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# Genesis Of Baloch Alienation: Diagnosis and Prognosis

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*This study was conducted to highlight the numerous factors active behind Baloch insurgency. Data was collected from the existing literature and, besides, Baloch nationalists, politicians, and those fighting for independent Balochistan were interviewed through semi-structured interviews. For data analysis, the tool of Thematic Analysis, developed by Braun and Clarke (2015), was used. The findings of the study highlight some political, economic, ethnic and ideological factors flaring up militancy and insurgency in Balochistan. Sardari system, poverty, illiteracy, the petty share in national economy, inaccessibility to clean water, food, health, educational and other public amenities are causing Baloch grievances. The lack of political resolve along with immature handling of the security issues have averted its resource-richness turning it a major problem for Pakistan. The political turmoil and the deteriorating security situation has not only impeded the development of the anterior malnourished province, but also retarded many mega projects of national interest indispensable for the national prosperity. In the light of the findings of the study, the author recommends the timely redressal of the Baloch grievances and the restitution of the trust which, in turn, will ensue sustainable and lasting peace in the region.*

**Key Words:** Balochistan, politics, insurgency, ethnicity, prosperity

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## Introduction

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan — a developing state — inherited, at the time of its inception, multifaceted issues and challenges viz. economic, political, social, infrastructural, professional, constitutional, geographical, statal, etc. Although some of these issues were resolved in the course of time, others warped and contorted further aggravating the worrisome state of affairs. For Muhammad (2014), Pernicious in the truest sense, these national and international challenges have gravely hampered the smooth development and prosperity of Pakistan.

Amidst these obnoxious and withering issues, the geopolitical issues are more precarious jeopardizing the national sovereignty of Pakistan. Albeit a federation state, there is an acute trust deficit between the centre, videlicet Islamabad, and the units, viz. Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan (Ismail, 2004). In a span of seventy years — roughly speaking — Pakistan has witnessed the eruption of insurgency in Baluchistan around four times.

Baluchistan — the largest unit of Pakistan in terms of area — have had a chequered political history since the inception of Pakistan posing earnest threats to the centre (Bansal, 2008). Perceived as secessionist movements and conspiracy against the ideological and geographical frontiers of Pakistan, not less than five times in 1948, 1950, 1960s, 1970s and 2004, Baloch insurgency erupted paving the way for military intervention. Presently, Baloch insurgency is amidst the gravest challenges looming over Pakistan (Grare, 2013).

According to Macmunn (1931), Baloch as a nation and Balochistan as a land are rich in history. Ethnologically, Balochistan has three ethnic groups viz. Bloch, Pashtoon and Brahui speaking distinctive languages. Maari, Bhugti, Domki, and Leghari are the main tribes of Baloch nation. This ethnological diversity has made Balochistan — albeit carrying a homogenous name — a heterogeneous unit (Samad, 2014). Both, the Balochis and non-Balochis, reside in Balochistan. Despite the difference in their languages, their cultural heritage, customs, traditions, values, manners, dress music, food, poetry, sports, rituals, ceremonies, beliefs, likes and dislikes, are alike.

In terms of area, Balochistan is the largest unit of Pakistan making 44% of the total area of Pakistan, whereas smallest in terms of population. Balochistan shares its borders with Iran, Afghanistan, Punjab, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Arabian Sea. According to the 2017 census, Balochistan makes only 5.9% of the total population of the country. Geographically, Balochistan is divided into four distinctive regions, namely Upper Highland: locally known as Khursa, it lies in the north-east and central part of Balochistan; Lower Highland: this mountainous range extends from Makran coast up to Afghanistan; Plains: the two raised plains or plateau are Quetta Valley and Kalat; and, Deserts: the extension of the Iranian Seistan and Dusht-i-Lut, the desert Kharan is located in the north-west.

After the mutual proclamation of Baloch Sardars and Mirs to join the dominion of Pakistan, trust-deficit widened between the Mirs and Sardars of Balochistan and political-cum-establishment administration (Rooney, 2010). On the directives of

Iskandar Mirza — the then President of Pakistan — On October 06, 1958, under the treason charges of conspiracy to secede from Pakistan, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan — the last Khan of Kalat, a princely state within the dominion of Pakistan — was arrested. His detention sparked the fury of Baloch nationalism. Anti-government protests and demonstrations were held across the province with nationalism further immersing into the aloof leftover masses. The revolts continued for several weeks deteriorating the simmering situation. Hitherto, with the seeds of insurgency and militancy sowed, at the end of the imbroglio, the remnants of patriotism vanished and swapped with treachery and abhorrence among the Balochi masses.

According to Wirsing (2012), despite a resource-rich province, Balochistan has remained the least developed province marginalized throughout history. Insurgency in Balochistan is both complex and multifaceted with different political, ethnic, economic and administrative factors behind it. For the author, ethnicity, illiteracy, poor political representation, unjust distribution of resources are the factors sparking Baloch insurgency.

According to Tariq (2013), geopolitically, geostrategically and geoeconomically, Balochistan is ultra significant. However, In the course of its post-independence history, Balochistan has suffered 04 waves of insurgency. In the repercussions of the insurgency, killing, abduction and disappearance of the freedom-fighters and leaders have ensued. According to Bansal (2006), the lack of basic amenities like access to education, health-units have multiplied Baloch's grievances. Besides, owing to the waxing investment of foreign investors, many Balochis fear their homeland to be the future colony of China. For Jaleel and Bibi (2017), Balochistan has the longest coastline, mass reserves of natural gas, oil, fuel, gold, lead, copper, zinc, etc. Despite the significant role Balochistan plays in the revenue generation of Pakistan, the province has been marginalized downright. According to Javaid (2010), the lack of development and the exploitation of resources in Balochistan have worsened Baloch grievances.

In his report, Khan (2009) have limelighted the complex-cum-nuanced Baloch insurgency. The local grievances coupled with the incitation of some foreign actors have incited Baloch insurgents to target security personals and government installations on the pretext of their resentment. Owing to the tense relation of Islamabad with Iran, India and Afghanistan, these foreign actors are conspiring to escalate war and riot in Pakistan inciting Baloch insurgency. Besides, for Cheema (2013), Balochistan — being the least developed and marginalized unit — lacks basic amenities like clean water, infrastructure, employment opportunities and just utilization of resources exacerbating public grievances.

### **Research objectives**

The main objectives of the study are:

- To investigate historical stimuli behind the Baloch problem in the post colonial era
- To describe Baloch narratives of various events of distrust and rebellion
- The explain the narrative of government about Baloch insurgency

- To find out main causes prevailing behind lawlessness, alienation and mistrust of Baloch masses
- To suggest ways for the restitution of peace and stability in the area

### **Research Methodology**

The current study — being descriptive and historical in nature — is based on secondary and primary data. The secondary source of information was the existing literature. Data was collected from the existing literature and, besides, Baloch nationalists, politicians, and those fighting for independent Balochistan were interviewed through semi-structured interviews. For data analysis, the tool of Thematic Analysis, developed by Braun and Clarke (2015), was used

### **Genesis of the Baloch Alienation**

Multifaceted in nature, the causative factors are multi-institutional viz. ideological, political, economic and ethnic. The phenomenon varies for different stakeholders. For some, it is Baloch nationalism, for others, sheer militancy, for a few, secessionist movements, and, yet, for many, attempts for provincial autonomy. In order to comprehend the scenario properly, below the different waves of Baloch insurgency are discussed chronologically.

#### **Accession of the Princely State of Kalat and the First Baloch Insurgency**

The first revolt against Pakistan was led by Sardar Abdul Karim — Khan of Kalat's brother — over the accession of Kalat to the newly established Dominion of Pakistan. As per the Indian Independence Act 1947, all the Princely States in Subcontinent were offered only two options, to wit, either to join the dominion of Pakistan or India inclusive of the two facts, namely the geographical location and will of its people. Like many others, the Princely State of Balochistan was reluctant to do so and wanted to remain independent. However, after scores of struggles, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan — the then Khan of Kalat — joined the dominion of Pakistan. However, aggrieved over this accession, Prince Abdul Karim revolted against Pakistan. Supported by Afghanistan, the Prince fought a guerrilla war against Pakistan. Marking the first ever threat to the ideological and geographical frontiers of Pakistan, this insurgency was tackled tactically by the military crushing the dissenters.

#### **One Unit Scheme and the Second Baloch Insurgency**

The second Baloch revolt started over the One Unit Scheme proposed by Iskander Mirza — the then president of Pakistan — and Khwaja Nazim Udin — the then Premier of the country. This move was taken by the federal government to merge all the four provinces of the Western Pakistan into one homogenous unit as a counterpoise against the numerical domination of the Bengalis, the ethnic group residing in East Pakistan — today's Bangladesh. Some of the Baloch leaders deposed this move of provincial merger. Besides, simultaneously, Baloch people

and leader were lamenting the miserable state of affairs in Balochistan and demanding the government for developmental projects. However, deaf to these demands and grievances, the establishment and key stakeholders did not heed. Then, the government had adopted the policy of condonement regarding Balochistan. Consequently, the poverty-stricken Balochs — weary of the fatigues and discrimination — girded up their loins and armed themselves against Pakistan. In the course of this ongoing insurgency, General Ayub Khan, the then first Martial Administrator, beleaguered the belligerent Baloch separatists. The insurgents were beset with lethality ensuing immensurable human, economic and infrastructural loss.

As a result of the insurgency and military intervention, the army installed new military cantonments in the key areas of Balochistan, which, in turn, exacerbated the sense of Baloch nationalism.

### **Dissolution of the Provincial Government and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Baloch Insurgency**

In 1970, owing to the dissolution of the provincial government, 3<sup>rd</sup> insurgency fomented ultimately ensuing military intervention. A number of political factors prompted Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to dissolve the provincial government of Balochistan. In the elections of 1970, National Awami Party — the new political party dominated in the Pashtoon built — had bagged more seats upsetting the political ambitions of Bhutto. Besides, some attacks on the government figures widened the chasm between Quetta and Islamabad. Above all, in the mid of this devastating political situation, sums of weapons of mass destruction were recovered from the Iraqi Embassy in Pakistan. The government elements perceived the weaponry piling as preparation for Baloch insurgency against Pakistan. The government launched military operation against the rebels and dismissed the provincial government of Atta Ullah Mengal. These acts of violence, against the insurgents, further deteriorated the situation immersing the sense of nationalism in Balochis. The unresolved issues, coupled with the harm inflicted by military and government in the heat of war, multiplied the antagonistic-cum-antigovernment pulses of the Balochis propagating their resentment and indignation.

### **Abolition of the Sardari System and the Fourth Baloch Insurgency**

In 1976, in a move to hunt down the oppression of Sardars who had kept the masses around uneducated and undeveloped in order to be exploited easily, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto started building schools, hospitals and roads in Balochistan. Derogatory and repugnant in its spirit, this move was planned to annihilate Sardari System hampering the political, economic and social advancement of the people. Resented and aggrieved over their waning hold on the masses, Sardars, Chieftains and Mirs positively confronted and defied the act of the abolition of Sardari System. The indignation caused by this move coupled with the resentment ensued by the 1970's dissolution of the provincial government of Atta Ullah Mengal, flared up Baloch nationalism. Consequently, some fifty thousand insurgents were fighting against military personals besides targeting government installations.

### **The Musharaf Government and the 4<sup>th</sup> Wave of Baloch Insurgency**

The 4<sup>th</sup> wave of insurgency flared up in Balochistan during Musharaf's era. Coupled with the previous grievances, the mega Gawadar Project, a deep sea port constructed by Islamabad and Beijing in a joint venture, led the Balochis to take up arms against Pakistan. In the storm of the war, led by Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti and Mir Baloch Marri, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) and People's Liberation Army (PLA) openly fought against Pakistan army. Bomb blasts, use of rockets, kidnapping of Chinese and government figures, targeting government installations, and the frequent supply-lines cutoff virtually paralyzed Balochistan. The war reached its apogee on August 26, 2006 when the military wing killed Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti causing serious implications for Pakistan. In reprisal, the anti-Punjab sentiments grew. Afterwards, the federal government has been facing stern opposition from Balochistan on all political fronts.

### **Political and Economic factors behind Baloch Insurgency**

The findings of the study infer that — besides the ideological and ethnic issues — numerous political and economic factors are flaring up Baloch insurgency. Albeit a resource-rich province, Balochistan is the least developed unit of Pakistan. Education, health services, infrastructure, clean water, roads, opportunities of employment, etc. are wanting in Balochistan. Poverty has been parent to crimes in Balochistan. It, coupled with unemployment, has ensued militancy in the area. In poor socio-economic situation, propaganda by the anti-state elements finds large audience. Besides, Balochis resent and aggrieve the utilization of Balochistan's resources by the government. They are struggling for greater share in these resources.

### **Conclusion**

Balochistan holds key to the future of Pakistan's prosperity. The lack of political resolve along with immature handling of the security issues have averted its resource-richness turning it a major problem for Pakistan. The findings of the study highlight some political, economic, ethnic and ideological factors flaring up militancy and insurgency in Balochistan. Sardari system, poverty, illiteracy, the petty share in national economy, inaccessibility to clean water, food, health, educational and other public amenities are causing Baloch grievances. The political turmoil and the deteriorating security situation has not only impeded the development of the anterior malnourished province, but also retarded many mega projects of national interest indispensable for the national prosperity. Only the timely redressal of the Baloch grievances and the restitution of the trust can ensue sustainable and lasting peace in the region.

### **Recommendation**

In the light of the findings, the author recommends that:

1. The Balochis should be ensured that they wouldn't be converted into minority on their homeland.
2. The due royalty of Balochistan in the natural resources of Pakistan should be guaranteed.
3. More opportunities of employment should be produced for Baloch nationals.
4. Federal encroachments in provincial matters must vanish both in letter and spirit.
5. The issue of the missing persons shall be resolved.
6. Target killing must be stopped.
7. Balochistan should be incorporated into mainstream national life by long term population friendly policies.
8. All stake holders should be involved to annihilate the trust deficit between Balochis and Pakistan.
9. Poverty reduction program shall be launched for the province.
10. Education and literacy shall be boosted up in the province.
11. The government should ensure the availability of free and easily accessible public amenities.
12. The law enforcing agencies should ensure peace in the area.

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