian Voices, 8/5/2022, <https://southasianvoices.org/shari-baloch-gender-security/>.

'gender-blind' and irrational grudge against Pakistan, the inclusion of an educated woman indicated that women were not passive victims of oppression and that men were uneducated and had irrational motivations.²³⁸ The fact that an educated mother decided on her own volition to give her own life for a cause, and the fact that Pakistan had never considered that the widespread concerns of Balochis could've spread to female militants, both indicate that this conflict is no longer a niche one that only concerns a few stakeholders. This event indicates that absent a genuine desire for a solution from Pakistan that entails mutual harmony, this conflict will continue to expand until it is larger than life.²³⁹ Unfortunately, it seems that Pakistan has yet to learn this lesson, evidenced by their lack of a unique response to Shari Baloch's attack. Instead, Pakistan simply increased the number of female police officers, which doesn't come close to addressing the issues at hand. Predictably, attacks have continued monthly from April 2022 to the time of writing, July 2023.²⁴⁰

On The Question of Foreign Involvement

Since the beginning of the conflict, Pakistan has consistently claimed that external players are supporting the Baloch struggle.²⁴¹ A prime reason for this conclusion is the high level of organization within certain groups, such as the BLA. Pakistan has historically blamed Afghanistan, Iran, and Iraq. However, the vast majority of their vocal outrage is directed at India. Narendra Modi has used the Balochistan issue to criticize Pakistan on many fronts, both to support the claim that Pakistan is a 'terrorist state' and to argue that Islamabad has no moral right to criticize India's actions in Kashmir.²⁴² Beyond India's statements, there is no real evidence available to suggest they are supporting the insurgency. Baloch separatists have said they are open to and desire foreign aid, but are yet to receive any.²⁴³ While there is a small paramilitary group in India named the Hind-Baloch Army which consists of former rebels like Mama Qadeer, this does not equate to India's government being involved in the conflict.²⁴⁴ It is likely that Pakistan knows that other countries aren't aiding Baloch militants, but still insist on it

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency.," 21-22.

²⁴² Afroz Ahmad and Ms. Najish, "Balochistan Movement: Why India's Policy Took a Shift Towards Balochistan Under Narendra Modi Government." *International Journal of African and Asian Studies* 39 (2017): 83-84.

²⁴³ Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency.," 21-22.

²⁴⁴ Business Standard, "Indians Contributing to Balochistan's Freedom Struggle: Hind Baloch Forum." 8/11/2019,

https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/indians-contributing-to-balochistan-s-freedom-struggle-hind-baloch-forum-119081100475_1.html.

because it allows for a disproportionate level of resources allocated to putting down the conflict in the name of defense from external powers seeking to destroy Pakistan.²⁴⁵

Pakistan's Policy Solutions: Missing the Mark

During the latest phase of the conflict, three distinct initiatives were spearheaded by Islamabad to resolve the economic situation in much of Balochistan. These were known as the Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan Project, the 2009 National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, and the 18th amendment to Pakistan's constitution.²⁴⁶ The 2009 Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan Project was a historic set of reforms proposed to holistically transform the reality of Baloch citizens. It included a litany of demands, including the restructuring of the NFC award, withdrawing the army presence from Sui, postponing construction of mega projects, creating an independent commission to investigate missing persons, and revising the royalty structure from Balochistan's natural resources.²⁴⁷ While this promise seems extremely productive in resolving the conflict, there were at least two distinct issues with it. First, Baloch grievances were no longer exclusively about the semantics of revenue sharing or economic growth. Too many instances of brutal repression, too many missing persons, and too many broken promises and insults had been generated since Pakistan's inception to the point that the conflict represented the survival of a group of people opposed to abject poverty being experienced by Balochis alone.²⁴⁸ Second, over a decade later, Pakistan has only adopted 15 of the 61 measures laid out in the package.²⁴⁹ Even if the Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan Package could've resolved the conflict, it is now widely considered a failure in policy, as it was not coupled with genuine consultation and occurred simultaneously with the continuation of violent repression.²⁵⁰

The December 2009 NFC award was another policy act created with the intention of quelling Baloch disillusionment. It saw Balochistan's revenue pool increase from 5.11% of the

²⁴⁵ Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency.," 21-22.

²⁴⁶ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 227.

²⁴⁷ Ibid.

²⁴⁸ The Express Tribune, "Why has Aghaz-e-Haqooq failed to extinguish Baloch discontent?" 11/29/2011, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/299860/why-has-aghaz-e-haqooq-failed-to-extinguish-baloch-discontent>.

²⁴⁹ Zahid Gishkori, "Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan: Reform Package Stopped in Its Tracks." The Express Tribune, 3/6/2011, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/128835/aghaz-e-haqooq-e-balochistanreform-packagestopped-in-its-tracks>.

²⁵⁰ Aishwarya Verma, "CPEC Is Developing More than Just Infrastructure in Balochistan." The International Scholar, 4/23/2021, <https://www.theintlscholar.com/periodical/2021/01/24/analysis/benefit-cpec-pakistan-balochistan-ethnonationalism>.

total revenue to 9.09% within a year. Balochistan was also guaranteed 120 Billion Pakistani Rupees, around \$400,000 US Dollars, over 12 years to make up for gas surcharges. They were also given an extra 10 billion Pakistani Rupees to equalize the currency and stabilize the local economy.²⁵¹ It also widened the criteria for revenue distribution, basing it on more than just population but also 'backwardness' and other considerations.²⁵² While this award did ease economic marginalization in the province, it failed for a few reasons.²⁵³ First, similar to the Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan Package, it only addressed economic concerns and not the general mistrust that Balochis harbor, which is the tip of the iceberg for Baloch citizens.²⁵⁴ Second, in accordance with the 18th amendment that placed larger responsibilities on provincial governments for revenue generation, the NFC award alone did not provide any provisions to create additional revenue, which makes the poorest provinces, namely Balochistan and KPK, dependent on federal funds.²⁵⁵ This has hampered provincial autonomy as a whole, as provincial governments must pay the costs of developing industries from their own pocket.

The 18th amendment is still considered a landmark move that gave power from the central government to the provinces. It altered nearly 40% of the 1973 constitution, attempted to reduce the influence of the military in politics and military-owned businesses, and abolished the Concurrent Legislative List, which were defined areas of power that the federal and provincial governments held.²⁵⁶ It also allowed greater resources to provincial governments through the NFC and required consultation with provincial governments before enacting mega projects.²⁵⁷ These are still considered positive steps towards Baloch self-determination, but there were two problems with it. First, it still didn't address the past 70 years of animosity and mistrust developed between Balochis and Islamabad. Second, it didn't go far enough to grant provinces

²⁵¹ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 227-228.

²⁵² Fahsiah Uddin, "Analyzing 7th NFC Award and its Implications." *Policy Perspectives* 7, no. 2 (2010): 124-125. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/42909279?seq=10>.

²⁵³ Muhammad Sabir, "Financial Implications of the 7th NFC Award and the Impact on Social Services." *The Pakistan Development Review* 49, no. 4II (2010): 400-403. <https://doi.org/10.30541/v49i4iipp.387-403>.

²⁵⁴ Musarrat Karamat Ali and Amanat Ali Jalbani, "Pakistan NFC Award 2009 and People's Perceptions: A Case Study of Balochistan," *JISR Management and Social Sciences & Economics* 9, no. 1 (2011): 78-81, <https://doi.org/10.31384/jisrmsse/2011.09.1.5>.

²⁵⁵ Uddin, "Analyzing 7th NFC Award and its Implications.," 124-125.

²⁵⁶ Salman Rafi Sheikh, "How Can Pakistan End the Military's Role in Politics?" *Himal South Asian*, 2/8/2023, <https://www.himalmag.com/pakistan-military-beyond-18th-amendment-constitution-politics/>.

²⁵⁷ Zeb, "Pakistan's Other Problem: Narratives, Enduring Injustice and Ethnopolitical Conflict in Balochistan.," 228.; Sadia Sherbaz and Karim Khan, "18th Amendment and Deprivation." *The Express Tribune*, 3/12/2020, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2174895/18th-amendment-deprivation>.

autonomy, specifically in the realm of power and resource devolution through Article 140A.²⁵⁸ The political will to alter the constitution further no longer exists, which is particularly problematic given the devastating floods in Pakistan last year.

A problem that has plagued all of Pakistan's major initiatives to resolve the insurgency is that Baloch grievances have expanded and evolved over time. It is worth noting the key drivers for the conflict when discussing past policy attempts at solutions. The key drivers of the conflict today include economic marginalization, ethnic marginalization and 'colonization' of their indigenous homeland by different foreign groups, including Punjabis and Chinese separately, and Pakistan's violent response and human rights abuses against Balochis.²⁵⁹ There are a litany of issues that arise within each of these categories, like the issue of natural gas as a single issue within the broader issue of economic marginalization, and so on. Absent a proposal that tackles all areas of Baloch grievances, the conflict will rage on.

Conflict Drivers: Economic Destitution, Ethnic Domination, and Extrajudicial Violence

Economic Destitution and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

A primary grievance of Baloch citizens, and one of the only problems that the central government has attempted to address, is the economic degradation that average Balochis face. Balochistan remains one of the poorest regions on earth. The average Baloch lives on less than one dollar a day.²⁶⁰ 88% of Balochis quotidian realities involve a high degree of deprivation and lack of access to resources common in the rest of Pakistan.²⁶¹ 90% of settlements in Balochistan have no access to clean drinking water or basic medical infrastructure. 48% of Balochis live under the poverty line, which is already comparatively lower in Pakistan than the rest of the world. While 86% of Pakistanis have access to safe drinking water, only 20% of Balochis have this necessity. 75% of Pakistanis have easy access to electricity around the clock, while only 20% of Balochistan's villages have electricity.²⁶² Of Balochistan's 28 districts, only four have regular and consistent access to gas. Out of Pakistan's 20 most economically deprived districts, 18 of them are in Balochistan. 75% of Baloch women are illiterate and around

²⁵⁸ Imran Ahmed, "The 18th Amendment: Historical Developments and Debates in Pakistan." National University of Singapore: Institute of South Asian Studies, 9/4/2020, <https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/papers/the-18th-amendment-historical-developments-and-debates-in-pakistan/>.

²⁵⁹ Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency.," 7-8.

²⁶⁰ Ahmed and Baloch, "The Political Economy of Development: A Critical Assessment of Balochistan, Pakistan.," 281.

²⁶¹ Kaushik and Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?," 28.

²⁶² Ahmed and Baloch, "The Political Economy of Development: A Critical Assessment of Balochistan, Pakistan.," 281.

67% of Balochis under the age of 10 are illiterate.²⁶³ Illiteracy runs especially rampant in rural areas, which hold a literacy rate of around 10% according to the most liberal metrics.²⁶⁴ Balochis' per capita income is less than half of Pakistan's average, meaning a Baloch is likely to be twice as poor as a resident in any other province. Even in Quetta, Balochistan's largest city, less than 1/3rd of houses are connected to the government water supply and can access it around the clock.²⁶⁵

Educational infrastructure has continued to be so poor that those Balochis who make around the national average often opt to send their children to be educated in Pakistan's metropolises. The story of access to medical facilities is similar, with Balochis taking their family members to Karachi or a similar city for treatment. This lack of social services, especially education, is a key contributor to Balochistan's socio-economic realities.²⁶⁶ It cements poverty as an almost unchangeable reality, and those who can afford to leave do so and receive education elsewhere. The lack of social investment also means that workers can't be as productive in the workforce, ensuring that the majority of Balochis cannot pull themselves out of poverty. In other words, Pakistan has been trying to create growth in Balochistan without substantial development, which is a formula that rarely sees success if ever. Last, the presence of the insurgency has meant that Balochistan receives very little foreign direct investment from international governments and businesses.²⁶⁷ All of these problems exist in Balochistan while the land fuels the majority of Pakistan's energy and resource requirements, and yet they receive virtually none of the benefits.

On top of the destitute economic conditions that Balochis are forced to grapple with on a daily basis, the lack of Baloch inclusion and participation in economic projects is another key driver for the insurgency.²⁶⁸ Rather than expanding a simplistic understanding of the conflict that sees Balochis as upset for being impoverished, the lack of inclusion has given rise to animosity against dominant ethnic groups and has made it structurally near-impossible for Balochis to create upward mobility for themselves. In the current royalty structure for natural resources,

²⁶³ Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency.," 16.; Kaushik and Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?," 28.; Ahmed and Baloch, "The Political Economy of Development: A Critical Assessment of Balochistan, Pakistan.," 281.

²⁶⁴ Ahmed and Baloch, "The Political Economy of Development: A Critical Assessment of Balochistan, Pakistan.," 281.

²⁶⁵ Ibid.

²⁶⁶ Ibid.

²⁶⁷ Ibid., 284-285.

²⁶⁸ Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency.," 15.

Punjab receives \$1.65, Sindh receives \$2.35, while Balochistan receives a mere \$0.29, despite the majority of resources coming from Balochistan.²⁶⁹

Despite this fundamentally unfair economic structure, Pakistan has handed over the development of Gwadar and other areas in Balochistan to China for the development of ports and other business infrastructure.²⁷⁰ Since the beginning of the project, Baloch leaders strongly indicated their opposition to such deals, claiming that they would not receive the benefits. Pakistan disagreed and made the agreements anyway.²⁷¹ Since the start of operations in Gwadar Port in 2016, Baloch concerns have rang true, as their economic conditions are nearly identical to what they were prior to CPEC.²⁷²

Pakistan's army has been directly involved in coal, gold, copper, and real estate projects with collaboration from multinational companies, namely companies from China. This increases perception of Pakistan and China as colonial forces. Some key examples are the Sandak Copper and Rek-e-Dik Gold-Copper projects.²⁷³ The 2002 agreement outlined that the Chinese company taking over the project would receive 80% of the profits, while 18% goes to Islamabad, and only 2% would be given to the Balochistan government in the form of royalties.²⁷⁴ For a project that would produce 20 million ounces of gold and two billion tons of copper,²⁷⁵ Balochistan's government receives insultingly little. This is a common structure of business deals over Balochistan's resources.

Punjabi and Chinese Dominance and Ethnic Marginalization

Since the accession of Kalat to Pakistan, the perception of foreign domination and colonialism in Balochistan has persevered throughout the many changes in the economic, political, and security situation in the province.²⁷⁶ Throughout all of the broken promises, steps that didn't go far enough, and the lack of genuinely respectful interactions between the central, Punjabi-dominated government and the provincial government. Punjabi dominance over economic projects and political power control has escalated violence and eliminated nearly all trust left in Islamabad.²⁷⁷

²⁶⁹ Ibid., 15-16.

²⁷⁰ Kaushik and Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?," 28.

²⁷¹ Ibid., 28-29

²⁷² Adnan Aamir, "Pakistan's CPEC Projects Leaving Balochistan Behind." Asia Times, 4/26/2018, <https://asiatimes.com/2018/04/balochistan-is-being-left-behind-by-cpec/>.

²⁷³ Ahmed and Baloch, "The Political Economy of Development: A Critical Assessment of Balochistan, Pakistan.," 282-283.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency.," 14-15.

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

CPEC has exacerbated and altered the perception of foreign occupation and colonization.²⁷⁸ Balochis feel that Punjabi elites are colluding with Chinese businessmen and politicians to systematically eliminate them, especially given that Musharraf didn't consult any Balochis over the plan. They have described Gwadar and other areas with high levels of investment from China as 'parallel towns.'²⁷⁹ Chinese settlers and businessmen are provided with elite amenities, guarded by military checkpoints to keep Balochis out. Pakistan allocated plots of land to members of the Army and China while threatening the indigenous people of Gwadar with eviction.²⁸⁰

Balochis have understandably dubbed this development as neo-colonialism, with militants threatening to kill Chinese representatives who come to Balochistan. In relatively affluent Baloch schools, children are being taught English, Urdu, and Mandarin.²⁸¹ To Balochis, this suppression of indigenous languages, namely Balochi and Brahui, and propagation of foreign ones like Mandarin is born out of a colonial desire to slowly eliminate the Baloch and their connections to the land and make them a minority in their own homeland. This perception is bolstered by a litany of parallel developments, namely Chinese involvement in tribal and political affairs, exclusive land development for Chinese developers, and the documented threat of a demographic threat.

China has driven Pakistan's modern disposition towards Balochistan, creating financial incentives for Islamabad to maintain their economic exploitation of its people and land. They have also cozied up to sardars that are sympathetic to mega projects, which has crowded out civilian and popular dissent against CPEC.²⁸² Baloch land has been sold to Chinese corporations at superficially low rates in the name of development, which results in the exploited residents being unable to prove their land-ownership through government documents, as their claims are no longer being recognized.²⁸³ The perceptual difference in the quality of life between Chinese migrants and Balochis is extremely evident through massive housing projects, like the development of a gated community which includes an open-air shopping mall, state-of-the-art

²⁷⁸ Kaushik and Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?," 28.

²⁷⁹ Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency.," 17.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.; Baloch Warna. "Balochistan: Pakistani Forces Threaten to Evict the Entire Village." Baloch Warna, 5/7/2020,

<https://balochwarna.com/2020/05/07/balochistan-pakistani-forces-threaten-to-evict-the-entire-village/>.

²⁸¹ Naimat Khan, "Schools in Gwadar Instructed to Teach Mandarin." Arab News, 10/2/2018, https://www.arabnews.com/node/1381331/spa/spa/page_action/aggregate.

²⁸² Kaushik and Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?," 28.

²⁸³ Mehreen Zahra-Malik, "Land Rush around Pakistan's Gwadar Port Triggered by Chinese Investment." Reuters, 2/13/2017,

<https://www.reuters.com/article/pakistan-cpec-property/land-rush-around-pakistans-gwadar-port-triggered-by-chinese-investment-idUSL4N1G72PS>.

amenities, restaurants, international schools, community parks, indoor and outdoor sports facilities, and more.²⁸⁴ The project was spearheaded by a company based in Hong Kong and cost around 111 million British pounds, funds that are never used for Baloch people.²⁸⁵ On top of the differential in material realities between Chinese workers and Balochis, a report created by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) estimated that by 2048, the Chinese population in Balochistan would outnumber the level of indigenous Baloch in the province.²⁸⁶ The fear of becoming a minority in their own land is a real possibility for Balochis, threatened by Chinese workers and Punjabi elites. At the same time, Gwadar is still extremely underdeveloped, and CPEC has not done much to improve this reality despite consistent claims from scholars and Islamabad that the project would benefit Balochistan the most.

This system of ethnic marginalization that privileges Chinese and Punjabi ‘foreigners’ has escalated violence and left very little trust in the central government.²⁸⁷ The perception of ethnic marginalization has so severely alienated Baloch people that the insurgency has turned from a fringe movement supported by sardars to one that experiences significant levels of civilian support. Despite policies to address economic concerns, the paternalism inherent to Chinese mega-projects drives the perception of ethnic dominance, as is the reason why some reforms have worsened the conflict, lacking a comprehensive approach to Baloch grievances.

Extrajudicial Violence and Crimes Against Humanity

Another primary driver of conflict is the government’s consistently brutal and unforgiving response to Balochi activists, leaders, and militants. Pakistan has routinely treated the plight of Balochis as a purely military and tribal conflict being perpetuated by sardars who are unwilling to give up their influence rather than a political conflict. Islamabad’s military operations in the region have been marked by kidnapping, torture, and routine ‘kill and dump’ policies targetted at politicians, activists, students, and average civilians.²⁸⁸ Prominent human rights groups including Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International and local organizations like Pakistan’s human rights commission and the Human Rights Council of Balochistan have extensively documented

²⁸⁴ Asian Image, “China Pak Investment Corporation Announces Plans for £111m Gated Community Build in Pakistan.” Asian Image, 9/27/2017, <https://www.asianimage.co.uk/news/15560550.china-pak-investment-corporation-announces-plans-for-111m-gated-community-build-in-pakistan/>.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Fawad Yousafzai, “Chinese to Outnumber Baloch Natives by 2048.” The Nation, 12/29/2016, <https://www.nation.com.pk/29-Dec-2016/chinese-to-outnumber-baloch-natives-by-2048>.

²⁸⁷ Tanner, “Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency,” 16-17.

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 18-19.

and condemned the human rights abuses committed by Pakistan's security forces.²⁸⁹ Balochis describe the actions of Pakistan, the ISI, and the Frontier Corps as putting them and the province in a 'constant state of war.'²⁹⁰

From 2019 to August 2022, over 2000 people were reported as missing in Balochistan.²⁹¹ Most of these cases go unreported for fear of retaliation and government neglect on investigating the disappearances, believing it is futile and actively harmful to report missing persons.²⁹² Independent researchers have estimated that the total number of missing persons from Balochistan between 2019 to 2022 is closer to 47,000, a whopping increase from the reported 2,000.²⁹³ Additionally, in 2020, 177 Balochis were killed and 109 of those deaths were by the Frontier Corps (FC), a force that was intended to protect Balochis.²⁹⁴ An appalling lack of mercy is shown to victims, as evidenced by the case of Hayat Mirza who was dragged out of his house by the FC, blindfolded, and shot eight times at point blank range while his parents watched and begged for his life.²⁹⁵ Their cries fell on deaf ears. Such examples prove that women and children are rarely ever spared by Pakistan. 16 year old Ameer Bakhsh and 13 year old Haneef Meran were also found tortured and killed for being related to political activists.²⁹⁶ Many of those disappeared or killed are family or friends of political activists, indicating that Pakistan avoids widespread condemnation by not going after said political activists themselves. However, this means that innocent people are the victims and used as pawns to inflict psychological pain on activists in order to incentivize silence or break their spirits. Last month, June of 2023, saw 35 people go missing and 37 people killed by Pakistan's army, the FC, or ominous deaths attributed to the ISI.²⁹⁷

The death toll can often obfuscate the sheer human suffering inflicted on Balochis. A common practice during (unlawful) searches and detention by armed forces is to drag out the

²⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch. "We Can Torture, Kill, or Keep You for Years." HRW, 3/28/2023, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2011/07/28/we-can-torture-kill-or-keep-you-years/enforced-disappearances-pakistan-security>.; Amnesty International. "Pakistan: End Arbitrary Detention of Mahal Baloch." Accessed 6/10/2023. <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/urgent-actions/end-arbitrary-detention-mahal-baloch>.; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan. "Balochistan's Struggle for Hope: An HRCF Fact-Finding Report ." 2023. <https://hrcp-web.org/hrcpweb/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/2023-Balochistans-Struggle-for-Hope.pdf>.; Human Rights Council of Balochistan. "Balochistan: The State of Human Rights in 2022." 3/28/2023. <https://hrcbalochistan.com/balochistan-the-state-of-human-rights-in-2022/>.

²⁹⁰ Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency.," 18.

²⁹¹ Patel and Sharma, "Enforced Disappearances: A Major Human Rights Issue in Balochistan.," 26.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Patel and Sharma, "Enforced Disappearances: A Major Human Rights Issue in Balochistan.," 29.

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Human Rights Council of Balochistan. "Balochistan: 35 Disappeared, 37 Killed in June." 7/14/2023. <https://hrcbalochistan.com/balochistan-35-disappeared-37-killed-in-june/>.

victim's family members from their homes, violently subdue and assault them with weapons, and sexually assault women and girls who try to resist them.²⁹⁸ These cases, of course, never reach central authority or judiciary bodies. During these assaults, torture and physical abuse is not an exception, rather it is the norm. These military operations have created massive displacement of Balochis, internally and externally.²⁹⁹ Prime examples include Karima Baloch, Sajid Hussain, and Saqib Baloch, all of which claimed political asylum in other countries, but still ended up dead. These brutal responses have incited widespread protests and anger, and vastly increased the perception of injustice being committed against Balochis.³⁰⁰ Women make up a vast number of protesters, vocally opposing the kidnapping, detention, and murder of their brothers, fathers, cousins, uncles, and friends.³⁰¹ Pakistan has also ignored how their continuously brutal response is a primary motivator and driver of radicalization and the turn towards militancy, viewing Pakistan as an unrelenting aggressor and desiring vengeance against the structure that subjugates their lives, people, land, and identity.³⁰² It's also vital to note that even if Kalat and its sister states' accession to Pakistan was legal and valid, everything that occurred to the Baloch people after March of 1948 demonstrated that the indigenous people have a genuine claim to protest against the Pakistani state.

The Role of the US: Recommendations and Opportunities

In the face of a multifaceted insurgency that has extended throughout decades and shows no signs of slowing, it's easy to dismiss the problem of Balochistan as inevitable or unsolvable due to long-standing grievances as Balochi's purported insistence on independence from three modern nation-states. However, it is imperative to remember that Balochis suffers the most from conflict and they have the highest incentive for a sustainable solution.³⁰³ However, any solution must include a genuine resolution to continued Baloch protests with their material realities and the forces that create such conditions. With these prerequisites in mind, there are multiple areas of recommendations that have massive potential to remedy the material grievances of Balochistan. The areas of recommendations are as follows.

²⁹⁸ Patel and Sharma, "Enforced Disappearances: A Major Human Rights Issue in Balochistan.," 27-28,32.

²⁹⁹ Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency.," 18-19.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.; Patel and Sharma, "Enforced Disappearances: A Major Human Rights Issue in Balochistan.," 30.;

³⁰¹ Tanner, "Explaining the Resilience of the Balochistan Insurgency.," 18-19.

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Karlos Zurutuza, "'We Are Suffering Genocide at the Hands of Pakistan': An Interview with BLF Commander Allah Nazar." VICE, 4/15/2015,

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/a39wdk/we-are-suffering-genocide-at-the-hands-of-pakistan-an-interview-with-blf-commander-allah-nazar>.

A Negotiated Settlement

The United States should encourage inclusive dialogue between Baloch community leaders, militant groups, Balochistan's provincial government, and the Pakistani government to address concerns, compromises, and aspirations in order to end the protracted insurgency. Dialogue to end the incentives for the insurgency is a fundamental prerequisite to any conversation between Pakistan and Balochistan's government. Such talks must genuinely address Baloch concerns over their status, treatment, and history in order to break the consistent cycle of distrust and to realign Pakistani and Baloch interests.³⁰⁴ Conversations must not engage in 'whatabout-ism,' that intends to obfuscate the scale and importance of this conflict, rather they must be based in Pakistan's recognition that the 'Bangladesh' route is the logical outcome of the status quo and is the worst case scenario for their nation.³⁰⁵ Similarly, Baloch leaders, civilians, and militants must be convinced that their interests and history can work within the framework of Pakistan, and that being Baloch and Pakistani is not a historical or moral contradiction. Honest channels of communication is a massive step forward to maximize the bargaining process for meaningful negotiations, dialogue, and concessions.

The most likely negotiator in this scenario would be the United States, as other alternatives are definitely less desirable for one or both parties. While some evidence indicates that the U.S. positioning itself as a mediator might be unsuccessful³⁰⁶, it cannot be portrayed as an objective fact. Pakistan is generally open to having the U.S. act as a mediator in its conflict resolution, as indicated by their statements on Indo-Pak tensions.³⁰⁷ Even if the U.S. is not a great mediator, the only viable alternative would be China, who recently flexed their diplomatic muscles by mediating an agreement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, a possibility the U.S. failed to achieve.³⁰⁸ However, there is virtually no chance that Baloch militants, civilians, and leaders would accept China to mediate such negotiations, evidenced by their vehement distrust and

³⁰⁴ Bibi, "Genesis Of Baloch Alienation: Diagnosis and Prognosis.," 178-9.

³⁰⁵ Kaushik and Gour, "Future of Balochistan: Independent Country or Province of Pakistan?," 28-29.; Meenakshi Ganguly, "Engaging in 'Whataboutery' Instead of Protecting Rights." Human Rights Watch, 10/28/2020. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/03/01/engaging-whataboutery-instead-protecting-rights>.

³⁰⁶ Afshan Ahmed, "Analysing Possible Role of USA in Pak-Baloch Conflict." Sustainable Development Policy Institute, November 2012. <https://sdpi.org/sdpiweb/publications/files/WP-128.pdf>.

³⁰⁷ Shafqat Ali, "Pakistan Open to Mediation on Peace with India as US Expresses Availability." The Nation, 3/11/2023, <https://www.nation.com.pk/11-Mar-2023/pakistan-open-to-mediation-on-peace-with-india-as-us-expresses-availability>.

³⁰⁸ Adam Gallagher, Sarhang Hamasaeed, and Garrett Nada. "What You Need to Know about China's Saudi-Iran Deal." United States Institute of Peace, 3/16/2023, <https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/03/what-you-need-know-about-chinas-saudi-iran-deal#:~:text=The%20agreement%20provides%20important%20wins.in%20the%20past%20two%20years>.

perception of China's role in their plight. This represents a rare opportunity for the U.S. to bolster its soft power in South Asia, an area of control that has seen increasing emphasis because of India's role as a middle-power, as well as proving to the world that they are still able to successfully broker negotiations.³⁰⁹ In a region that is generally wary of U.S. intervention, the U.S. can prove they are not the same country that invaded Iraq by brokering a deal that is not only in its own interests as a means to counter China's larger-than-life presence in Pakistan, but also in the interests of stateless human beings fighting state-sanctioned oppression and neglect.³¹⁰ The need for such negotiations is viscerally evident, as this conflict has existed as long as Pakistan has, and the global implications of the conflict mean that it cannot be seen as a low-level insurgency. Rather, it is a mid-level insurgency with existential risks for U.S. and global interests given Balochistan's strategic importance.³¹¹ If this argument seems unconvincing, it's important to consider why have foreign militaries have desired to control this region for centuries? Why have empires cared so much about this region that they were willing to dig their graves here?

The prospects for peace talks have been improving in the last decade despite the insurgency raging on. Many separatists groups have shown their willingness to negotiate with Pakistan and many others have opted to lay down their arms.³¹² In recent negotiations, it was reported that 90% of issues were resolved but they stalled in the last phase.³¹³ This indicates the potential for a settlement in the near-future. Additionally, Imran Khan's government has shown sympathy to the Baloch cause. This is proven by their concession to the protests in Gwadar, as well as nominating the grandson of a militant leader to develop policy in Balochistan.³¹⁴ Despite rhetoric that might indicate the contrary, they are the first government

³⁰⁹ Eddie Walsh, "Baloch Could Divide Administration and Congress on Pakistan Policy." HuffPost, 3/28/2012. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/baloch-could-divide-admin_b_1237440.; Seshadri Chari, "Middle Power Era Is Here. India Can't Afford to Miss the Bus Again." ThePrint, 6/16/2023, <https://theprint.in/opinion/middle-power-era-is-here-india-cant-afford-to-miss-the-bus-again/1628646/>.

³¹⁰ Huma Imtiaz, "US Congressman Tables Bill for Baloch Right to Independence." The Express Tribune, 2/17/2012, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/338079/us-congressman-tables-resolution-calling-for-independence-of-baloch>

³¹¹ Manish Rai, "Baloch Conflict: No Longer a Low-Level Insurgency." Geopolitical Monitor, 10/20/2022, <https://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/baloch-conflict-no-longer-a-low-level-insurgency/>.

³¹² The Express Tribune. "Ex-BLA Militants Ask Baloch Rebels to Lay down Arms." The Express Tribune, 6/11/2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2421249/ex-bla-militants-ask-baloch-rebels-to-lay-down-arms>.

³¹³ Dawn. "Brahamdagh Met Dr Malik Baloch, Discussed Balochistan Issue: BBC Report." DAWN.COM, 11/11/2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1218938>.

³¹⁴ Kriti M. Shah, "The Gwadar Protests: Balochistan Stands up for Its Rights." ORF, 1/13/2022, <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/the-gwadar-protests-balochistan-stands-up-for-its-rights/>.; Ayaz Akbar Yousufzai, "PM Imran Khan Appoints Shahzain Bugti as Special Assistant on Balochistan Reconciliation." thenews, 7/7/2021,

since Yahya Khan to genuinely address the concerns of Balochis and have the potential to break the cycle of distrust that has been generated over the last seven decades. Moreover, Imran Khan is still poised to win elections later this year despite a mass exodus within his party, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf, and can engage in talks that emphasize that it is beneficial for all parties to align their interests.³¹⁵ In other words, Pakistan cannot afford to continue their strategy of repression and neglect and Balochis cannot afford to ignore negotiations in favor of full independence. Intuitively, a settlement and cessation of fighting would immediately improve the socio-economic conditions of the people.³¹⁶

Devolution of Authority

The United States should encourage the Pakistani government and Balochistan's provincial government to devise a power-sharing agreement that involves the devolution of authority over designated policy and decision-making matters in order to grant greater autonomy and self-determination to the Baloch people. There are many different methods that can be developed, with scholars arguing for different versions of the same general idea. It could look like a cooperative federalist approach, or a loose federation system where Balochistan adheres to a few policy areas controlled by Pakistan and collaboration on other areas.³¹⁷ This is similar to the Lahore Resolution of 1940, which fizzled out of relevance with the events of partition. As a result, community-led movements focused on secularism, democracy, and equity would be treated seriously and can guide the development of the province politically and economically.

Some may argue this recommendation is extreme, but it is required for the province to see development and peace, as it speaks to a primary disagreement that explains why the conflict exists and why the region is so neglected.³¹⁸ The argument is not that Balochistan

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/860859-pm-imran-khan-appoints-shahzain-bugti-as-special-assistant-on-balochistan-reconciliation>.

³¹⁵ Tom Hussain and Maria Siow. "Pakistan Seeks Peace with Baloch Rebels, with China and Afghanistan on Its Mind." South China Morning Post, 8/16/2021, https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3141121/pakistan-seeks-peace-balochistan-china-and-afghanistan-its-mind?module=perpetual_scroll_0&pgtype=article&campaign=3141121.; Dawn. "PM Imran Says He Is Considering 'talking to Insurgents' in Balochistan." DAWN.COM, 7/5/2021, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1633359>.; Adil Shahzeb, "Balochistan Rebel Leader Brahamdagh Bugti 'Ready to Talk.'" BBC News, 8/27/2015, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34077864>.

³¹⁶ International Collective in Support of Fishworkers. "Pakistan: Finding Peace through Socio-Economic Development in Balochistan." ICSF. Accessed June 2, 2023. <https://www.icsf.net/newss/pakistan-finding-peace-through-socio-economic-development-in-balochistan/>.

³¹⁷ Sadia Ashraf and Aisha Shahzad. "Federalism and Provincial Autonomy in Pakistan: A Case of Balochistan." *Pakistan Social Sciences Review* 4, no. III (September 2020): 30-34. [https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2020\(4-iii\)03](https://doi.org/10.35484/pssr.2020(4-iii)03).

³¹⁸ Ibid.

should be treated as a different country within Pakistan or that the provincial and central governments should seek a partial divorce. Rather, there are systems that were created to serve the Baloch people but have only existed to oppress them. A prime example of this is the FC, which operates in Balochistan and KPK and was intended to preserve law and order, but instead functions as an invading force used to harass and kill Baloch dissidents. In order for Balochistan to experience peace, the internal character of such structures must be transformed to serve, not suppress, the Baloch people.

Independence is not an ideal recommendation for a few reasons. First, Balochistan is split between Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, so full independence would necessitate trilateral talks between states who have existing conflicts with one another and are too distracted with their overall security situation. Anything other than independence of greater Balochistan negates and undermines the Baloch position that *all* of the land has been home to Balochis for centuries. Second, Pakistan would rather fight a civil war to keep Balochistan rather than outright accept independence given its strategic importance. A complete severance of relations would see Pakistan losing over 40% of its land, access to natural resources, foreign investments from China, and would create another unfriendly nation at its borders. Third, Baloch people themselves are split on the question of independence.³¹⁹ While it has existed as a demand among certain groups, recent demands and proposals to resolve the conflict have stayed away from advocating independence. Even many militant leaders support some sort of devolution of authority over independence. Activists, politicians, sardars, and civilians can't seem to agree on which option is most preferable but acknowledge that something must be done. It is important to note that this doesn't preclude a partition in the future depending on future events, but the recommendations listed are to address the indigenous and human rights issues plaguing Balochistan opposed to listing vehicles for Baloch statecraft.

Substantial Material Reforms

The United States should encourage the equitable distribution of natural resources and business deals, including infrastructure and mega projects, revenue from resources, and political attention towards Balochistan. The United States should implement targeted employment and development programs that uplift the socio-economic conditions of the province, in conjunction with CPEC. The United States should encourage Pakistan to uphold its own human rights standards and adhere to the rule of law in Balochistan, necessitating the end

³¹⁹ Khaleej Times. "Only 37% Baloch Favour Independence: UK Survey." Khaleej Times, 4/3/2015, <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/world/only-37-baloch-favour-independence-uk-survey>.

of forced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, torture, and political repression. These policies should act on the genuine grievances of the Baloch people in the status quo.

Someone who might not understand the full history of Balochistan might view the current conditions of the province and believe it was a region that was always destined to suffer. However, it is essential to remember that this is not the case, and Balochistan could've experienced immense economic progress since 1948. The province's problems are a result of deliberate economic neglect and violent repression of anyone speaking out against Pakistan's military, ISI, or government and their treatment of Balochistan. This is especially true given the value Baloch lands provide Islamabad.

Pakistan can create trade schools to encourage Balochis to become employed and experience economic development through mega projects like CPEC. Many scholars boasted the potential for CPEC to help the province, and while they are correct on paper, in practice, Balochis have continued to be ignored and neglected.³²⁰ With the implementation of such economic policies as well as the restructuring of business deals that currently favor foreign or Pakistani army companies to give more to Balochis, the real benefits of CPEC can be exacted. These policies would strengthen key global industries like gas in Pakistan while improving the material conditions of the people.³²¹ Additionally, the cessation of conflict removes one of the largest barriers to China's investment and can experience more rapid development than what has occurred in the past two decades.

Pakistan's human rights record in the region has been atrocious and must be altered. This could be enforced through different legal mechanisms that the U.S. has at its disposal, such as initiative action within the U.N. Security Council, canceling military support via triggering the Leahy laws, or a quid-pro-quo agreement with Islamabad. It is easy to argue that Pakistan would never adhere to such policies, but it's important to remember that Islamabad has been in this situation before with Bangladesh. Absent a new era of human rights policy in the region, the insurgent and economic problems will persist, and Pakistan will eventually become reduced to a lump called Punjab.³²²

Investing in a Cultural Renaissance

³²⁰ Hashmat Ullah Khan and Shan Yu. "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Meeting Security Challenges in Balochistan through Trade and Development." *MGIMO Review of International Relations* 15, no. 5 (2022): 135-49. <https://doi.org/10.24833/2071-8160-2022-5-86-135-149>.

³²¹ Ibid.

³²² ANI News Agency. "If Pakistan Continues Ethnic Cleansing, It Will Be Reduced to a Hump Called 'Punjab': Defence Experts." *The Indian Express*, 1/14/2017, <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/if-pakistan-continues-ethnic-cleansing-it-will-remain-a-hump-called-punjab-defence-experts/>.

The United States should work with the Pakistani government and Balochistan's provincial government to legally promote and protect the languages in Balochistan, as well as their rich traditions, history, and mythology. The United States should, in coordination with Baloch-American and other organizations of the Baloch diaspora, encourage education, diplomatic, and media efforts to raise awareness for the Baloch struggle. These recommendations would affirm the Baloch identity as one that is historically significant, essential to the creation of Pakistan, and strengthen the multi-ethnic fabric of Pakistan.

The perception and fear of being removed and replaced from their indigenous homeland has motivated not only conflict, but also the lack of initiative to cooperate and integrate themselves within the fabric of the country. Despite Pakistan's insistence that the different ethnicities of the nation makes it stronger under the banner of Islam, their actions indicate something quite different. It is in Pakistan's interest to create a public campaign to convince Balochis that their ethnicity and national identity are not contradictory and work in tandem to define their lineage. Rather than use Baloch songs, poets, and politicians in a way that equates to lip-service, the history of the people, language, and traditions should be holistically embraced.

Wider knowledge and awareness of the conflict in Balochistan as well as the material conditions of the province would galvanize international pressure on Pakistan to alter their approach to governance and realize that their strategy is unsustainable. The media is a particularly powerful tool here to capture the hearts and minds of not only other Pakistanis within the country and abroad but international citizens as well.³²³ There is no reason why Balochistan should be marginalized as an issue. It should be discussed and be on the same level as Palestinian or Kashmiri liberation, especially to Muslims in America and the world.

Additionally, Pakistan has been able to avoid broad publicization and accountability for its treatment of Balochis with the excuse that it is purely a domestic issue that other nations do not and should not concern themselves with.³²⁴ Not only does this contradict the parallel claims by Pakistan that other nations like India are aiding the insurgents, definitionally creating a scenario that transcend the bounds of domestic duties, but it also is not founded in reality and modern international relations governed by international treaties. The Gambia's case in the International Court of Justice against Myanmar for its treatment of Rohingya Muslims reaffirmed the idea that nations can and should hold others accountable to their international treaty

³²³ Babrak Niaz, Ali Hassan, and Sadaf Irtaza. "Role of Media in Minimizing Religious Extremism and Ethnic Instability in Balochistan, Pakistan." *Global Regional Review* V, no. IV (2020): 15-20. [https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2020\(v-iv\).02](https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2020(v-iv).02).

³²⁴ Marco Mezzera, "The Desperate Need for a Peace Initiative in Pakistan's Baluchistan Province." Agency for Peacebuilding, 10/15/2022, <https://www.peaceagency.org/desperate-need-for-a-peace-initiative-in-pakistan/>.

obligations, and Pakistan should not be treated differently.³²⁵ Wider awareness for Balochistan functionally removes this as an excuse in Pakistan's arsenal.

Conclusion

Over 70 years after the Khanates' aspirations to become a full-fledged nation-state dissolved into thin air, to say that the position of the Baloch and Balochistan has deteriorated significantly is a severe understatement. Despite still being marginalized from hegemonic narratives, the similar occupation stories of Palestine, Kashmir, and Kurdistan are much more well-known to the global and Muslim populace compared to Balochistan. The situation in Pakistan's southwest region represents a human struggle for equality, dignity, honor, and freedom, rights that all human beings deserve by virtue of their existence. Rather than play into Islamabad's hands by obscuring Baloch grievances against the state through propaganda, violently silencing criticism, and arguments framing the issues as purely domestic, Americans and American Muslims should stand firmly on the side of Balochistan's indigenous people. Anything else goes against our Islamic values that uphold the virtue of every individual, regardless of background, and threatens the Baloch with extinction in the near future. Independently, awareness around the history and issues of Balochistan and its relationship with Islamabad is essential to push the needle and pressure the forces subjugating Balochistan to back down, or at the very least, face backlash when they murder children, torture activists, and assassinate overseas dissenters.

³²⁵ Opinio Juris, "The Gambia v Myanmar at the International Court of Justice: Points of Interest in the Application." 11/14/2019, <http://opiniojuris.org/2019/11/13/the-gambia-v-myanmar-at-the-international-court-of-justice-points-of-interest-in-the-application/>.

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<https://www.asianimage.co.uk/news/15560550.china-pak-investment-corporation-announces-plans-for-111m-gated-community-build-in-pakistan/>.

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