

# YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN BALOCHISTAN INSURGENCY



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# YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN BALOCHISTAN INSURGENCY



**“Thesis submitted to the Department of Pakistan Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, for the partial fulfillment of the Master of Philosophy in Pakistan Studies”.**

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### **Author's Declaration**

I submit that the dissertation presently submitted bearing the title “**Youth Participation in Balochistan Insurgency**” is produced as a result of researcher's own hard work and has not been submitted to any other university for consideration of a different degree.

**Laiba Khan Saleem**

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Laiba Khan Saleem

***DEDICATED TO YOUTH OF BALOCHISTAN***

## **Abbreviations:**

BLA	Baloch Liberation Army
BRA	Baloch Republican Army
BNA	Baloch National Army
BSO-A	Baloch Students Organization-Azad
BHRO	Baloch Human Rights Organization
WBWF	World Baloch Women Forum
BSO	Baloch Students Organization
BLF	Balochistan Liberation Front
CPEC	China Pakistan Economic Corridor
CCI	Council of Common Interests
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
NDS	National Directorate of Security
NAP	National Awami Party
NFC	National Finance Commission
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
PSA	Port of Singapore Authority
RAW	Research and Analysis Wing
UBA	United Baloch Army

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Figure 1: Bahot Baloch Tweet

Figure2: The Balochistan Post, Twitter Account

## **Abstract**

*The thesis deals with the participation of youth in the Balochistan insurgency. The history of Balochistan is a set of historical, socio-economic, and political grievances. This thesis explains the causes of the Balochistan insurgency and how today's youth perceive it. For this purpose, interviews were conducted with students of Balochistan to understand the factors that are motivating youth to join banned outfits. The participation of women in insurgency is a new phenomenon. It has brought new dimensions to this struggle with many challenges and impacts. The thesis also discusses the involvement of women in insurgency and how it will impact the Baloch national movement. Finally, it discusses the challenges in the way of the peace process and tries to address how conflict can be managed in Balochistan.*



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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **Introduction**

Pakistan came into being on 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1947 but inability and unwillingness of the state to accept ethnic diversities have created problems for it. This is obvious as soon after independence almost all ethnic groups began to contest because there was more emphasis on Islam as it was considered the main criterion for Pakistaniyat.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Pakistan's biggest but least populous province, Balochistan has been in conflict with the state since its independence. The conflict is multifaceted as it involves socio-economic and political factors. The denial of national rights along with systematic exclusion from political and economic domains has fueled the national sentiments of the Baloch nation. However, the problem of Balochistan is different in the sense that it was not ready to be part of Pakistan. The accession was done forcefully that is why the Pakistani state faced great resistance from people of Balochistan. The first revolt took place in 1948 by Prince Abdul Karim Khan against the forceful accession of Balochistan with Pakistan. It was followed by insurgencies in 1955, 1963, 1973, and 2006.

The current phase of insurgency escalated after the death of Nawab Akbar Bugti. It gained momentum in 2019 and is becoming more violent with time. Unlike previous insurgencies, this insurgency is largely led by middle-class educated Baloch youth which is a matter of great concern. The involvement of youth in the Balochistan insurgency has raised a lot of questions. The youth of Balochistan is mainly divided into two groups i.e. federalists and radicals. The ones who support the state's stance are of the view that the writ of the state should not be challenged

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<sup>1</sup>.Sheikh, Salman Rafi. Genesis of Baloch Nationalism: Politics and Ethnicity in Pakistan, 1947-1977. S.I.: Routledge India, 2020..

while the latter are radical in their approach but there is a difference between what they say and what they do. The details of these groups will be discussed later in the dissertation.

In the year 2022, Pakistan suffered 376 terrorist attacks out of which banned outfits including the Baloch liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch National Army (BNA) claimed responsibility for 14.. Balochistan suffered from 26pc of terror-related fatalities<sup>2</sup>. Three main incidents took place in 2022, which clearly show how increased access to a wide range of armaments has escalated the conflict. An incident took place on Christmas day (2022) when the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) coordinated five bomb attacks in the cities of Turbat, Kahan, Gwadar, and Quetta in which six Pakistani security personnel were killed. Moreover, on August 1, 2022, the Pakistan military's helicopter crashed in southwestern Balochistan in which six senior officers, including major generals and lieutenant generals, were killed.

Baloch national movement is a secular struggle and involves the participation of women as well. Leading the protests and making the movement of Baloch missing persons one of the biggest movements led by women, Baloch women are now participating in the insurgency directly from the battlefield. There is very little literature on the participation of women in insurgency. If we see the role of Baloch women in a feudal society like Balochistan, their role was very limited. Women were confined to their homes but since the start of the 21st century, this trend is being changed. Now women are not leaving their homes to get an education and seek jobs but are also playing their role in Balochistan national movement. From leading protests and raising their voice against state oppression, Baloch women are supporting their brethren in every possible way.

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<sup>2</sup> Rana, Muhammad Amir. —AInsurgency Restructured.” Dawn, March 20, 2022.

There is a history of Baloch women who have participated in nationalist struggle. However, their involvement and experiences have been diverse and often overlooked in official narratives. With time the nature of women's participation has changed. Initially, few women talked about the state crimes and brutalities but as the form of state suppression and repression changed, the nature of women's participation also changed. They have been involved in organizing political platforms such as the Baloch Students Organization-Azad (BSO-A) women's wing, the Baloch Human Rights Organization (BHRO) and Baloch Khawateen Panel. Women have also been active in cultural and literary spheres, using poetry, art, and music to express their experiences and aspirations. This can be witnessed as the missing person movement in Balochistan is a women's movement. In today's era, many Baloch women are actively participating. Among them, Sammi Baloch, Farzana Majeed, and Mahrang Baloch are prominent faces.<sup>3</sup> However, women's involvement in Baloch nationalist movements has also been constrained by patriarchal norms and practices, as well as by state repression and violence. Women who participate in armed resistance or political activism face particular risks and challenges, including sexual violence, harassment, and arbitrary detention. Women's perspectives and experiences have also been marginalized within some nationalist movements, where male leaders may dominate decision-making and discourse.

However, militant organizations including Baloch Republican Army (BRA) and the Baloch liberation Army (BLA) do claim that they have women's wings. The founder of BRA, Allah Nazar Baloch was of the view that women should participate directly in the insurgency. In one of the conferences talking to students, he said — appeal to my sisters if in Palestine, Leila Khaled can pick up arms then can't my sisters do the same? They should play Leila Khaled's role. If the

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<sup>3</sup>Mehmood, Rabia. —The Women Fighting Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan.” The Friday Times, March 23, 2023.

Iron Lady Margaret Thatcher can govern Great Britain, if Tansu Ciller can govern Turkey, if Indira Gandhi can govern India, then don't my sisters have the same talent and capability? They should play their role because this is the demand of the times. History is not written just for men. Both men and women make up the history of any nation.”<sup>4</sup> But it seems that the words of Allah Nazar Baloch are becoming real as it is evident by the recent attacks of women in Karachi and Turbat. Moreover, the press release by media wing of BLA shows the presence of women in their Majeed brigade.<sup>5</sup>

The main incident in this regard is the attack that brought a new chapter in the nationalist struggle that happened on 26 April 2022, when a female Baloch insurgent Shari Baloch, appeared as a suicide bomber. She targeted a van outside Karachi University. In the attack, three Chinese and a Pakistani driver lost their lives.<sup>6</sup> This case was unique in terms of insurgency, as before this attack, the role of women was limited. They were only restricted to taking part in protests and leading political and national movements. These kinds of incidents act as a catalyst in the nationalist struggle because they play an important role in the shaping of public opinion.

Historically, there were few Baloch women like Mehnaz, Hani, and Giran Naz who stood against the Baloch customs and rituals prevalent at that time. Regarding war, there were two Baloch women Bibi Bebo and Bibi Bano who came into the battlefield along with their brothers and not only guided the forces for the attack but also boost their morale on the battlefield.<sup>7</sup> About the Baloch nationalist struggle after its accession with Pakistan, Baloch women became active in the first decade of the 21st century. Naela Quadri, who was an assistant professor at the University

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<sup>4</sup> Desmukh, Fahad. —Baloch Women Taking More Prominent Role in Fight for Independence from Pakistan.” The World, July 17, 2013.

<sup>5</sup> See tweet of Balochistan post-English on 26 June, 2023

<sup>6</sup> Hassan, Maha. —Assumptions in Counterterrorism: Understanding the Case of Shari Baloch.” South Asian Voices, August 5, 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Baloch, Panah. Baloch Aurat Tareekhi Manazar Mein. Quetta, Pakistan: Goshaeadab, 2019.

of Balochistan, was the most prominent female leader at that time who raised voice for the suppressed people of Balochistan. In her interviews, she mentioned that her aim was not to bring change in Baloch nationalist struggle but in Baloch society where the role of women is limited. She is head of the World Baloch Women Forum (WBWF), a platform to raise her voice against the atrocities of the Pakistani state. In an interview in 2017, she said –Over the past seven decades, the Baloch of Pakistan have suffered all imaginable crimes against humanity including the dishonor of women. Baloch women have suffered doubly, running their households in the absence of their men folk and suffering abduction, torture, rape, and murder at the hands of the Pakistan army”.<sup>8</sup>The atrocities committed by the Pakistani state have created space for Baloch women to participate in the national struggle. One other example of this kind of participation was that of Karima Baloch, who joined the Baloch Student Organization (BSO) in 2005 and later became its chairperson in 2015. She highlighted the issue of missing persons and how human rights are being violated by the Pakistani state and the military in Balochistan. She was found dead on 22 December 2020 in Toronto. Her struggle for the rights of the Baloch people came through political means.

Nevertheless, the case of Shari Baloch is different from other cases as it was for the very first time that a female participated directly. This attack has added a new chapter to Balochistan Insurgency. The interview of Shari Baloch released by the BLA highlights different issues. She called the Pakistani state a –rueful state” that has forcefully occupied the Baloch land and snatched the basic rights from Baloch people in this modern era and is increasing its brutalities just to make its hold strong. She rose a question "Why people of Balochistan are so helpless just

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<sup>8</sup> Women Are Pak’s Favorite Tool to Silence Dissidents’ - Ani News.” ANI, December 31, 2017. <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/women-are-paks-favourite-tool-to-silence-dissidents201712310831400001/>.

to get a piece of bread, despite being owners of such resourceful land."<sup>9</sup> She indicated that revolutionary thoughts alone are not enough to solve the problem, and Baloch people need to take practical steps. She encouraged women to participate in a war of liberation and stand shoulder-to-shoulder with their brothers in this struggle. She claimed that her step will motivate other women to participate in this resistance. Shari's direct involvement in resistance has raised a lot of questions regarding the role of women in the Balochistan insurgency because she has not only opened the doors for women to directly become part of banned outfits and play their part but also motivated them to do so.

Balochistan is considered the least understood political problem in Pakistan. The state has always tried to suppress the Baloch people through military means. The political and military interventions by the state have made the problem worse and have left no space for conflict management.

### **Statement of the Problem**

There has been debate on the crisis of Balochistan and the involvement of youth in Balochistan insurgency but existing literature fails to find the answer of the question why the educated youth of Balochistan is joining the banned outfits? The participation of youth in the Balochistan insurgency is increasing with the passage of time. The existing literature discusses the causes of the Balochistan insurgency, and the role of the state in adding fuel to the fire, but it does not focus on the role of women. The part played by the women in Baloch national movement is completely denied. This research aims to provide information regarding youth participation with its emphasis on the role of women.

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<sup>9</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kr5s5sChsgY>

## **Main Research Question**

- Why the educated youth (men and women) of Balochistan is joining the banned outfits?
- What will be the impact of women involvement in Baloch national movement?
- How the conflict between the state and insurgents can be managed?

## **Hypothesis**

In Balochistan, a region plagued by social injustices, frustration, and deprivation of basic rights, the enthusiasm for the freedom of their land has driven some young individuals to join banned outfits.

The Baloch national movement is a political movement and the inclusion of women in this struggle seems to strengthen the Baloch cause with diverse perspectives and greater resilience.

Winning the trust of local people and involving them in decision making process can help in management of conflict.

## **Scope and Significance of Study**

The research will help to identify the causes of youth participation in the Balochistan insurgency. It will also discuss the historical factors that favor the rise of insurgent movements and why the educated youth have reached to the point of no return. It will also highlight the involvement of women in the Balochistan insurgency, which is entirely a new domain. It will not only talk about the problem but will also propose solutions for conflict management.



### **Limitation of the Study:**

The following are the limitations to proposed study. It will only focus on the participation of youth in Balochistan insurgency, the causes of Balochistan insurgency and ways to cope with the conflict. The research aims to focus on the reasons or circumstances that are provoking youth to join banned outfits. However, the interviews were not conducted in Balochistan largely due to the difficulty in accessing conflict-ridden areas. Furthermore, the sample size of my research could be viewed as a limitation. The students of Quaid-e-Azam University were only interviewed for this research. The reason for interviewing the students of Quaid-e-Azam University is discussed in the portion of the research methodology. A literature review is an essential component of any research since it determines the level of prior work done in the relevant field. However, there had not been enough literature on the radicalization of youth especially women.

### **Literature Review**

Farhan Hanif Siddiqui's book "*The politics of ethnicity in Pakistan: The Baloch, Sindhi and Mohajir ethnic movements*" focuses on ethno politics after 1971 because after the separation of East Pakistan, there was a rise in ethnic conflict and ethnic movements. The author explains the three concepts, the state, nationalism, and politics of ethnicity. The behavior of the government towards the non-dominant ethnic groups plays a vital role in making them against the state as they believe that the state protects the interests of a dominant ethnic group. The author argues that the state should be considered both an autonomous entity as well as a non-neutral apparatus because its policies provide benefits to privileged groups or classes. While explaining nationalism, the author used modernist theories of nationalism and explain the diverse economic

and social conditions that resulted in the rise of nationalism post-1971.<sup>10</sup> Explaining the concept of politics of ethnicity, the author argues how politics play its role in generating ethnic movements. as these movements do not represent the whole nation but speak for some members of the nation. The author also explains how government instrumentalises the intra-ethnic conflict so that they do not pose a serious threat to the state. But the book falls short of explaining the external factors that play their part in ethnic conflict.

Imtiaz Ali in his article *“The Balochistan problem”* states that the conflict started when Balochistan started complaining about the violation of provincial autonomy, economic resources and social neglect they face at the hands of state. The deprivation of basic rights triggered the conflict<sup>11</sup>. But the problem was that their complaints were not taken seriously by the state and no efforts were made to address these problems which intensified the situation.

In the book *“Ethno-national movements of Pakistan: Domestic and International factors”*, Tahir Amin explains the factors behind the nationalist movements of Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Balochistan. This book focuses on the fact that economic and political deprivation among Baloch people is the main reason for their aspiration for a separate state. Amin explains the role of domestic as well as international factors behind ethnic conflicts in Pakistan<sup>12</sup>. He also argues that the strength of these ethnic groups depends on their participation in the power structure. So what we conclude from this is that less participation of the Baloch community in power politics along with economic deprivation has led them to take arms against the state.

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<sup>10</sup>Siddiqi, Farhan Hanif. *The Politics of Ethnicity in Pakistan: The Baloch, Sindhi and Mohajir Ethnic Movements*. London: Routledge, 2015.

<sup>11</sup> Ali, Imtiaz. *“The Balochistan Problem.”* *Pakistan Horizon* 58, no. 2 (2005): 41–62.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/41394092>.

<sup>12</sup>Amin, Tahir. *Ethno-National Movements of Pakistan: Domestic and International Factors*. Institute of Policy Studies, 1988.

Muhammad Amir Rana in his article “*Missing political approaches*” published in Dawn explains that the upsurge in violent terrorist activities in Sindh and Balochistan is due to a lack of political approaches. Government considers that these activities and insurgency can be solved by using force. Because if the state asks for negotiation it will be considered the state’s weakness. The state needs to understand that if it goes for repression rather than negotiation; it will make the situation more intense and will support the point of banned outfits.<sup>13</sup> The government needs to understand that it has failed to address the basic grievances of Balochistan a. Government should come up with a political solution to the problem keeping economic factors in mind.

Sanaullah Baloch in his article “*Balochistan: in a state of despair*” argues that the state of Balochistan is in a state of slow-motion collapse. The past governments and the present government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf have paid no heed to the problem of Balochistan. The government has put no effort into knowing the causes and impacts of insurgency on society. The government had no policy towards the most strategically important and resourceful province.<sup>14</sup> The writer concludes by saying that government needs stable political system and planned division of resources and development projects to reduce long term social and security risks.

In the article “*Balochistan: Caught in the Fragility Trap*”, Ali Dayyan Hasan states that Balochistan is the most fragile area of Pakistan and the involvement of politicians, military and government officials has created a nexus among criminality, militancy, and terrorism.<sup>15</sup> There are no political talks between the government and insurgents which means they are not moving towards a political solution. The involvement of the military is also the main factor in sabotaging

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<sup>13</sup>Rana, Muhammad Amir. “Missing Political Approaches.” Dawn, July 12, 2020.

<sup>14</sup>Baloch, Sanaullah. “Balochistan: in a State of Despair.” The News International, January 31, 2020.

<sup>15</sup>Hasan, Ali Dayyan. “Balochistan: Caught in the Fragility Trap” United State Institute of Peace, July 2016.

peace talks. Although the state has improved the security situation but without addressing the needs and rights of Balochistan, the conflict cannot be managed.

Yunus Samad in his article *“Understanding the insurgency in Balochistan”* examines the Balochistan insurgency and gives various reasons for the present crises. External intervention, resistance to social change, resource-driven conflict theory are the causes of existing crisis in Balochistan.<sup>16</sup> The author blames the state for not managing the conflict which points that state has failed in developing a suitable approach to solve this problem.

Adeel Khan in his book *“Politics of Identity”* talked about nationalism which gets its life from the modern nation-state system. While talking about Baloch nationalism in his chapter *“From guerilla warfare to nowhere”* he discusses that in a modern world, nationalism is about sharing in the existing state power and if that is not possible it is about creating its own state.<sup>17</sup> I partially agree with his point of view as in the case of Balochistan the problem is not of share in existing power, there are many other problems too. Adeel Khan in his book talking about the Balochistan insurgency discusses the period of the 1973-77 insurgencies and failed to put light on the other phases of the insurgency.

Panah Baloch in his book *“Baloch Aurat Tareekhi Tanazar Mein”* discusses the role of bravery and courage of different Baloch women. He highlights the women who stood against the rituals and customs of Baloch society. Although the book was published in 2019 it discusses the role of

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<sup>16</sup>Samad, Yunus. *“Understanding the Insurgency in Balochistan.”* Common Wealth and Comparative Politics, March 10, 2014.

<sup>17</sup> Khan, Adeel. *“Baloch Ethnic Nationalism: From Guerrilla War to Nowhere?”* Essay. In *Politics of Identity*, 109–26. New Delhi, India: Sage Publications, 2005.

women from the lens of historical perspective. It fails to highlight the part played by women in Baloch national movement in the 21st century.<sup>18</sup>

An article published in Al Jazeera titled “*Pakistan: Woman suicide bomber change in Baloch rebels’ strategy?*” talked about the attack done by the female bomber Shari Baloch and also hints that more women can also become part of this movement. According to BLA, if China does not stop its activities in Balochistan then it should be ready to become the target of the trained male and female members of this organization.<sup>19</sup>

Alia Amir in her book *—Balochistan, A Case Study of Pakistan’s Peacemaking Praxis*” provides a thorough and insightful analysis of the region's complicated problems and potential solutions. The author explores the complex interplay of historical, sociopolitical, and cultural elements that have influenced the Balochistan conflict while articulating a praxis-oriented strategy that is intended to promote future peace. She has discussed in detail the historical, socio-political, and cultural factors that have shaped the Balochistan conflict, while presenting a praxis-oriented approach that promises to lead towards a more peaceful future. She not only explains the conflict's fundamental roots in great detail, but also looks at how many parties—including the government, rebel groups, and local communities—plays a part in it. This multifaceted viewpoint gives readers a complex understanding of the nature of conflict. Her approach encourages readers to move beyond mere theoretical discussions and engage actively in initiatives that can foster reconciliation, understanding, and sustainable peace.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Baloch, Panah. *Baloch Aurat Tareekhi Manazar Mein*. Quetta, Pakistan: Goshaeadab, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Baloch, Notezai, Kiyya, Akbar. “Pakistan: Woman Suicide Bomber Change in Baloch Rebels’ Strategy?” Al Jazeera, April 28, 2022.

<sup>20</sup> Amirali, Alia. *Balochistan a case study of Pakistan’s peacemaking praxis*. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2015.

The author Jan Muhammad Dashti in his book *–The Baloch national struggle, Emergence and Dimensions*” explains historical trajectory, socio-political dynamics, and underlying motivations that have driven the Baloch nationalist movement. Dashti presents an intricate analysis of the Baloch struggle for autonomy and self-determination, shedding light on the complex factors shaping the region's ongoing unrest. The author's in-depth research is evident as he discusses significant events, key personalities, and pivotal moments that have contributed to the emergence and persistence of Baloch nationalism. This historical context is essential for readers seeking a deeper understanding of the region's complex dynamics. However, the narrative often leans towards a one-sided portrayal of the conflict, largely reflecting the perspective of the Baloch nationalist movement. While it is important to understand the grievances and experiences of the Baloch people, a more balanced analysis that incorporates diverse viewpoints would have provided a more holistic understanding of the conflict's complexity.<sup>21</sup>

Shah Muhammad Mari in his book *–Aurtoun ki Tehreek*” discussed the role of Baloch women in different periods. He discussed that with the change of system, the role played by women also changed. He has discussed how women were portrayed during the feudal era and how the capitalist system changed its role. However, he has discussed the role of women in general but also points out what was happening in Balochistan during all these changes.<sup>22</sup>

Tilak Devasher's book, *–Pakistan, The Balochistan Conundrum*” is very well-researched and gives an in-depth inspection of the complicated issues surrounding Balochistan, a region that has long been at the center of Pakistan's problems. The historical, political, and socioeconomic contexts of the ongoing Balochistan conflict are extensively explored in Devasher's research. The

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<sup>21</sup>Dashti, Jan Muhammad. *Baloch National Struggle in Pakistan: Emergence and dimensions*. S.l.: Trafford on Demand Pub, 2020.

<sup>22</sup>Marri, Shah&nbsp; Muhammad. *Aurtoun ki Tehareek*. Sangat Academy of Sciences, 2015.

book's detailed historical analysis, which chronicles the Balochistan issue's beginnings from the British Raj to the present, is among its most outstanding features. He provides readers with insights into the myriad layers of grievances, ethnic conflicts, and political aspirations that have fueled the Baloch nationalism by presenting a thorough account of the province's turbulent history. Devasher's examination of the many dimensions of the Balochistan war, including the military's function, insurgency movements, and outside influences, is both educational and thought-provoking. He helps readers grasp the complexity of the problem by navigating the complex web of connections and interests that have contributed to the province's dilemma. The book occasionally takes a more analytical and policy-oriented approach, which could make it seem opaque and less interesting to casual readers despite its benefits. However, his balanced approach is admirable, although I think there is a tiny prejudice in favor of the viewpoint of the government.<sup>23</sup>

Inayatullah Baloch in his book *—The problem of greater Balochistan: a study of Baloch nationalism*” provides insightful information about the struggles and aspirations of the Baloch people, but it also shows several shortcomings that detract from the overall reading experience. The book makes clear Inayatullah Baloch's strong commitment to the Baloch cause. He describes the concerns and aspirations that have motivated the desire for a larger Balochistan while passionately laying forth the historical background of the Baloch nationalist movement. His story is filled with anecdotes, first-person testimonies, and historical allusions that give readers a realistic and intimate viewpoint on the subject. He emphasizes the value of maintaining their

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<sup>23</sup> Devasher, Tilak. Pakistan: The balochistan conundrum. New Delhi, India: ICWA, 2019.

culture, language, and way of life while illuminating the difficulties they confront in the face of modernization and outside forces.<sup>24</sup>

## **Research Methodology**

Research Methodology is an important tool while doing research. A qualitative approach is used in this dissertation. To understand the historical factors and the previous phases of insurgencies books, articles, and journals were used as study material. Moreover, in order to understand the present situation of conflict and to find the answer to the above-mentioned research questions interviews were conducted from the students of Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad. The reason for choosing this university is that the students at this university are more vocal on sensitive issues than other universities in Islamabad. Many students of this University have faced abduction and enforced disappearances. In fact, two former students of the University named Shahdad and Ehsan joined the insurgency and were killed in a clash with security forces in Balochistan. So it is important to know what the students of Quaid-i- Azam University think of insurgency. How do they relate the incident of Shahdad and Ehsan to other Baloch students of this university? Most of the interviewed students were close friends of Shahdad and Ehsan.. However, regarding Shadad and Ehsan’s involvement in insurgency students have different opinions. There are different assumptions regarding their joining and no one knows the real reason why they became insurgent. The research tries to find out what are the factors that are motivating youth to join banned outfits.

Along with this, the university is home to students belonging to almost all areas of Balochistan. This was quite helpful to understand the situation of different areas and how Baloch belonging to

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<sup>24</sup>Baloch, Inayatullah. The problem of “greater Baluchistan”: A study of Baluch nationalism. Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden, 1987.



different areas of the same province feel at their home. Like, the person living in Quetta has a different experience from a person living in Panjgur, Noshki, or Turbat. Contrary to this, conducting interviews was not an easy task as it took a lot of effort to make Baloch people trust in you. Most of the time when I was taking the interview, the first question they posed to me –“Are you Punjabi?” and when I said, No, I felt like a lot of tension has been released. They somehow got comfortable after knowing that I belonged to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). This situation itself poses the question of why Baloch people are skeptical of Punjabis. The Baloch are not skeptical of just Punjabis but they also do not feel comfortable with other ethnicities except Pashtuns especially Pashtuns from Balochistan. When I asked them that I have observed that you (Baloch) do not easily interact with people who are not Baloch. Most of the respondents said they feel happy in their community and do not want to interact with other people who do not know anything about them and make them feel discriminated against. I still remember when I asked why they are skeptical of Punjabis. Two main opinions came out in this regard. One was most of the Balochs do not like Punjabis because they feel whatever is happening in Balochistan is due to the Punjabi elite. Although all Punjabis are not the same but we cannot relate to Punjabis in any sense. While the other opinion was they feel humiliated at the hands of Punjabis. Two of the respondents shared their experience of Quaid-e-Azam University when they were new here and were not familiar with the university environment. –“There was a person (Punjabi) who came as a researcher and was profiling Baloch students in the name of research. Later on, we came to know that he was serving as a Major in the army and came here for profiling of Baloch students. After that, we lost our trust in Punjabis and researchers. We told our seniors about him and they asked us not to give any information and also complained about it to the university administration. So whenever anyone said that he or she is doing research we get

skeptical whether it's the research in the real sense or it has some other motives.” This is one of the reasons why I do not approach respondents directly but through my Baloch fellow so they should know this discussion is purely for research purposes. Why do Baloch not communicate with people of other ethnicities easily, and why there is mistrust when it comes to people other than Baloch? There are various reasons for this and it shows that they have faced situations that have created mistrust and hatred for other ethnicities.

While conducting interviews both structured and unstructured questions were asked. Interviews were more informal in nature so that the Baloch do not feel that this task is for their profiling and other tactics used by the state. I tried my best to make them comfortable and to do discussions in a very easy manner like (in most of the interviews) we are sitting at the huts over a cup of tea and discussing the situation of Balochistan. Some of the students shared their experiences where they felt discriminated against and somewhat felt like aliens by their fellows because they do not know anything about Baloch, their culture, or their language. The discussions and experiences will be shared in this dissertation as per the requirement of the topic.

Although I interacted with many Baloch students but I am keeping my research sample to fifteen due to repetition of their shared experience. Among those respondents, ten were male while five were female. However, their information is kept confidential due to the sensitivity of the issue. They belonged to different areas of Balochistan including Noshki, Turbat, Panjgur, Dera Bugti, etc. These were the areas where the insurgency was at its peak especially Turbat. The special thing about Turbat is that the literacy rate of Turbat is higher in Balochistan and more people from Turbat are involved in insurgency. What makes this research legitimate is that I got to understand the views of Baloch belonging to different regions due to diversity in this university and get a broader view of the situation in Balochistan. Secondly, here students talked about their

experiences more openly than any other university. Third, the students of this university have faced different things at the hands of state institutions including abductions and enforced disappearances etc. All these factors make it legitimate.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

When people are dissatisfied with their current political, economic, or social circumstances and think that their grievances are not being heard by the government or other institutions, insurgent groups frequently spring up. Several things, including political repression, economic deprivation, social injustices, and marginalization, contribute to the situation where people stand against their governments because they were denied their due rights.

People may resort to violence and insurgency as a means of achieving their objectives if they believe that their grievances are not being heard or addressed in peaceful ways. This can apply to terrorism, guerilla tactics, and other violent forms of resistance. The aim is to destabilize the state by attacking military personnel, government buildings, and other symbols of state power.

The same is the case with Balochistan when Baloch demands what the constitution of Pakistan allowed them and they are deprived of their basic rights and the state treats them as a colony, this kind of behavior from the state creates frustration and hatred for the state institutions and by using guerilla war tactics they respond aggressively to state. How Baloch respond to the state is their aggression towards the state. The frustration-aggression theory is most suitable to explain the situation in Balochistan. The Frustration-Aggression Theory can provide valuable insights into understanding the complex dynamics in regions like Balochistan, where social, political, and economic factors often intertwine to create an environment conducive to frustration and aggression. According to the theory, frustration serves as a crucial trigger for aggression, acting

as a stimulus for aggressive behavior. Frustration, in this context, refers to the emotional state experienced when an individual faces an obstacle or blockage that prevents them from achieving a desired goal<sup>25</sup>. This obstruction generates negative emotions, such as anger, disappointment, and resentment. Consequently, these negative feelings fuel the individual's propensity to engage in aggressive behaviors as a means to reduce the tension and restore their emotional equilibrium. The frustration-aggression link is not limited to direct, explicit aggression. Instead, it encompasses a wide range of behaviors, including verbal aggression, physical aggression, and passive-aggressive behavior<sup>26</sup>.

In the case of Balochistan, people have experienced long-standing issues of socio-economic marginalization, political grievances, and conflict, making it a compelling case study for the application of this theory. The frustrated environment leads them to choose aggressive behavior towards the state. This frustration, in turn, can manifest in various forms of aggression, ranging from peaceful protests and activism (raising voices against state institutions) to armed insurgency and militancy.

### **Frustration-Aggression Theory**

The original formulation of the frustration–aggression hypothesis by Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, and Sears (1939) stated that “the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration and, contrariwise, that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression”. This means that frustration leads to aggressive behavior which

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<sup>25</sup> By, Charlotte Nickerson, Updated on, February 8, and Charlotte Nickerson Research Assistant at Harvard University Undergraduate at Harvard University Charlotte Nickerson is a student at Harvard University obsessed with the intersection of mental health. —“Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis.” Simply Psychology, February 8, 2023. <https://www.simplypsychology.org/frustration-aggression-hypothesis.html>.

<sup>26</sup> —“Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis.” Encyclopædia Britannica, August 11, 2017. <https://www.britannica.com/science/frustration-aggression-hypothesis>.

suggests aggression does not occur without any form of prior frustration, and the assertion that frustration “always leads to some form of aggression” implies that aggression is a certain outcome of any frustration.<sup>27</sup>

The Frustration-Aggression Theory provides a lens through which we can better understand the complex interplay of factors contributing to frustration and aggression in regions like Balochistan. Socio-economic disparities, political grievances, ethno-linguistic tensions, and resource exploitation create a fertile ground for frustration to flourish. Balochistan faces deep-rooted socio-economic challenges, including poverty, lack of basic infrastructure, and limited access to quality education and healthcare. The frustration arising from these socio-economic disparities can contribute to feelings of hopelessness, powerlessness, and resentment among the population. Similarly, the province has a history of political grievances, with some Baloch groups seeking greater autonomy or even independence from Pakistan. Perceptions of political marginalization and lack of representation in decision-making processes can lead to collective frustration among certain segments of the population. Along with this Balochistan is rich in natural resources, including natural gas, coal, and minerals. However, local communities often feel that their resources are exploited without adequate benefits or compensation. This resource-based frustration can lead to protests, sabotage of infrastructure, and violent confrontations with authorities. The frustration stemming from various socio-political and economic factors has contributed to the rise of insurgency and militancy in the region. Armed groups, such as the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), have engaged in acts of violence and sabotage against state infrastructure and personnel. These groups claim to be

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<sup>27</sup>Breuer, Johannaes, and Malte Elson. —Frustration Aggression Theory.” Essay. In *The Wiley Handbook of Violence and Aggression*. Wiley Blackwell, 2017.

fighting for the rights and autonomy of the Baloch people, but their actions also reflect the pent-up frustration and grievances within the region.

In summary, by utilizing the hypothesis of frustration-aggression I suggest that if a society is deprived of its basic rights and on demanding these rights they are dealt with hard power (forced disappearances, kill and dump policies, etc.), an environment of frustration is created and to this frustration, people respond aggressively which is the case with Balochistan. Due to oppression and suppression by state institutions, the Baloch are now responding aggressively in the form of insurgencies.

### **Organization of Research**

The research is divided into four chapters:

**Chapter One:** The first chapter of the study comprises the research proposal of the project. This chapter sets out the plan of the study, which includes the problem statement, the objective and significance of the study, research questions, hypothesis, Methodology, data collection, theoretical framework, and organization of chapters.

**Chapter Two:** Chapter two explains the causes of the Balochistan insurgency. It will explain in detail the historical factors that paved the way for insurgencies. It will discuss why the educated youth of Balochistan is joining the banned outfits. What are the reasons that motivate youth to become an insurgent rather than opting for any other useful career? The data for this chapter is deduced from the interviews with Baloch youth. Their experiences while living in Balochistan are also shared which gives us a better understanding of what does it actually mean to live in Balochistan and what are the conditions that are acting as catalysts in making youth radicalized.

The current phase of insurgency and its comparison with the previous phases, and what makes it different from previous phases will also be discussed.

**Chapter Three:** The main focus of this chapter will be on the role of women in the Baloch nationalist movement. It will try to answer the question of what will be the impact of women on the nationalist movement. By discussing the participation of women historically, it will discuss the role played by women in today's time and how with the passage of time as the nature of state suppression is changing the nature of women's participation is also being changed.

**Chapter Four:** This chapter will discuss the possible solutions to the problem. How the conflict can be resolved between state and insurgents. What kind of policies the state should adopt to manage the conflict and try to answer the question of whether a peace deal is possible between the state and insurgents.

The conclusion is given at the end.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Causes of Balochistan Insurgency and Participation of Youth in Insurgency**

In the year 2019, I graduated from the School of Politics and International Relations(SPIR), Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad and the very next year I heard the news of Ehsan and Shahdad's death (two students of Quaid-i-Azam university who died in a clash with security forces in Balochistan). This news was so shocking and unbelievable that it took time to accept the reality because as per my observation and little interaction with these two young students, they seem to be very calm and had plans especially Ehsan was a very calm person and dealt with everything patiently. After accepting the reality, the first question that came to mind was why the educated youth of Balochistan is joining the banned outfits. What were the factors that provoked both these students to choose the way of the bullet instead of the pen? This chapter will try to answer this question although the reasons for educated youth for joining the banned outfits are complex and multifaceted. The chapter will first discuss the history of Balochistan and the emergence of sporadic insurgencies in the region and its geo-strategic importance and then will discuss the factors that paved the way for Balochistan insurgency relating them to what motivated the educated youth to join banned outfits. The data collected for this chapter is through secondary sources and interviews.

#### **Historical Background**

Balochistan is the largest and richest province of Pakistan as far as the territory and natural resources including the coastline are concerned. The history of Balochistan is replete with turmoil due to foreign invaders and internal clashes between various tribes. But after the division of the subcontinent, the focus of the clashes shifted from resistance against the foreign invaders



to resistance against the overarching influence of the central government over the political, and socio-economic matters of the province without providing equal representation or share of the resources to the indigenous population.<sup>28</sup>

The Baloch insurgency has its roots in the history of the Baloch people, who have distinct cultural, linguistic, and historical identities. The Baloch people have lived in the region for thousands of years, with a rich history of trade, agriculture, and nomadic lifestyles. The Balochistan region has been contested by various empires and dynasties throughout history, including the Persian, Mughal, and British empires. The Baloch people have successfully resisted all these external influences, maintaining their independence and autonomy through various means, including armed resistance.

After the partition of the subcontinent in 1947, Balochistan became part of Pakistan, against the wishes of many Baloch leaders who sought an independent Baloch state. The Pakistani government promised the Baloch people autonomy and control over their natural resources, but these promises were not fulfilled, leading to growing discontent and frustration among the Baloch population.<sup>29</sup> Baloch people launched several armed uprisings against the Pakistani government in the early decades, demanding greater autonomy and control over their resources. These uprisings were brutally suppressed by the Pakistani military, with thousands of Baloch people killed or displaced.

The first phase of insurgency started in 1948 when Abdul Karim Khan launched a guerrilla war against the Pakistan army. Although the insurgency did not last long because not so many people supported it. But this insurgency is important in Baloch history for two reasons; one it

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<sup>28</sup> Rizwan Zeb, "Baloch and Balochistan through History," *Ethno-Political Conflict in Pakistan*, December 2019, pp. 22-38, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429318139-2>.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

established the fact that Baloch people do not accept the forceful occupation of the Pakistani state and secondly, Baloch were betrayed by Pakistani forces so it created a trust deficit between Baloch people and Pakistan's Army as Abdul Karim, who was promised a safe passage, was later on arrested and sentenced to prison.<sup>30</sup> The second insurgency started in 1958 when it was alleged that Khan has raised an army to attack Pakistan's military. The third insurgency started in 1962 when Ayub Khan nominated sardars of his own choice to head the local government machinery but this backfired and Sher Muhammad Marri along with Khair Baksh Marri established the first parrari camp to challenge the Pakistan Army. The dismissal of Attaullah Mengal by Bhutto's regime provoked the rising of the fourth insurgency.

In the early 2000s, the Baloch insurgency resurfaced with more vigor and intensity, with various Baloch nationalist groups launching attacks on government forces, infrastructure, and non-Baloch settlers. The insurgency has continued to this day, with periodic waves of violence and government crackdowns. The Baloch insurgency is a complex issue with deep historical roots, and its resolution will require a comprehensive understanding of the historical, political, and socio-economic factors that have contributed to it.<sup>31</sup> A peaceful resolution will require a dialogue between the Baloch nationalists and the Pakistani government, addressing the root causes of the conflict and finding a mutually acceptable solution that respects the rights and aspirations of all stakeholders.

### **Causes of Balochistan Insurgency**

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<sup>30</sup> Devasher, Tilak. Pakistan: The balochistan conundrum. New Delhi, India: ICWA, 2019.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

Rising dissent against the state's policies and the state's failure to address the reservations of the Baloch people fueled the fire of insurgency in the largest territorial province of Pakistan. Although, the Baloch insurgency in Pakistan has its roots in a complex set of historical, political, and economic factors. Some of the key causes behind the Baloch insurgency are:

### **Political Factors**

Balochistan is the largest but the least developed province in Pakistan, and Baloch nationalists have long complained of political marginalization and discrimination by the federal government. Baloch nationalists argue that the federal government has consistently ignored the province's development needs and exploited its natural resources for the benefit of other provinces.

Along with this the state has deprived Balochistan of greater political autonomy and denied due rights to Baloch people. The government has sought to promote political participation by Baloch nationalist parties and leaders by providing them with greater representation in government institutions, such as the provincial assembly and the Senate. However, many Baloch nationalists view these efforts as tokenistic and insufficient to address their broader grievances. According to Baloch people, their vote has no value, it's not their vote that decides who will hold the reins of power in the provincial capital, but rather only those will hold on to the power that has backing by the military.<sup>32</sup> For this reason, a significant majority of Baloch people don't trust the political system and political processes in the province. The general perception of the politics and politicians of Balochistan is that "only puppets are installed here, they go wherever the military wants them to go." The examples of state-controlled puppet politicians are Jamhoori Watan Party's Shah Zain Bugti and Balochistan National Party (Mengal group) Akhtar Mengal, who

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<sup>32</sup>An interview conducted with Baloch student at Quaid-i-Azam university, Islamabad

switched their affiliations with the central government multiple times within the past five years based upon the indications of military leadership. All these factors explain why a common Baloch doesn't believe in the political system of Balochistan, and why the system overall doesn't bear any fruits despite the fact that it is apparently working fine for at least the past one and a half decades.

### **Economic Factors**

Balochistan is rich in natural resources, including gas, oil, and minerals, but the people of the province have not benefitted from these resources. Baloch nationalists claim that the federal government has failed to provide adequate compensation to the province for the extraction of its resources, leading to economic deprivation and poverty.

I still remember a student while talking to me said, the whole of Pakistan is getting benefits from the resources of Balochistan except the Baloch people who truly have more rights over it.<sup>33</sup> The development projects initiated by the state have further hurt the sentiments of the Baloch people. They view the development projects as part of a larger plan to extract resources from the province and marginalize its people. They argue that the projects are designed to benefit the military and the elites, rather than the local population. The unequal distribution of resources is one of the main causes of resentment among the Baloch people.

Baloch nationalists criticize the fact that the development projects are planned and implemented by the federal government, with little or no input from local communities or elected representatives. They argue that this centralized approach leads to a lack of accountability and transparency and perpetuates the province's marginalization. Neither the Baloch people are

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<sup>33</sup>An interview conducted at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

consulted before initiating development projects nor are they invited to share the administrative or decision-making positions rather all the foreigners are given positions of power that are insensitive to the culture as well as needs of indigenous people.

### **Cultural Factors**

Baloch nationalists see themselves as a distinct ethnic and cultural group with their own language (the Baloch ‘ethnic-nation’ contains at least two distinct linguistic groups Balochi speakers and Brahui speakers) and traditions. Baloch people consider the foreign settlers in their land as an agent of change and a threat to the indigenous socio-cultural values of the region that are persistent for thousands of years.<sup>34</sup>

Since Baloch people are very sensitive towards their culture and social values, they think that the state is gradually working towards eliminating the sources of their socio-cultural values by inviting people/settlers from other provinces and parts of the country in the name of development projects. Baloch people consider all these connecting policies part of a great nexus that is aimed at harming the basic fabric of the Baloch culture by weakening it through the introduction of modernity and inducing internal clashes among various tribes. Hence, the Pakistani state's ideological intervention in curbing the Baloch insurgency has been widely criticized for being shallow and insincere, with the state seeking to promote a nationalist narrative that emphasizes national unity and economic development while delegitimizing the Baloch nationalist movement as a threat to national security.

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<sup>34</sup> Rizwan Zeb, “The Return of Insurgency in Balochistan,” *Ethno-Political Conflict in Pakistan*, December 2019, pp. 145-179, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429318139-7>.

## Geographical Factors

Balochistan is a land of harsh mountainous terrain and dangerous plains with severe climatic conditions and above all a vast territory with very low population density. Moreover, it shares the longest land borders with Afghanistan and Iran, two of the most volatile nations in the region. Afghanistan being a turmoil and war-torn country itself poses a greater opportunity for key international players such as foreign spy agencies like RAW to instigate insecurity in the region.<sup>35</sup> All of these factors make it an ideal place for the rise of extremist, terrorist, or insurgent movements if proper precautionary measures are not taken.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately, the Pakistani state failed to take proper measures despite so many security flashpoints, and Balochistan is burning in the fire of insurgency ever since.

Moreover, the society in Balochistan consists of a diverse mix of ethnic groups and various cultural and religious identities coexisting together. These distinct cultural and ethnic backgrounds have the potential to contribute positively to the development of the province, provided they are appropriately acknowledged and valued. However, conflicts and challenges arise when policymakers fail to consider and include these specific cultural and ethnic perspectives in the decision-making process concerning the province.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Jason R. Murtha, *The Strategic Importance of Balochistan* (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, 2011).

<sup>37</sup> Muzaffar, Muhammad, Sidra Karamat, and Khalid Saeed. —“Balochistan Insurgency: Causes and Prospects.” *Orient Research Journal of Social Sciences*, June 2018.

## **Human Rights Violations**

The Pakistani military and paramilitary forces have been accused of human rights violations, including extra judicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture. These allegations have fueled resentment among Baloch nationalists and contributed to the growth of the insurgency.

According to the Federal Ministry of Human Rights, Balochistan has witnessed the recovery of a significant number of deceased individuals who were previously reported as disappeared. These bodies, often showing signs of torture and mutilation, amount to at least 936 cases since 2011. The provincial government disclosed in 2015 that they had recovered the bodies of 800 individuals connected to the insurgency between 2011 and 2014. Additionally, it is estimated that around 950 people remain missing, although some reports suggest much higher figures, reaching as high as 14,000 according to a UN fact-finding team report from 2013.<sup>38</sup>

## **Militarized approach adding Fuel to the Fire**

The Pakistani state's military intervention to curb the Baloch insurgency has been a major component of its overall strategy to apparently restore stability in the province. The military has played a central role in the conflict for almost the past eight decades, with its operations targeting militant groups, separatist leaders, and alleged supporters of the Baloch nationalist movement within the country and all over the world.

The Pakistani military has conducted several large-scale military operations in Balochistan to suppress the insurgency. These operations have included air and ground attacks on militant hideouts, as well as targeted killings and arrests of Baloch nationalist leaders and activists. The full-fledged military operations against Nawab Nauroz Khan in the 1950s and Nawab Akbar

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<sup>38</sup>Devasher, Tilak. Pakistan: The balochistan conundrum. New Delhi, India: ICWA, 2019.

Khan Bugti in the early 2000s are the testimonies that state can go against their own allies if they demand their rights, and that too by unleashing absolute brutality and crashing all the moral and ethical values. Moreover, the military established checkpoints and conducted search-and-cordon operations in many parts of the province aggravating the situation further.

The government has deployed paramilitary forces, such as the Frontier Corps and the Balochistan Constabulary, to maintain law and order in the province. These forces have been accused of human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.<sup>39</sup> Every year, hundreds of Baloch people including civilians are humiliated, tortured and forced to undergo unbearable suffering at the hands of these forces in the name of security that has heightened the hatred of paramilitary forces and state institutions in the hearts of the general public.

The Pakistani military and intelligence agencies have conducted intelligence operations to gather information on Baloch nationalist groups and their activities. These operations have targeted not only militants but also journalists, activists, and academics who are perceived to be sympathetic to the Baloch nationalist cause. The Pakistani government has also initiated the construction of a fence along the Pakistan-Iran border to curb illegal border crossings and prevent the infiltration of militants into Pakistan. The government has also established numerous checkpoints and security posts throughout the province to monitor movement and prevent attacks. According to the majority of the population, these checkpoints have no objective other than to humiliate and dishonor the Baloch people and make them suffer unnecessarily just to remind them who actually holds the reins of power. In an interview, a Baloch student stated, “when we go back

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<sup>39</sup>Patel, Pinal and Sharma, Saurabh, Enforced Disappearances: A Major Human Rights Issue in Balochistan (October 17, 2022). *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, Vol.5 No.4 (2022)



from Islamabad to our hometown, it seems like we have returned to an occupied colony where we are required to show proof of our identity at every tenth step, everyone hates that”<sup>40</sup>.

However, the military intervention by the state has also been criticized for its heavy-handed approach and alleged human rights violations. There have been reports of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and torture of Baloch activists and militants by the security forces. These allegations have raised concerns about the impact of military operations on the local population and their impact on the broader political and social landscape of Balochistan.

### **Repercussions of Military Intervention in Balochistan**

The trust deficit among Baloch people (civilians or nationalist-separatist leaders) regarding the state especially the military has widened so much that no one is ready to trust the state’s stance in any matter. Every incident in the past seventy or so years indicates the fact that it’s better not to trust the state and its institutions as far as reconciliation or dialogue is concerned due to the fact that the state has always fallen short of its promises.

Nawab Nauroz Khan was promised a general amnesty in 1959, as soon as he surrendered, he was thrown in jail and sentenced to life in prison while his sons were hanged for treason. A similar episode was repeated in the early 2000s when an old Bugti chieftain Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti was killed allegedly after a ceasefire between the Bugti tribe and the military forces. Due to the aforementioned reasons, Baloch people hesitate to trust any promises made by the Pakistani state or its institutions.

Another major impact of this trust deficit is the counterproductive capabilities of the longstanding conflict that has spread from fighters only under the leadership of their tribal

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<sup>40</sup> An interview of the Baloch student conducted at the Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad.

chieftain to the general public especially the highly educated young generation enrolled in various major universities across Pakistan. Previously, every Baloch separatist used to be under the subservient command of its tribal lord, it was war when the tribal lord says and its peace when the tribal lord makes peace with the authorities. But now the situation has changed drastically, as the educated young generation is neither part of any proper separatist movement nor under the command of any separatist leader, they are rather separatists who are agitated due to the unjust treatment of Balochistan and its people at the hands of state and its machinery.<sup>41</sup>

In the past, many educated youngsters have taken part in insurgent activities against the state due to highly unjust policies of the state towards Balochistan that motivates youngsters to exercise violence. There are many examples of educated youth that have joined the banned outfits but the prominent ones include Allah Nazar Baloch (the commander of one of the militant organizations) who was a doctor and a gold medalist, the two master's students at Quaid-i-Azam University Shahdad Baloch and Ehsan Baloch who died in a clash with security forces in Balochistan and Shari Baloch, an MPhil scholar and a mother, who blew herself up at Karachi University.

It's high time for the state and its stakeholders to ponder what is it that motivates these highly educated people to take up arms against state institutions. What motivated Shahdad Baloch and Ehsan Baloch to take part in militant activities while they were in their hometown for vacations? What motivated an MPhil scholar Shari Baloch and convinced her to leave her children behind and take that extreme measure? It's high time for the state to think about what forced a highly competent doctor Allah Nazar Baloch to leave his studies and practice to join the insurgent

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<sup>41</sup> Amna Asif <https://www.paradigmshift.com.pk/author/amna-asif/>, "Insurgency in Balochistan: Then & Now," Paradigm Shift, September 28, 2022, <https://www.paradigmshift.com.pk/insurgency-in-balochistan/>.

groups. It's the manifestation of a trust deficit and nothing else. Moreover, this new wave in the insurgent movement is more violent than the previous ones.

### **CPEC and Baloch Insurgency**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a major infrastructure project that aims to connect China's western region to Pakistan's Gwadar Port through a network of highways, railways, and pipelines. While the CPEC has the potential to bring economic benefits to Pakistan, particularly to the less developed regions such as Balochistan, it has also been a source of controversy and has been linked to the Baloch insurgency.<sup>42</sup> Baloch nationalists view the CPEC as a project that will benefit the Pakistani military and the elites, rather than the local population.<sup>43</sup> They argue that the project will lead to the further exploitation of Balochistan's natural resources, the displacement of local communities, and the marginalization of the Baloch people.

Furthermore, Baloch nationalists are concerned that the CPEC will result in a large influx of outsiders into Balochistan, diluting the province's ethnic and cultural identity (Demographic change). They argue that the project will lead to further alienation of the Baloch people and fuel the insurgency. Moreover, the CPEC has the potential to bring economic benefits to Balochistan and other parts of Pakistan, its implementation has been controversial and linked to the Baloch insurgency. Baloch will not let it complete without their willingness. The Pakistani state's heavy-handed approach to the insurgency has not addressed the underlying grievances of Baloch nationalists and has contributed to the ongoing conflict.

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<sup>42</sup> Ali Haider Saleem, —CPEC and Balochistan: Prospects of Socio-Political Stability,” *Strategic Studies* 37, no. 4 (November 2017): pp. 118-132, <https://doi.org/10.53532/ss.037.04.00201>.

<sup>43</sup> Allauddin and Muhammadi, —ChinaPakistan Extended Relation: An Overview of CPEC Opportunities, Expectations and Fear of Balochistan,” *Global Economics Review* II, no. I (2017): pp. 56-63, [https://doi.org/10.31703/ger.2017\(ii-i\).07](https://doi.org/10.31703/ger.2017(ii-i).07).

The development of Gwadar Port under the banner of CPEC has further intensified the issue. Gwadar's strategic location has great potential as it is located 250 nautical miles from the Strait of Hormuz through which 40 percent of the world's oil supply flows. On the one hand, they recognize that the port has the potential to bring economic development to Balochistan and provide employment opportunities for the local population. However, they have several concerns about the project that have fueled their opposition to it.

Firstly, Baloch nationalists argue that the Gwadar Port project has been imposed on the province without adequate consultation with local communities. They feel that the project has been planned and implemented without taking into account the interests and aspirations of the Baloch people.

Secondly, Baloch nationalists are concerned that the Gwadar Port project will result in the further exploitation of Balochistan's natural resources, particularly its fisheries and mineral reserves. In the process of making Gwadar port, the government is posing threats to its own people. The people most affected by the development of Gwadar port are fishermen and they constitute 80 percent of local population. The government is displacing the people without giving them any proper resources. They argue that the benefits of the project will accrue to the Pakistani military and elites, rather than the local population.

Thirdly, Baloch nationalists are concerned that the Gwadar Port project will lead to the displacement of local communities and the marginalization of the Baloch people. They argue that the project will bring in a large number of outsiders, particularly from Punjab, and this will lead to the further dilution of Balochistan's ethnic and cultural identity.

Overall, Baloch nationalists view the Gwadar Port project with suspicion and skepticism. While they recognize its potential economic benefits, they are concerned that it will be implemented without adequate consideration for the interests and aspirations of the Baloch people. According to a Baloch student, “there is no clean water in Gwadar, people are forced to relocate, and the government’s propaganda machine is tirelessly working to show that Gwadar is heaven while the reality is different”.<sup>44</sup>

It is evident as the construction of Gwadar port began, a protest from the fishing community for their rights has begun. "Gwadar Haq Do Tehreek" (Gwadar Rights Movement), a protest movement that emerged in November 2021 in Gwadar<sup>45</sup>. The protesters, primarily from fishing communities gathered to demand their rights and address various issues, including deep-sea fish trawling, local water crisis, and informal border trading with Iran. The movement's leader, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, called for Chinese citizens working at the port to leave, causing tension between the protesters and the government, which led to a crackdown. Over 100 people were arrested, and there were clashes resulting in injuries and fatalities.<sup>46</sup> The government imposed restrictions on public gatherings and an internet blackout in response to the protests. Gwadar has seen significant development and infrastructure projects due to the port's inception in 2007, but the fishing communities have faced challenges and economic crises. However, the movement's fate remains uncertain.

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<sup>44</sup> An interview conducted from the student at Quaid-i-Azam University

<sup>45</sup> Anees, Mariyam Suelman. —“Protest Movement in Gwadar Causes Concern for Pakistan-China Relations,” January 25, 2023. <https://newlinesmag.com/spotlight/a-protest-movement-in-gwadar-causes-concern-for-pakistan-china-relations/>.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

## Stakeholders in Baloch Insurgency

Insurgencies are complicated all over the world, and Balochistan insurgency is no different. It is a quagmire, where due to multiple stakeholders and actors, it's really difficult to distinguish between the participants and their objectives. There are several actors that are active in the Baloch insurgency:

- 1. Baloch Nationalist Groups:** Various Baloch nationalist groups, such as the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), Baloch Republican Army (BRA), and United Baloch Army (UBA), are active in the Baloch insurgency. These groups are fighting for greater political autonomy, economic rights, and cultural preservation for the Baloch people.
- 2. Criminal Groups:** Criminal groups, such as drug traffickers, smugglers and death squads are also involved in the Baloch insurgency. They use the conflict to further their illegal activities, such as smuggling arms and drugs and often collaborate with Baloch nationalist groups.
- 3. Pakistani Military and Intelligence Agencies:** The Pakistani military and intelligence agencies, such as the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), are also involved in the Baloch insurgency. They have been accused of carrying out extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and other human rights abuses against Baloch nationalists.
- 4. Foreign Intelligence Agencies:** Foreign intelligence agencies, such as India's Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security (NDS), have also been accused of supporting Baloch nationalist groups.

## **Frustration-Aggression Theory**

The frustration-aggression theory proposes that frustration can lead to aggression. The theory suggests that when a person is prevented from achieving a desired goal or satisfying a basic need, frustration can occur, which in turn can generate aggressive behavior. According to this theory, frustration can be caused by a variety of factors, including external obstacles, personal setbacks, or social injustices. The level of frustration experienced by an individual can depend on several factors, such as the intensity of the desire for the goal or need, the perceived likelihood of achieving it, and the degree to which the frustration is perceived as unjust or unfair.

When frustration is experienced, individuals may respond with a range of aggressive behaviors, including verbal aggression, physical aggression, or passive aggression. The theory suggests that aggression serves as a way to reduce the level of frustration and restore a sense of control over the situation. It is important to note that frustration does not always lead to aggression and that there are many other factors that can influence aggressive behavior. However, the frustration-aggression theory remains an influential perspective in understanding the link between frustration and aggression. The frustration-aggression theory suggests that aggression and violent behavior can arise when individuals or groups feel frustrated or blocked from achieving their goals. This theory can be applied to understanding the root causes of Balochistan insurgency.

In case of Balochistan, this frustration stemmed from a range of factors, such as political oppression, economic deprivation, discrimination, and cultural marginalization. When people feel that their grievances are not being heard or addressed through peaceful means, they may turn to violence and insurgency as a way to achieve their goals. This can include acts of terrorism, guerrilla warfare, and other forms of violent resistance.

Similarly, when Baloch feel that their identity is at risk, they are being treated like a colony in their homeland; they are deprived of their basic rights, and are considered secondary citizens of the state. All these elements have given rise to frustration, so by adopting guerilla tactics and attacking state institutions and military personnel, they are responding aggressively. The frustration in their environment is responsible for their aggressive behavior which justifies the theory that frustration leads to aggressive behavior which suggests aggression does not occur without any form of prior frustration, and the assertion that frustration “always leads to some form of aggression” implies that aggression is a certain outcome of any frustration.<sup>47</sup>

The Baloch insurgency in Pakistan has been fueled by an amalgamation of political, economic, and cultural factors, as well as human rights violations and the province's geostrategic location. Baloch nationalists see the insurgency as a struggle for the right to self-determination and greater autonomy for their people to control their matters, be those of political or economic nature. All the Baloch nationalist and separatist entities that actively participate in insurgent activities demand more control over the matters of politics, natural resources and socio-cultural values’ preservation to keep the Baloch identity intact in the wake of existential threats.

### **Youth Participation in Balochistan Insurgency**

The participation of youth in the Balochistan insurgency is a matter of great concern because, over time, more youth is getting involved in it. Regarding the youth of Balochistan and their participation, several questions need to be answered. First, why are the educated youth of Balochistan joining the banned outfits? There are various reasons for this. They have gone through years of suppression and oppression, facing unemployment, economic deprivation,

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<sup>47</sup> Breuer, J., & Elson, M. (2017). Frustration Aggression theory. In *The Wiley Handbook of Violence and Aggression*. essay, Wiley Blackwell



political marginalization, enforced disappearances, etc. While talking to Baloch students for this research there was hardly any student who himself or his family had not suffered due to circumstances created in Balochistan. These sufferings have made their life traumatic. Let us not talk about suffering, then what is it that motivates youth to join rebellious groups. There is a popular opinion that if the material needs of the people are fulfilled then they do not tend towards extremist tendencies. If that is the case then why Shari Baloch blew herself? She belonged to a well-settled family, she was educated and doing a job, above all she was a mother of two children then why she became part of Fedayeen of Majeed Brigade. The answer to this is it's the psychology of an individual. How one thinks of himself and the place where one belonged. The people who themselves are satisfied with their lives are not satisfied with the state policies regarding their province. They make an effort to play their role in the struggle for freedom for their country/region.

As a matter of fact, it was not the educated youth that wanted to become insurgents and anti-state, it was the state that pushed them in this direction due to their discriminatory policies towards the people of Balochistan. The local people of Balochistan are suffering because the elite did not make a compromise. The Balochistan conflict is a result of conflict between elites.<sup>48</sup> Initially, it was Ayub Khan and Attaullah Mengal then it was Bhutto and National Awami Party (NAP) and later it was General Musharraf and Akbar Bugti. When the elite due to their egocentric policies did not make a compromise then local people got involved in the conflict and now the generations of Baloch are suffering.

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<sup>48</sup> See Dr. Farhan Hanif's Podcast, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oXxi3HFRZU4&t=2323s>

## **Division among Youth**

While having interviews and discussions with youth I have found that there are different opinions regarding the insurgency in Balochistan. Some students consider it right and some consider it wrong. Everyone has his/her experiences and based on that they have their opinion. They have different views but one thing is common between them i.e. they accept that the state has adopted brutal policies in Balochistan and instead of trying to solve the problem the state is making it more complicated. The drawback is from the state's side. If the state will not deal with its people with a soft hand, the educated youth will get involved in these kinds of activities.

So, to show the difference between them, Alia Amir Ali in her work titled "Political Culture of Baloch National Movement" used the term Moderates for pro-state group and radicals for the group with extremist tendencies. I have divided them into two groups.

## **Federalists**

The term federalist<sup>49</sup> is used for the group of youth who are pro-state in their approach and of the view that Balochistan should remain part of Pakistan otherwise it will become difficult for it to survive alone. They consider the state as the ultimate authority. They are of the view that the state has the power to do anything and one cannot challenge the writ of the state. If one challenges the writ of the state he has to face the consequences of state policies.

According to this group of students or youth, the one who chooses the path of insurgency is being brainwashed to serve the interests of militant organizations. They claim that there are many other ways to record your protest, taking arms against the state is wrong. One should not do it.

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<sup>49</sup>According to The Britannica Dictionary, Federalist is a one who is supporter of federal government

Regarding the participation of educated youth, they say there is no doubt that circumstances in Balochistan are worrisome but taking arms against the state is not the solution. The state is trying to accommodate youth but the youth themselves do not want to get accommodated. Although state has taken little steps to engage youth in positive activities but they still believe they should compromise with the state.

### **Radicals**

The term radicals<sup>50</sup> is used for the group of youth who is against the state and consider insurgency as the right way to get back their rights. They are of the view that if the state wants war then we are ready for it. They have little sense of belongingness to the state. However, the interesting thing is the one who is against the state has the approach of getting employment in this state. There is a difference between what they say and what they do. Theoretically, they are against the state but practically they are making efforts to get government jobs, involving themselves in the political process.

In this section of the chapter, I tried to put the reasons that motivated youth to get involved in the insurgency. I relate them to different incidents which are shared by different students and almost every Baloch can relate to it. It is important to understand how the people living in Balochistan share their experiences because that is what makes the difference.

### **Role of State Policies and Institutions**

To find the answer to the above-mentioned questions, it is important to know how Baloch youth see the state policies and institutions. What role they are playing in Balochistan? For Baloch,

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<sup>50</sup>According to Britannica Dictionary, a person who favors extreme changes in government: a person who has radical political opinions.

state policies and institutions have always served the government and its interest. It has nothing to do with the Baloch people. Their grievances are not addressed. The state has always opted the harsh policies but they have ignored the fact that the more the state oppresses the Baloch people the more strong their resistance becomes.

While talking to Baloch students about this, most of them counter-questioned which state and institutions (Kon se riyasat au rkon se idaray?)<sup>51</sup>The state has always suppressed the people of Balochistan and has always treated them as a colony. Respondents recalled their experiences that whenever they travelled in Balochistan they felt like they are in a colony where after every few kilometers they have to show their identity. They are asked different types of questions. And when they traveled to other parts of Pakistan there is no such setup. They feel like the whole of Pakistan is free while Balochistan is a colony with high securitization.

Similarly, regarding state institutions when I asked the respondents how you see state institutions and their role in Balochistan. One of the respondents replied,

*–State institutions were there but they did not play any role in bringing peace in Balochistan. Rather they are the reason the people of Balochistan hate them. The state has deployed death squads to counter-insurgency but these death squads are involved in heinous acts such as extortion, kidnapping etc. They have turned the youth against the state.”*

Other respondents also agreed with this point of view and said the policies adopted by the state to counter insurgency are giving more heat to it. The more state is using harsh policies to counterinsurgency, the more they are forcing youth to join insurgency.

One of the respondents said,

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<sup>51</sup> An interview conducted with Baloch student

*It becomes difficult in Balochistan to come out of the house on the 23rd of March and 14th of August. Even if you are going to a nearby market you are stopped three to four times and asked where are you going and why are you going? On these days, there are instances when people are forcefully taken on gunpoint to attend the ceremonies held on these days.*<sup>52</sup>

This tactic by the state institutions is to show that everything is normal in Balochistan. In these circumstances, the youth of Balochistan has developed hatred against the state and see the state as their enemy who has always suppressed and oppressed the people of Balochistan for their interests.

### **How Baloch Identify Problem**

To understand the situation of Balochistan it is important to know how the youth of Balochistan understands the problem. I, as a researcher, can only read books, and articles about the situation of Balochistan and can understand the issue by talking to the people of Balochistan. But experiencing one thing is a different phenomenon. It is easy to say that Balochs have turned against the state which is why the state is getting harsh towards them. But what people face in their daily lives matters. For this, it is important to know how Baloch identifies the problem. From which lens they see is important. For them it is “us versus them” and when they see a problem from this lens then for them state is the problem and insurgency is the solution. While having discussion on the question on how as a Baloch you identify a problem.

The respondent replied,

*—We Baloch do not identify a problem, we look for a solution because there are so many problems in Balochistan but the main problem majority of Baloch think is the forceful*

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid

*occupation by state of our land. For us, this is the problem and whatever one finds is the suitable way to solve it. He chooses that way. It differs from person to person. Some consider joining the peaceful protests and raising their voice while others think taking arms against the state is a possible solution. Then there are others who do not have any problem and they become part of the system.”*

Most of the respondents were of the view that they consider the state as the main problem. But some respondents disagreed with it. They were of the view that there is no doubt that Balochistan is facing many crises. However, the solution is not in challenging the writ of the state. There are other ways to solve the issue and become part of the system. The respondents that I have put in the federalist group were of the view that we cannot only blame the state for the crisis in Balochistan. The banned outfits have their interests and motives and they use youth for this purpose.

### **Second Class citizens of State**

The predominant perceptions in Baloch society is that the state has always treated Balochs as second-class citizens. Addressing the grievances of the Baloch people was never a state priority as they have always adopted harsh policies. One of the respondents said 60 pc of Baloch know that they are second-class citizens of the state before going to any educational institution. The degree has no role in awakening their consciousness. They know the reality since their childhood.<sup>53</sup>

I recalled the discussion when I was talking about the Baloch-Pashtun relations, one of the respondents said, look both were anti-establishment and raised their voice against state brutalities

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<sup>53</sup>An interview conducted with Baloch student at Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

but the state does not deal with them the way it treated Baloch because they consider Baloch as a secondary citizen. It is true that Balochs have chosen the way of the bullet while Pashtuns have not adopted this way but still, the state needs to identify the reasons why the angry Balochs turned towards the mountain. Why were once those who were called angry brothers in arms now called terrorists? If the state did not take the issue seriously it will reach the point of no return.

Furthermore, 50 % of the respondents said that they know they are second-class citizens of the state because if that is not the case why only Balochs are facing hardships? Resistance movements were in other provinces as well but the state treated Balochs harshly because they do not consider them as equal citizens. I recalled when the respondent replied,

*“If you consider that education is awakening Baloch’s consciousness, you are wrong. Education has no role in awakening the consciousness of Balochs. Most of the Balochs know since childhood what is happening in Balochistan and who is doing it. Hunger is the teacher of Balochs.”*

### **Identity Crisis**

Since the creation of Pakistan, the Balochs are facing an identity crisis. Their separate identity is always denied by the state. States use different tools to do this. The state did not let the concentration of power in the hands of the Baloch people. Secondly, the state creates its own monopoly over economic resources.

In terms of social relations Baloch identity is always denied. In Pakistan textbooks, Balochs are portrayed as backward people. Most Pakistanis do not know about the Baloch people. They make fun of their dress and getup. While having a discussion regarding how Baloch feel when they travel to other parts of the country. Respondents say we feel like we do not live in this country.

Most people do not know about us, our culture, values, attire, and history are the things unknown to them. I recalled when one respondent said,

*–While travelling in Islamabad on Uber and Careem and having a conversation with the driver when they asked where you belong and when I said Balochistan and they are like Balochistan which is in Quetta. This is what they know about us. This is not a one-time story. It happens many times.”*

Similarly, respondents also share their views that when we visit the different areas of Pakistan, we see the obvious difference between us and them. The small cities in other provinces are well-developed while in Balochistan the provincial capital does not have that facilities. The response of respondents was,

*“Why do we not feel discriminated against when we see that by using our resources the state is facilitating the whole of Pakistan and we here in Balochistan are suffering for even basic facilities.”*

### **Humiliation by State institutions**

Humiliation by the state institutions is a common custom in Balochistan. Many Balochs complained that their self-respect is being hurt by state institutions. It is evident as Dr.Aasim in his article shared his experience while travelling from Quetta to Dera Bugti. He said the city (Quetta) was filled with numerous check posts handled by police and paramilitary forces, and access to the cantonment area was tightly controlled. The feeling of suffocation in Quetta was mild compared to the situation in the deeper Baloch periphery. Typically, four soldiers were present at each checkpoint, which consisted of an improvised roadblock and an accompanying tent. At every roadblock, we were asked to disembark from the Suzuki vehicle, requested to



present our national identity cards, and subjected to questioning regarding our purpose of travelling to Dera Bugti, our relationship with each other, the duration of our stay, and similar inquiries.<sup>54</sup> The security forces in Balochistan humiliate people through different tools. They feel humiliated when at every step in their own home, they have to show their identity and have to tell where they are going and why?

Along with this, for Baloch honor is something on which they do not compromise. One of the respondents recalled the incident,

*“When at the security check post, the security officers not only make fun of their getup but also tore out the shalwars of some Baloch. He said can you imagine after this kind of humiliation and disrespect Baloch will feel and how can he love a state where he is facing this kind of humiliation.”*

However, many respondents shared their view that they feel humiliated when in Balochistan they have to prove their identity at every step and show their identity card. They said what’s bigger than this is that you have to give proof of yourself in your homeland.

### **Security forces-symbol of fear not safety**

In general, when security forces are seen people feel safe around them. But in Balochistan the case is different. In Balochistan security forces are seen as a symbol of fear not safety. When people see they know deep inside something is going to be wrong. They do not feel safe around security forces. I can recall when respondents were sharing their views regarding security forces. Many respondents agreed to the point that

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<sup>54</sup> Akhtar, Aasim. The Checkpost State in Pakistan’s War of Terror: Centres, Peripheries, and the Politics of the Universal. Antipode,2022

*“In Balochistan we feel we are in some securitized state and it is somewhat a colony where state has imposed people on us for our security where we have to give prove at every point that we belong to this land.”*

This is a big issue that must be taken seriously because these security forces have a very important role in changing public opinion, when they are considered the symbol of fear how can people feel safe around them? If these security forces treat people softly and positively then things could be changed.

### **Enforced Disappearances, Kill and dump policy by State institutions**

Enforced disappearances and the kill-and-dump policy by the state institution are not new things in Balochistan. The people of Balochistan are facing it for a long time. The first case of a disappeared person happened to be in 1976 when Asadullah Baloch got disappeared and was later killed by state institutions. It is evident that Balochs are protesting for the recovery of missing persons for a very long time.

There are even students of Quaid-e-Azam University who have faced abductions and disappearances. The respondents on these issues said,

*“These policies cannot change their mindset. However, these kinds of incidents make their views more rigid and they legitimize their point of view regarding the role of the state.”*

Many Baloch families were victims of these policies by the state. When this happens this creates hatred for state institutions and this hatred is one of the reasons why Balochs are joining the banned outfits. Many examples can be quoted in this case but the most recent example is of Sumaiya Qalandarni, a female who attacked security forces in Turbat on 24 June, 2023. Her

history records show that her family suffered enforced disappearances in 2011. Definitely, this is not the only reason there are other reasons too but such kind of policies are playing their role in creating hatred among Baloch people. The Baloch whether they are of federalist approach or radical were of the view that these kind of policies have made the Balochistan crisis worse. This needed to be stopped. Otherwise, people will completely lose trust in the state.

### **Frustration in Balochistan**

Balochistan is a devastated area with political marginalization and economic deprivation and forceful occupation by Pakistani forces. These factors have played a role in creating frustration in Baloch society. The Balochs are continuously facing the state's brutal policies.

One of the respondent said,

*“What state has done to stop youth from joining banned outfits? The level of frustration in Balochistan is increasing by the day. There are no jobs for youth, no education for them, they are facing enforced disappearances and kill & dump policies by the state. What will they do? They have only two options; either to go for career or become insurgent. The option of career is difficult in areas like Balochistan so out of frustration they will join insurgent groups.”*

The situation in Balochistan is like a civil war. The people are depressed, oppressed, and frustrated. In frustration, they do what they think is right. It is theoretically proven that people who faced frustration continuously respond to situations with aggression. The same is happening in Balochistan. The taking of arms of youth against the state is a result of this frustration along with many factors mentioned above.

## Psychological Factors

The most important factor behind the radicalization of youth is their psychology. They are psychologically not satisfied with the situation in Balochistan. It is in their minds that Pakistan has forcefully occupied their land and is exploiting their resources. Whether it is the Shari Baloch interview or the Sumaiya Qalandarani's, they have accused Pakistan of forceful occupation. Most Baloch through their social media accounts have raised the issue of state's brutal policies. The solution is not about the fulfillment of material needs because there are many cases where material needs were fulfilled, but the youth still tend towards extremist tendencies. It is about the psychology of an individual. The more the state is suppressing the youth, the more youth is choosing the path of radicalization.

I remember when one of the respondents said,

*"It is not necessary to take weapons against a state to show hatred. Maybe many do not go on that path but they have hatred for the state in their hearts."*<sup>55</sup>

It is evident as one other respondent who lives in Islamabad shared his experience. He said while travelling on his bike he was stopped by police near Serena Chowk and the policeman asked him to give a lift to FC personnel which he refused. Then he asked me to show the papers of the bike and I showed it to him. He asked why you are not giving a lift to him and the respondent replied it's my choice and started his bike.<sup>56</sup> This shows how a Baloch living in Islamabad has responded to the situation in Balochistan. This shows that every Baloch is at war with the state but everyone is using different means. Taking arms against the state is not the solution for everyone, some adopt other ways as well.

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<sup>55</sup>An interview conducted at Quaid-i- Azam University, Islamabad

<sup>56</sup> Ibid

The need of the hour is to engage youth in political dialogue, address their grievances and make policies to win the trust of the Baloch people. If not done timely, the state will see more radicalized youth in the future and the process will become irreversible. When youth is not given enough opportunities and continues to face harsh policies by state, they will get involved in these kind of activities.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Role of Women in Baloch National Movement**

The Baloch national movement has played an important role in raising voices for the rights of the Baloch people. It has shown the resistance against oppressive forces by different means like raising voice on political platforms, organizing different protests, etc. The role of women in the Baloch national movement cannot be denied. Their contributions are often overlooked in this regard. Women have been at the forefront of advocating women's rights. They have defied traditional gender roles and societal expectations in Baloch society to actively participate in various aspects of the movement, shaping its trajectory and success.

This chapter will shed light on the historical role of Baloch women and then will discuss how with time the role of women get evolved. Baloch national movement in a broader context is a movement for the independence of Balochistan and insurgency is one of the means to achieve this end. The chapter will discuss the prominent females in today's time and their contribution to the Baloch cause. It will also highlight the role of women in insurgency because as the nature of state oppression changes the nature of women's participation also changes. The example of Shari Baloch and Sumaiya Qalandarani are very important in this aspect. It is very important to know what makes Baloch women participate in the insurgency and what will be the impact of women's participation in insurgency.

#### **Baloch Women in Historical Context**

Panah Baloch in his book "Baloch Aurat Tareekhi Manazar Mein" has discussed the role of Baloch women and claimed that the history of Balochistan is incomplete without discussing the

role of women. In his book, he discussed the women of the 16th to 20th centuries<sup>57</sup>. He has highlighted the role of different women who stood against the norms of Baloch society, who were the symbols of bravery and courage and stood for their rights etc.

Historically the Baloch woman Mehnaz is of great importance as she is considered the symbol for the rights of Baloch women in the 16th century. She stood against the injustices in Baloch society and through her poetry recorded her protest. Similarly, Hani, Banri, Kiran Naz etc are some of the women who stood against the rituals and customs of Baloch society.<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, regarding war and leadership, the role of Bibi Bebo, Bibi Bano, and Chagli are very important. Bibi Bebo was the sister of the Mir Ahmad Khan (the Khan of Kalat). During his time an incident took place where people from another tribe stole the earrings of one of the Balochs and killed other Balochs. Khan wanted to settle this matter peacefully but the opposite side including the Nawab Bakhtayar Khan did not cooperate. Nawab Bakhtayar Khan was ruling Sibbi and Kech. At that time these areas were part of Multan province. As a result, Mir Ahmad decided to attack Bakhtayar Khan but unfortunately, he died and his son Malik Mirza Khan became his successor and fought the battle with Khan of Kalat. The battle continued for three days and Khan was defeated in this battle. Later on, he carried fourteen attacks on the area of Sibbi and Kech but was defeated in all attacks. However, his sister Bibi Bebo decided to conduct a fifteenth attack on the other tribe (Baruzais) and as a leader of the Baloch nation attacked Sibbi. She fought fearlessly and died during a fight on 21st December 1684<sup>59</sup>. When Mir Ahmad Khan came to know about this, he became furious. He attacked the villages along with his son-in-law Mir Ibrahim Noshervani and on his return faced Baruzais. After an intense fight, his son-in-law died

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<sup>57</sup>Baloch, Panah. Baloch Aurat Tareekhi Manazar Mein. Quetta: Gosha e Adab, 2019.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid

<sup>59</sup> Baloch, Panah. Baloch Aurat Tareekhi Manazar Mein. Quetta: Gosha e Adab, 2019.

and Khan faces severe injuries. So, during the seventeenth confrontation, Baloch was defeated. This time the daughter of Mir Ahmad Khan and widow of Mir Ibrahim decided to go to the battlefield. She was the one who not only planned the attack but also supervised the whole fight. This time Khan won the battle and Baruzais was defeated and later on peaceful agreement was signed between the two parties.

Moreover, the state of Lasbella was ruled by a female ruler Chaghli. She was the wife of Malik Pahar Khan who ruled Lasbella for five decades. After his death, his younger son became his heir. As he was so young so his mother Chaghli took charge of all affairs.<sup>60</sup> During her time, she solved the internal matters of the state very carefully. She made the state economically developed by focusing on agriculture and also made the defense of the state strong. The state of Labella was economically developed and militarily strong during her time.<sup>61</sup> Baloch women have played their roles as a sister, a daughter, and as a wife. They have worked as advisors and leaders showing the signs of bravery and courage.

### **Evolution of Women's role with Time**

Pakistani society in general is patriarchal, and so is Balochistan. The women in general are marginalized and have little say in public matters but this trend is being changed. The Baloch national movement has witnessed a remarkable transformation regarding the role of women from being marginalized and confined to the private sphere to becoming empowered agents of change. Through education, political awareness, and activism, Baloch women have shattered traditional barriers and emerged as integral contributors to the movement's goals. Their involvement has not

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<sup>60</sup> Dilmurad, Hanif. "Women in Baloch Society." The Balochistan Point, July 23, 2015.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid



only strengthened the movement but has also highlighted the intersectionality of gender and national struggles.

Baloch women are actively participating in raising their voices for themselves and Baloch nation. There are hardly a few houses in Balochistan that have not suffered the enforced disappearances and kill-and-dump policies by the state. These sufferings at the hand of the state made Baloch youth stand for their rights. Baloch women in this regard are also at the forefront. There are stories of women who have joined political movements because they are left with no choice but to raise their voices against the state-sponsored violence they are facing. One such story is of Zarina Baloch who joined the national movement when she found the mutilated body of her brother and that was the turning point of her life.<sup>62</sup> She has been raising her voice since then for the missing persons. It is one story, many other stories, and women like Zarina have become active in these movements because they became direct victims of state brutal policies. The importance of today's dynamic is that the families are not only the victims of enforced disappearances but women themselves are facing these harsh policies. There have been cases where women disappeared and the honor of women was humiliated during search operations. Kiyya Baloch, one of the renowned journalists in Balochistan reported that Baloch women and children have been illegally detained by Pakistan security forces which were later on released. In one of his tweets, he said the way Baloch women are humiliated, mocked, and ridiculed before the Commission on inquiry against enforced disappearances is unspeakable.<sup>63</sup> According to the

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<sup>62</sup> Desmukh, Fahad. "Baloch Women Taking More Prominent Role in Fight for Independence from Pakistan." *The World*, July 17, 2013.

<sup>63</sup> See Tweet of Kiyya Baloch on 27 March, 2022

Voice of Baloch Missing Persons, there have been 50,000 registered cases of disappearances. Among them, there are 300 women.<sup>64</sup>

Mama Qadeer Baloch who is also head of the group Voice for Baloch Missing Persons said –Women rarely leave the home, and when they do it is only for education. But ever since this barbarity of abducting and killing, and military operations started, women whose husbands, brothers, or fathers have been abducted have started taking to the street to raise their voices in protest”<sup>65</sup>They are raising their voices against the brutal policies of the state. This can be witnessed from the Baloch missing person movement as it is one the largest movements which is mostly led by women. Karima Baloch, Mahrang Baloch, Sammi Baloch, and Farzana Majeed are some of the women who have played important roles in raising awareness among Baloch women. They raise voices for oppressed people and encouraged other women to stand up for their rights.It is important to discuss the role of these women because they are changing the nature of women participation in Balochistan. Without knowing their role it will be difficult to understand today’s dynamics. The role of these women will be discussed in detail.

### **Karima Baloch**

Karima Baloch is considered a key figure in Balochistan national movement as she openly raised her voice against the brutalities of Pakistani forces. She became one of the leading voices for the Baloch cause and is considered the symbol of resistance and courage

She participated actively in various student movements while she was a student at the University of Balochistan. In 2006, she joined the Balochistan student organization (a student group known

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<sup>64</sup> Baloch, Sagar. –8th June : Baloch Missing Person’s Day Reminds Us of Unrelenting Anguish.” The Balochistan Post, June 8, 2023.

<sup>65</sup> Desmukh, Fahad. –Baloch Women Taking More Prominent Role in Fight for Independence from Pakistan.” The World, July 17, 2013.

for its advocacy of Baloch rights and autonomy). She was the first woman to become chairperson of this organization in 2015.<sup>66</sup> This gave her a chance to highlight the human rights abuses, economic deprivation, and political marginalization caused by Pakistan. She openly talked about the brutalities and oppressive policies of Pakistan towards its community and accused them of the situation created in Balochistan.

In 2016, she was named in the BBC's annual list of hundred inspirational and influential women.<sup>67</sup> Later on due to her bold stance against the state she has to leave the country and was residing in Toronto, Canada, and was raising her voice for the rights of the Baloch people. She was found dead in December 2020. Although the causes of her death are unknown. Baloch nationalist and activists claimed that she was killed by Pakistan intelligence agencies.<sup>68</sup>

Karima Baloch is remembered as the symbol of bravery and courage who has sacrificed her life for the Baloch nation. She is remembered as "Mamma" a Brahvi term which means mother. During her second death anniversary in December 2022, "Balochistan-i-Banuk" a film by Baloch Women Forum documenting the life of Karima Baloch was also presented.<sup>69</sup>

The Baloch nation remembers her and today women follow in her footsteps. It is said that you can kill a person but you cannot kill an ideology. Her contributions have left a lasting impact on the struggle for the rights and self-determination of the Baloch people, and she continues to be an inspiration to those fighting for justice and equality in the region.

## **Maharang Baloch**

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<sup>66</sup> "Karima Baloch: Pakistani Rights Activist Found Dead in Toronto." BBC News, December 22, 2020. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-55368524>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> "Karima Baloch, Pakistani Human Rights Activist, Found Dead in Canada." The Guardian, December 22, 2020. <https://www.theguardian.com/world>.

<sup>69</sup> "Activists, Student Groups Remembers Karima Baloch on Her Second Death Anniversary." The Balochistan Post, December 23, 2022.

Maharang Baloch is a political activist, she advocated for the rights of Baloch missing persons. She is suffering from state-enforced disappearances policies since the time she was thirteen years old. Her father disappeared in 2006 and 2009 before his extrajudicial killing in 2011.<sup>70</sup> After the death of her father, she became quiet. It was the abduction of her brother that made her choose the path of political activism. She became politically active by protesting on roads and streets for the safe return of her brother. She also become active on social media and raised her voice for Baloch's missing persons and gave updates on the situation in Balochistan. It was due to her activism that her brother, Nasir Baloch was released.<sup>71</sup>

She has become the voice of Baloch's missing person due to her social media following. In her interview with Vice Asia, she said I believe social media has played a crucial role in bringing back my brother because social media creates pressure on national and international media. She considered social media a powerful tool in raising the issue of enforced disappearances and extra-judicial killing by the Pakistani state.<sup>72</sup>

The people who criticize the involvement of women in the political sphere should look at the factors that made them choose this path. When you and your family are suffering at the hands of the state, you are left with no choice but to raise your voice for the atrocities being conducted by the state.

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<sup>70</sup> Mehmood, Rabia. "The Women Fighting Enforced Disappearances in Pakistan." *The Friday Times*, March 8, 2023.

<sup>71</sup> Pakistan's Enforced Disappearances | Influence. VICE Asia, 2021.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsuN4xNj3SI>.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid

## Sammi Deen Baloch

Sammi Baloch is a social activist raising her voice for Baloch's missing person. She claimed that her father was abducted by Pakistan security forces in 2009.<sup>73</sup> Since, then she is asking one question from the state, where is her father now it's been fourteen years, and she has no clue about her father. She is very vocal regarding Baloch's missing person issue. In a seminar conducted this year in March, she said if we are Baloch, people easily called us anti-state or traitors but they failed to understand why we have an anti-state stance.<sup>74</sup> We have been facing enforced disappearances for years and when we questioned about it we went missing. Similarly in Asma Jehangir's conference she bashed Pakistani media for covering every minute and irrelevant issue but failed to give any coverage to the families of Baloch missing persons.<sup>75</sup>

She has been vocal regarding the concerns of families of missing persons. She said it is the story of every other house in Balochistan. Abduction, kill and dump policy and fake encounters are common things in Balochistan.<sup>76</sup> According to her, the difficulties faced by families of missing persons have escalated significantly, particularly for those who have been engaged in peaceful protests for an extended period. She holds the view that the recent suicide bombing incident is being exploited by the authorities to justify the abduction, intimidation, and mistreatment of Baloch women, allegedly in the name of countering terrorism<sup>77</sup>. The state has begun labeling Baloch women as terrorists and subsequently initiated a harsh crackdown. However, under the

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<sup>73</sup> –More than 5,000 People Are Missing in Balochistan. I Want My Father Back | Sammi Deen Baloch.” The Guardian, July 6, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jul/06/pakistan-5000-people-disappeared-missing-balochistan>.

<sup>74</sup> Karachi | re imaging Pakistan Seminar | sammi deen baloch Speech | 12 March 2023. YouTube. YouTube, 2023. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBcR\\_LuOGp8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NBcR_LuOGp8).

<sup>75</sup> YouTube. YouTube, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ocbPb5yfeiU>.

<sup>76</sup> –More than 5,000 People Are Missing in Balochistan. I Want My Father Back | Sammi Deen Baloch.” The Guardian, July 6, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/global->

<sup>77</sup> Ibid

guise of maintaining law and order, the focus appears to be directed towards those Baloch women who have been involved in long-standing protests and resistance efforts.

### **Farzana Majeed**

Farzana Majeed is the sister of Zakir Majeed Baloch, who was a student of Masters in English at Balochistan University and vice president of BSO went missing in 2009. Since then Farzana Majeed is struggling for the peaceful recovery of her brother.<sup>78</sup> It's been more than a decade that she has no whereabouts of her brother. She has spent years of her life sitting in protest camps and speaking at political rallies. She along with Mama Qadeer Baloch led the Quetta-Karachi and Karachi-Islamabad long marches demanding the safe recovery of political workers in Balochistan. She has played an important role in raising awareness among Baloch people for their rights.<sup>79</sup> She stands for her brother and political workers in Balochistan. Moreover, she also encouraged other women to join the protest and demand their rights from Pakistan.

The struggle of Farzana Majeed clearly shows what the Baloch women are going through in their daily lives. Their life is spent while waiting for the safe returns of their beloved ones. Farzana Majeed while talking to the media say, we do not want this type of life, we want a normal peaceful life as other citizens of Pakistan state. Unfortunately, we were forced to protest, sit in street camps, and held long marches. The state is responsible for the circumstances created in Balochistan.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Hanif, Mohammad. "Baloch Missing Persons: A Sister's Vigil." *The Express Tribune*, February 13, 2013.

<sup>79</sup> Shah, Syed Ali. "Ing March for Baloch Missing Persons Begins." *Dawn*, October 27, 2013.

<sup>80</sup> Farzana Majeed Baloch, 2018. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XRIVZ61vUbA&t=40s>.

## **Balochistan's Women and Today's Dynamics**

To understand today's dynamics and what the Baloch women think of the Baloch national movement and the involvement of women in the insurgency, interviews were conducted. Different questions were asked to which there were different responses.

### **Role of Women in the Baloch National Movement and its Evolution with Time**

There were different responses to this question. Three respondents were of the view that the role of women in the Baloch national movement is limited. They do not participate directly and most of the time they were confined to the house and if they leave it is only for education or a job. The Baloch women are peace-loving and have nothing to do with the insurgency. However, they agreed that now the trend is being changed and they are raising their voice for the Baloch cause and using different social media accounts to support the national movement. These respondents were of the view supporting national movement is not wrong but the way you choose matters. Women should support it through peaceful means such as raising their voices on social media and joining protests that are raising issues for their rights.

While other female respondents were of the view that maybe women were not supporting it directly but they were supporting their male counterparts in different aspects. They do not consider it a new phenomenon. They express that since the start of the insurgency, women were supporting male members of society. The support is still there but now they feel like they should be physically present to support males. One of the respondents said,

*“It is the need of the hour to stand shoulder to shoulder with male members of society. Otherwise, the brutalities of the state will increase. If we do not stand today, then we cannot complain about what is happening to us today and will happen in the future.”*

However, female respondents agreed that the current phase is violent and full of surprises. It is bringing new dimensions to the Baloch insurgency. One other respondent said,

*“The attack of Shari Baloch was a great surprise. I as a Baloch woman was not expecting this much but this is what happens when you reach the threshold level.”*

The response of male respondents in this regard was different. Although the Baloch society is conservative in general and does not allow women to get involved in these kinds of activities. To my surprise, male respondents were fine with it. I still recall the words of one respondent when asking this question he replied,

*“Baloch national movement is a secular movement. It has no specific roles confined to males or females. They both are equal and can play their part in whatever way they want to.”*

But when the discussion proceeded and I asked Baloch if society will allow women to indulge in these activities. He replied no. Women will have to face many challenges if she chooses this way.

### **Factors influencing the Involvement of Women in the Insurgency**

Regarding this, there were different opinions. Most female respondents consider lack of education, joblessness poverty, and frustration as the influencing factors. While others were of the view that

*“It is due to the grief and anger they go through when male members of their houses are abducted and killed.”*



There are many examples of women who joined the movement when their father or brother faced enforced disappearance. When women think that there is no other possible way to record their protest and raise their voices. Then they joined different movements. One respondent said,

*“It is the personal experience of everyone. We simply cannot say joblessness, illiteracy, and poverty are influencing factors. No doubt they have a role but very minute. You cannot imagine the level of anger and grief when one’s family member disappeared without any specific reason and then for years they do not know anything about them. This is what makes women take such steps”*

However, when I asked what is your opinion regarding the involvement of Shari Baloch who was not a victim of any of the mentioned things. The respondent replied,

*“Exceptions are always there. But I think someone has to take a step. In the case of Balochistan, Shari took that. The step of Shari is a message that if the state will not stop its brutalities, the damage will be irreversible.”*

### **Challenges Faced by Baloch Women while Participating in Baloch National Struggle**

For Baloch women, the road to struggle is not easy. They have to face challenges in this path. The Baloch society like Pakistan is patriarchal, women have to face the hurdles created by male members of society. In the peripheral regions, patriarchal norms undermine the sources of power for indigenous women, restricting their ability to exercise political and economic rights. This is especially evident in areas like Balochistan, Pakistan, where Baloch women have historically taken a leading role, paving the way for resistance against the double colonization that actively

operates within the social system of Pakistan.<sup>81</sup> The fight for liberation from oppressive social systems has also resulted in the institutionalization of gender distinctions, significantly influencing the lives of marginalized women. Despite some level of education and economic independence among women, the struggle against the dominant, oppressive, and neo-colonial system remains relentless.

The respondents agreed to the point that,

*“Life of Baloch women is already very challenging. However she will have to face more challenges including cultural barriers and restrictions from male members of society after the direct involvement of women in the battlefield.”*

Moreover, Baloch women will be under more security surveillance after the incidents of female insurgents. As one of the respondent said,

*„The honor of Baloch women was not saved. There have been incidents when security forces have trampled the sanctity of houses. Now they will do it more in the name of security.”*

One other respondent said it is obvious that when you are in the limelight and openly talking about the facts you have to face challenges.

*“Baloch women are aware of the fact that as the nature of women's involvement changes, the nature of violence also changes. She quoted the incident that happened in front of the Sindh Assembly.”*

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<sup>81</sup> Fatima, Kinza. “Dual Oppression in Balochistan: RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE OF BALOCH WOMEN.” Unbound - Unchained 2, no. May,2023, May 2023.

In July 2022, in Karachi, there was a protest near the Sindh Assembly against the alleged abduction of two Baloch students from the University of Karachi. The police intervened and detained 28 protestors, including nine women. The detained individuals were eventually released, but protest organizers accused the police of mistreating women and children during the incident.<sup>82</sup>

The Baloch women are not facing challenges from their society but also from the state institutions. The Baloch women have been threatened and harassed to stay quiet. It is evident as Sammi Baloch while talking to The Guardian said we are being threatened, humiliated, and faced verbal abuse by police while having protests. In her words,

*“We come from respectable families and we are not happy to be demonstrating on the streets. Our men have disappeared – that’s why Baloch women, from a conservative province, are coming out of their homes to protest.”<sup>83</sup>*

Similarly, she accused the police of mishandling the protestors. She said, I spent 13 years in the struggle to know the truth but have never been as humiliated, harassed, beaten, or verbally abused as I was at the peaceful protest in Karachi.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, Maharang Baloch also share her views saying I was threatened to keep quiet on the issue of missing persons otherwise will have to face consequences.<sup>85</sup>

In February 2023, three young individuals, consisting of two men and one woman, were found dead in a well in the Haji Kot area of Barkhan. The woman had suffered from rape, torture, and

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<sup>82</sup> Hafeez, Somaiyah. —As Bloch Women Raise Their Voices, the State Cracks Down.” The Diplomat, June 29, 2022.

<sup>83</sup> —More than 5,000 People Are Missing in Balochistan. I Want My Father Back | Sammi Deen Baloch.” The Guardian, July 6, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/global->

<sup>84</sup> Ibid

<sup>85</sup> Pakistan’s Enforced Disappearances | Influence. VICE Asia, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dsuN4xNj3SI>.

gunshot wounds. This shocking incident in Barkhan caused widespread anger and indignation in Balochistan. The subsequent sit-in protests not only focused on the brutal killing of Baloch women but also evolved into a movement against tribalism and the subjugation of women. The wave of protests intensified further, spurred on by the enforced disappearance of Baloch women, including Rahim Zehri, his mother Mahbas Khatoon, his wife Rasheeda Zehri, and their two children, who vanished from Gishkori Town in Quetta in February. Additionally, Mahal Baloch, her two children, and other women were also forcibly taken to an undisclosed location.<sup>86</sup>

One of the respondents said that Baloch women have added new history to resistance movement. Despite many challenges she is standing for her rights. She said,

*“Baloch women have become a symbol of resistance in today’s era. They have a history of awakening political consciousness among their people. They are still playing their part in making Baloch’s cause strong and encouraging other Baloch women to become part of the resistance movement. Despite facing numerous challenges, Baloch women have played crucial roles in the struggle for their rights, independence, and recognition.”*

### **Role of women’s networks and social movements in Influencing Women Participation**

Regarding the role of women’s networks and social movements some of the respondents agreed to the point that,

*“They have played a positive role in awakening consciousness among Baloch women. They have provided them the platform to raise their voice. These networks are motivating women to stand for their rights.”*

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<sup>86</sup> Fatima, Kinza. “Dual Oppression in Balochistan: RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE OF BALOCH WOMEN.” Unbound - Unchained 2, no. May,2023, May 2023.

Some other respondents do not consider the role of women's networks and social movements as influential. They were of the view that,

*It is the experiences of Baloch women who have played more role in influencing their choices rather than women's network and social movements."*

### **Long-Term Implications of Women's Involvement in Conflict**

The respondents were skeptical regarding more involvement of women in the insurgency. One of the respondents said,

*"I do not think that we will see more women as insurgents because it is a very unusual thing in Baloch society. So it is too early to say anything about long term implications of women involvement in national movement."*

There is no doubt that Baloch women have been involved in raising their voices for their rights. However, their involvement as insurgents is a new phenomenon. Moreover, some respondents were of the opinion women should not get involved in these kinds of activities as one other respondent said,

*"It is the war between state and nationalist groups, women should not be dragged into it because in Baloch society Baloch women are very respectful and by involving them in insurgency we are giving excuse to state to get skeptical about Baloch women."*

Furthermore, some respondents agreed to the view that whenever you are in state of war, what suits your interests you do that. This is the case of insurgent groups whatever they feel is right to protect their interests they will do it. One other respondent said,

*“If this was the case of Palestine or Kashmir and women were participating like this you will appreciate it but when it is the case of Balochistan people go against it.”*

### **Involvement of Baloch women in Insurgency**

Baloch women have actively participated in various aspects of the insurgency, including political activism, protest movements, and armed resistance. They have been at the forefront of demanding justice, equal rights, and autonomy for their people. The dimension of armed struggle in Balochistan is witnessing an unprecedented shift with women stepping into roles traditionally filled by men. The direct involvement of Baloch women as Fedayeen in insurgency highlights their resilience and determination. Their contributions have brought attention to the issues faced by the Baloch community and have made a significant impact on the dynamics of the ongoing struggle for their rights and self-determination.

BRA does claim to have female bombers in their squad but the first case of women's involvement came on 26 April 2022 when a female suicide bomber, Shari Baloch blew herself up near the Confucius Institute in Karachi University and as a result, a Pakistani driver and three Chinese teachers were killed.<sup>87</sup> Later on, BLA took responsibility for the attack. This incident created outrage in Pakistan because it was the first case of its nature. The attack of Shari Baloch created a new chapter in the history of the Baloch national struggle. The important thing to note is she was not only an educated woman and teacher but a mother of two children.<sup>88</sup> This raises the question of why an educated woman and a mother of two blew herself. Similarly, Sumaiya Qalandarani also blew herself up in Turbat. Mostly, these kinds of attacks took place to gain attention and shape public opinion. The faction of BLA which is responsible for suicide bombing

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<sup>87</sup> Baloch, Kiyya, and Akbar Notezai. “Pakistan: Woman Suicide Bomber Change in Baloch Rebels’ Strategy?” Al Jazeera, April 28, 2022.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid

is Majeed Brigade, which has three main goals. Abdul Basit in his report said The Majeed Brigade employs a three-stage strategy for each suicide attack, with specific objectives in mind. Firstly, the attack aims to achieve a political goal by garnering publicity for the Baluch insurgent movement when the suicide bomber detonates. During the second stage, the release of the bomber's video statement helps in attracting potential new suicide bombers. Whether or not the intended target is hit in the third stage, the Majeed Brigade considers it a win-win situation as the bomber becomes a revered martyr and an iconic figure within the group, similar to the Majeed Brothers, Rehan Aslam Baloch, and the female suicide bomber Shari Baloch who struck on April 27 in Karachi. The third stage also focuses on the military goal, where the destruction of the target helps in accomplishing their military objectives.<sup>89</sup> In the case of Shari Baloch's suicide attack, all goals were successfully achieved - the target was destroyed, significant media coverage was gained to attract recruits, and the political motive of targeting the Confucius Center, representing Chinese state imperialism(as Baloch separatist quote it) was prominently highlighted, an objective highly significant to Baloch separatists.<sup>90</sup>

However, there is no direct answer to the question of why the Baloch women are joining the banned outfits. One can assume the conditions and circumstances that motivated them to choose the path of becoming suicide bombers. The other source is to listen to the interviews of these women but it is not a reliable source because as mentioned earlier, it is a tactic to attract people. Unfortunately, the only source to know about their thoughts is their interviews. If the problem of Balochistan is not dealt with properly, the repercussions will be more dangerous. Raza Rabbani, former chairman of the senate said, "Extreme nationalism has permeated to such an extent that

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<sup>89</sup> Basit, Abdul. Publication. The Majeed Brigade: The Baluch Liberation Army's Suicide Squad 20. Vol. 20. The James Foundation, n.d.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid

educated women are willing to lay down their lives. This means that the seeds of oppression, suppression, alienation, and the sense of deprivation are so deep that it motivates violent reaction against the state and its strategic interests.”<sup>91</sup>

## **Shari Baloch**

Shari Baloch is the first female suicide who blew herself up in front of the Confucius Institute at the University of Karachi. This was the first case of its nature and it changed the dynamics of the Balochistan insurgency. Shari belong to an educated family none of whom had been killed or gone missing in the crackdown on the insurgency.

According to her husband, Haibtain Baloch the death of Hayat Baloch, a student of Karachi University who was killed in Turbat, and Karima Baloch, a Baloch political leader have a deep impact on her.<sup>92</sup> She was of the view that the state is not even accepting peaceful methods of protest. Maybe she thought the only way to face the state is by taking arms against them. In her video released by BLA after the attack, she called Pakistan a cruel state who has forcefully occupied their land. She raised a question why our people are so helpless just to get a piece of bread, despite being owners of such resourceful land? She accused the Pakistan army of snatching basic rights from the Baloch people.<sup>93</sup> In the released video she also said only revolutionary thoughts are not enough, people need to take practical steps. She also encouraged women to join this struggle for independence and believed that her step will motivate other women to do so.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Wasim, Amir. –‘KU Attack \_Final Wake-up Call\_ on Crisis in Balochistan.’ Dawn, April 28, 2022.

<sup>92</sup> –‘Baloch Women Fear Crackdown after Karachi Suicide Attack.’ The Guardian, May 19, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/may/19/baloch-women-fear-crackdown-after-karachi-suicide-attack>.

<sup>93</sup> Shari Baloch’s message for Baloch nation, recorded only a day before she carried out the fidayee. YouTube. YouTube, 2022. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HLzyUtUOPZw&amp;t=27s>.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid



The video of Shari Baloch shows that she held Pakistan responsible for the situation in Balochistan and her step is an effort to support her brothers who are fighting against the state.

### **Sumaiya Qalandarani**

Sumaiya Qalandarani, a suicide bomber who attacked security forces in Turbat on June 24, 2023.<sup>95</sup> She joined BLA earlier and was working for its media wing. Later on, she joined its Majeed Brigade as Fedayeen. She has been a direct victim of state brutal policies where male members of her family forcibly disappeared in 2011.<sup>96</sup> She has a deep connection with the Baloch resistance movement as she was the fiancée of Rehan Baloch and daughter-in-law of Aslam Baloch who was the founding father of BLA. The video released after her attack by the BLA media wing shows that she is also accusing Pakistan of forceful occupation of their land and declaring her step as an effort on her behalf on the road to independence.<sup>97</sup>

The circumstances and factors are different for both suicide bombers but one thing is common between the video of Shari Baloch and Sumaiya Qalandarani. Both have accused Pakistan of forceful occupation of their land. They both were of the view despite resourceful land, Baloch is sufferings at the hands of the Pakistani state. Both consider their step as motivating as it will encourage other women to join the struggle.

The era of women's active involvement in the armed resistance has begun. With Sumaiya Baloch's self-sacrificing attack making the second of its kind, the arrival of women on the frontline can no longer be overlooked or dismissed as a one-off incident. The involvement of

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<sup>95</sup> Baloch, Behram, and Saleem Shahid. —Cp "Martyred in Turbat Bombing." Dawn, June 25, 2023.

<sup>96</sup> "Who's Is Sumaiya Qalandarani Baloch?" The Balochistan Post, June 27, 2023.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid

women is evident in coming times as the media wing of BLA has released photos of more women who are under training and ready to sacrifice them.

### **Impact of Women Involvement in Insurgency**

Women's involvement in the Balochistan insurgency will have a multifaceted impact with its implications on social dynamics, gender norms, the conflict itself, and the broader regional context. One of the most significant impacts of women's involvement in the insurgency has been the challenge to traditional gender norms prevalent in Baloch society. By participating in political activism, protests, and even armed resistance, Baloch women have shattered the stereotype of being solely confined to domestic roles.<sup>98</sup> Their actions have inspired other women and young girls to pursue education, activism, and leadership roles, empowering them to demand greater agency and equality within their communities. Women's participation has also brought new dimensions to the Balochistan insurgency expanding the scope of resistance, leading to a more inclusive and diversified approach to addressing the region's grievances. Women have introduced new strategies, ideas, and forms of resistance, contributing to the insurgency's resilience and adaptability. The involvement of women in the Balochistan insurgency has captured the attention of the international community. The stories of brave women defying traditional norms and participating in the struggle for their community's rights have gained attention globally. This increased attention has placed pressure on the Pakistani government to address the underlying issues and engage in dialogue with the Baloch leaders, seeking a peaceful resolution to the conflict. This is also evident from the fact that after the attack of Shari Baloch and Sumaiya Baloch, they both were trending on Twitter with the hash tag of their name the

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<sup>98</sup> Fatima, Kinza. "Dual Oppression in Balochistan: RESISTANCE AND RESILIENCE OF BALOCH WOMEN." Unbound - Unchained 2, no. May,2023, May 2023.

legend. The participation of females was hailed by Baloch people in general but some people criticized the step. According to them involving women in the war is not the solution or step in the right direction. One of the journalists of Balochistan, Bahut Baloch through her Twitter account shared that people are paying tribute to Sumaiya Baloch in a unique manner.<sup>99</sup> Women have been saluting the bench where she sat and waiting for her target.



Source: Bahot Baloch Twitter Account

It has enhanced its legitimacy and broadened its appeal. Their participation signifies that the struggle for autonomy and recognition transcends gender, class, and ethnic boundaries. It reinforces the narrative that the Baloch people, both men, and women, are united in their quest for justice, equality, and self-determination and signifies that Baloch national movement is a secular movement where men and women are playing their part. The participation of women in the insurgency has impacted recruitment and support for the movement. It has attracted more women to join the ranks, while also gathering the sympathy and support of the wider Baloch

<sup>99</sup> See Bahot Baloch Tweet on July 03,2023

population. The involvement of mothers, wives, and daughters in the movement has strengthened the determination of male fighters, emphasizing the importance of the cause and its impact on their family's future. The picture released by one of the militant organizations shows that more women are becoming part of the Baloch national movement and joining the militant organization as insurgents.<sup>100</sup> They are now seen as active agents of change, capable of contributing meaningfully to the resistance. This shift in perception has encouraged women to take on leadership roles and participate in decision-making processes within the insurgency. The direct involvement of women in insurgency has alarmed the Pakistan security forces because with the involvement of women, the situation is getting out of control.



Source: The Balochistan Post, Twitter account

While women's involvement has brought positive changes, it has also exposed them to new vulnerabilities. Female fighters face increased risks of violence, abuse, and exploitation during the conflict. Women will be under more security risk. Moreover, women from non-combatant families may also be targeted as a means of retaliation or intimidation. There have been cases of

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<sup>100</sup> See The Balochistan post Twitter Account

women's disappearance and arrest like Noor Jahan who was arrested by the counter-terrorism department (CTD)<sup>101</sup>. Similarly, Mahal Baloch was also arrested on the allegation that she was a potential suicide bomber and was brainwashed by one of the militant organizations. Later on, CTD fails to provide any proof in this regard. Saira Baloch while writing in the Balochistan Post said that it is a tactic by the state to link women to armed organizations and subject them to bogus allegations. All this is done to silence their voices. These kinds of incidents will take place because the involvement of women in insurgency has made Baloch women suspicious.<sup>102</sup> More exploitation will be done in the name of security.

Concluding, the involvement of women in the Baloch national movement is not a new phenomenon but women's involvement in recent times, taking on roles as suicide bombers is new. While historically, women's participation in the conflict was limited to non-combat roles, this shift represents a concerning development with implications for both the conflict dynamics and the vulnerabilities faced by women themselves. The use of female suicide bombers represents a strategic shift, potentially indicating the desperation of the insurgents to escalate their efforts and garner attention for their cause. The involvement of women as suicide bombers in the Baloch insurgency is a disturbing development that warrants serious attention. It highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to conflict resolution, focusing on addressing the root causes of the insurgency while ensuring the protection and empowerment of women. Initiatives that promote dialogue, inclusivity, and gender equality are crucial in navigating toward a more peaceful and sustainable resolution to the complex Baloch conflict.

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<sup>101</sup> "Missing Baloch Woman Produced in Court; Lawyer Says She Was Tortured." The Balochistan Post, May 18, 2022.

<sup>102</sup> Baloch, Saira. "The Fabricated Story of Mahal Baloch: A Shocking Example of State-Sponsored Violence and Oppression." The Balochistan Post, April 18, 2022.

## Chapter 4

### Peace Process in Baluchistan

For decades, the province of Balochistan in Pakistan has been under unrest and conflict. It has been characterized by a mix of ethnic, political, and economic issues that have fueled a sense of alienation and marginalization among the Baloch population. The quest for peace in this region has been a complex and challenging endeavor, with multiple actors and historical grievances entangled in a web of violence and uncertainty. These grievances date back to 1947 when soon after partition, the Baloch nationalists claim that their province was forcibly incorporated into Pakistan against their will, and this historical injustice forms the foundation of their demands for autonomy and recognition of their separate identity<sup>103</sup>. Over the years, the conflict has witnessed several peaks and troughs, with violent clashes between separatist groups and the Pakistani state security forces. The dynamics of the Balochistan peace process are multi-faceted and involve a diverse range of stakeholders with competing interests. The Pakistani government, security forces, political parties, and intelligence agencies are key players, each grappling with its own set of challenges and objectives. Meanwhile, the Baloch nationalist groups, representing various factions, seek to assert their demands for political autonomy, resource rights, and cultural recognition. The road to peace in Balochistan is not easy as it will take a lot of effort to bridge the gap between Pakistan and Baloch community with the hope to address the root causes of conflict while fostering a climate of understanding, inclusivity, and trust among all stakeholders.

The state of Pakistan should take the matter of Balochistan seriously, otherwise, it will reach a point of no return. This chapter will discuss what Pakistan has done to bring peace to Balochistan

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<sup>103</sup> Shah, Kriti M. –“The Baloch and Pashtun Nationalist Movements in Pakistan: Colonial Legacy and the Failure of State Policy.” ORF, August 7, 2019. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/the-baloch-and-pashtun-nationalist-movements-in-pakistan-colonial-legacy-and-the-failure-of-state-policy-53691/>.

and what is needed to be done. Building trust, engaging with all stakeholders, addressing historical grievances, and respecting human rights is fundamental to laying the groundwork for a peaceful and prosperous future in Balochistan.

### **Overview of the previous attempts to restore peace in Balochistan**

Ali Dayan Hassan in his article *Balochistan caught in fragility Trap* argued that Balochistan is the most fragile province of Pakistan and he defined the situation of fragility as “periods when states or institutions lack the capacity, accountability, or legitimacy to mediate relations between citizen groups and between citizens and the state, making them vulnerable to violence.”<sup>104</sup> In Balochistan the situation is the same, the state has failed to bring peace to the region. The lack of control over natural resources and the central government's dominance have consistently fueled grievances and conflicts. The absence of provincial control in the development of the Gwadar Port has also become a significant point of contention. Moreover, ongoing issues encompass political victimization and state oppression. Since 2005, human rights organizations have documented extensive serious violations committed by security forces, including extrajudicial killings, torture, enforced disappearances, forced displacement, and excessive use of force. In response, Baloch nationalists have occasionally targeted government establishments, infrastructures, and security personnel in sporadic attacks.<sup>105</sup> This cycle of violence by the state and counter-violence by the different nationalist groups is exclusive in Balochistan for decades. The issue of concern is no serious efforts have been made to restore peace in Balochistan.

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<sup>104</sup> Hassan, Ali & Dayan. —“Balochistan: Caught in the Fragility Trap.” United States Institute of Peace, September 17, 2021. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2016/06/balochistan-caught-fragility-trap>.

<sup>105</sup> Gare, Frederic. —“Balochistan: The State versus the Nation.” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 11, 2013. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/04/11/balochistan-state-versus-nation-pub-51488>, 2021.

From 1972 to 2013, successive political governments attempted to address Balochistan's grievances, enhance socioeconomic development, and mitigate violent conflicts through institutional reforms. Efforts included elevating provincial status within the federal framework under the 1973 Constitution, granting more authority over provincial matters and resources, and augmenting financial resources based on the Aghaz-e-Huqooq-e-Balochistan and the Seventh National Finance Commission (NFC) Award (2009).<sup>106</sup> Furthermore, the 18th Amendment to the Constitution in 2010 aimed to enhance provincial autonomy. But more of these attempts were made verbally, and no practical steps were taken to ensure their practicality.

The Aghaz-e-Huqooq-e-Balochistan Package announced by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) government in 2009 was the first attempt by a federal government to specifically address the Balochistan-center conflict.<sup>107</sup> It aims to encompass a wide spectrum of issues, ranging from provincial self-governance to ensuring justice for the assassinations of Baloch political figures and the matter of overseeing natural resources. Along with this 18th amendment to the constitution was made in 2010, according to which provincial autonomy was promised. Previously exclusive federal government matters, including national planning, mega projects, the national census, electricity, and specific aspects of health and education, are now subject to determination by a more influential Council of Common Interests (CCI), representing all provinces. The sole subjects entirely passed on to provinces involve the collection of certain taxes and revenue. In a context where the federal government has historically held influence over revenue generation and collection (accounting for up to 93 percent of total revenue during the 18th Amendment's enactment), the National Finance Commission (NFC), responsible for

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<sup>106</sup> Hassan, Ali & Dayan. — "Balochistan: Caught in the Fragility Trap." United States Institute of Peace, September 17, 2021. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2016/06/balochistan-caught-fragility-trap>.

<sup>107</sup> Amirali, Alia. Balochistan a case study of Pakistan's peacemaking praxis. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2015.



shaping the tax framework and distributing revenue between the central and provincial governments, has unsurprisingly been a contentious body.<sup>108</sup> Over time, this has led to instances of unsuccessful commissions; three out of seven commissions formed since 1973 were unable to find common ground on taxation and revenue-sharing methods. The 18th Amendment has introduced modifications to the NFC award criteria. These revisions incorporate factors like inverse population density, revenue generation/collection, as well as poverty and underdevelopment. Previous formulas were solely based on population, disproportionately favoring Punjab in fund allocation. Significantly, the 2010–2011 NFC Award marked the first mutually agreed-upon award in 17 years. It elevated the overall provincial portion in the total divisible pool from 47.5 percent to 56 percent in 2010–2011, decreased Punjab's relative share within the provincial pool, and nearly doubled Balochistan's portion from 5 percent to slightly over 9 percent.<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, Constitutional reforms in Balochistan encompass several notable changes, including the revocation of the police and local government framework introduced during the Musharraf administration. This system designated all of Balochistan as A areas, subjecting them to police jurisdiction. This decision faced unanimous opposition from the Balochistan government, spanning both Baloch and Pashtun segments. The move was deemed offensive as it introduced an external police force into Balochistan territory, disregarding local sensitivities. Under General Musharraf's administration, the police and local government acts were placed within the Sixth Schedule, effectively preventing provinces from altering the system without central approval.

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid

<sup>109</sup> Ibid

The Package/18th Amendment, however, reinstates these powers to the provincial government, thereby enabling them to regain control over police and local governance matters.<sup>110</sup>

Control over natural resources is one of the important demands of the people of Balochistan. As per the Package, it has been agreed that the provincial government must approve all forthcoming megaprojects, with the contract agreement explicitly outlining the provincial share in benefits and profits. Furthermore, the Package indicates that for pre-existing agreements, a reevaluation of profit distribution between the federal and provincial administrations is permissible. The Package declaration states that the federal government, in consultation with the provincial government should release all political activists, except those accused of serious crimes. Similarly, a commitment to facilitate the return of Baloch leaders (Brahmdagh Bugti and Hyrbyair Marri) who are in political exile will be made. The Package also calls for the constitution of a commission on missing persons, the proceedings of which are to be held in-camera.<sup>111</sup>

These were the major announcements that have been made for the people of Balochistan. The problem in these packages is not the scope of this study. The study focuses on why peace has not been restored in Balochistan till time. All these packages sound good in theory but are of no use if not practically implemented. Unfortunately, the same has happened in Balochistan. As it is reported that a progress report compiled by the Establishment Division, highlights that the majority of the recommendations within the Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan package remain unaddressed, even after a span of 16 months since its inception. Authorities have indicated that both the provincial and federal administrations have been stuck by insufficient funds.

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<sup>110</sup> –Constitution (Eighteenth Amendment) Act, 2010.” Constitution (Eighteenth Amendment) act, 2010. Accessed August 17, 2023. <https://www.pakistani.org/pakistan/constitution/amendments/18amendment.html>.

<sup>111</sup> Amirali, Alia. Balochistan a case study of Pakistan’s peacemaking praxis. Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2015.

Nonetheless, they express their commitment to exerting their utmost efforts to execute the proposals by the conclusion of 2013. And now a decade has passed to this and still the situation in Balochistan is the same but it has become worse. The state should focus on what it is doing and what is needed to be done.

### **Challenges in Balochistan Peace Process**

The process of peace in Balochistan is not an easy task. It will take a lot of effort to restore peace. The Baloch people have suffered a lot at the hands of the Pakistani state and there exists a trust deficit between them. All the efforts to restore peace are only possible if the trust of the people is gained. The state has to face a lot of challenges to ensure peace in Balochistan. There were different responses from students when asked about what they think are the challenges in peace process. Different factors were discussed, they include

### **Historical and Ethno-Political Complexities**

Balochistan's history is marked by a legacy of political grievances stemming from perceived marginalization, cultural suppression, and economic exploitation. The struggle for autonomy and recognition of the Baloch identity has fueled ethno political tensions and contributed to cycles of violence. The challenge lies in addressing historical injustices while creating a platform for inclusive political participation that accommodates diverse ethnic and cultural groups<sup>112</sup>.

Respondents were of the view that addressing historical grievances is very important. Most of the respondents were of the view,

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<sup>112</sup> Grare, Frederic. –Balochistan: The State Versus the Nation .” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 11, 2013. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/04/11/balochistan-state-versus-nation-pub-51488>.

*“Without addressing historical grievances, the peace process will be challenging. If the state is unable to address the historical grievances what’s the guarantee that it will ensure peace in the region? The state should come up with a comprehensive strategy to address the issues on people’s terms, the flexibility from the state side can play an important role in ensuring peace in the province.”*

## **Security and Militancy**

Balochistan has experienced waves of militancy and insurgency, with various Baloch nationalist groups seeking greater autonomy or independence from Pakistan. The government's counterinsurgency measures have often resulted in human rights abuses, enforced disappearances, and extrajudicial killings, further exacerbating mistrust and resentment. One respondent said,

*–Balancing security concerns with efforts to address the root causes of militancy remains a significant challenge. Without addressing these basic concerns it is difficult to bring peace to Balochistan.”*

The people of Balochistan and nationalists have been saying they are ready for dialogue but on certain conditions. One of the main demands is the removal of military and security agencies from Balochistan. The role of the military in adding fuel to the fire has been discussed in Chapter 2. Whether it’s the recent video message of one of the leaders of the militant organization who said we are ready for negotiation if Pakistan removes its military from Balochistan.<sup>113</sup> Similarly, the videos of female Fedayeen before blowing themselves are also referring to the forceful occupation of Pakistan on their land and demand that they should leave their land. The security

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<sup>113</sup> See Bahut Baloch Twitter account

apparatus by the Pakistani state has created many hurdles in Balochistan so removal of them can be a step in a positive direction.

### **Socio-Economic Disparities**

Persistent socioeconomic disparities have contributed to widespread frustration and discontent among the Baloch population. Lack of access to quality education, healthcare, infrastructure, and economic opportunities has created a breeding ground for unrest. Baloch has also complained that they have not been given any benefit from state economic policies. Instead, the state extract their resources and the whole of Pakistan gets benefit except them. The mega projects including CPEC, Gwadar port construction, etc have not benefited the people of Balochistan.<sup>114</sup> Although they have created more problems for it. While reading the work of one Baloch student, Hafeez Jamali he used the term anxiety of development by which he means projects such as national highways, railways, and major dams become symbolic representations of the nation itself. Postcolonial countries in the Global South have been driven by a strong desire to narrow the gap with industrialized Western nations in terms of material prosperity, physical infrastructure, and overall well-being. This pursuit of economic development, often championed by nationalist and transnational elites, fosters optimistic expectations of a better future among middle-class and working-class beneficiaries. However, this utopian vision frequently places an unequal burden on local communities situated in the spaces affected by these projects. While promising progress, these endeavors can impose significant economic, social, and environmental costs on the very people they are intended to benefit. Particularly, substantial infrastructure undertakings reshape

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<sup>114</sup> Khan, Minhas Majeed, Ahmad Rashid Malik, Saira Ejaz, and Ume Farwa. —Gina-Pakistan Economic Corridor a Game Changer - ISSI.ORG.PK.” [www.issi.org.pk](http://www.issi.org.pk), May 2016. [https://www.issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CPEC\\_Book\\_2016.pdf](https://www.issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/CPEC_Book_2016.pdf).

existing social dynamics and disrupt daily life rhythms for local inhabitants, leading to feelings of disruption, disorientation, and vulnerability.

Along with this the lack of educational and health facilities are an issue of great concern in Balochistan. No proper educational and health care institutes have been constructed. However, the recent issue regarding the construction of Pak China Gwadar University has been in the limelight. As the government claim that the Gwadar project will bring prosperity to the people of Balochistan. The irony is the bill for the construction of the university is passed where it will be constructed in Lahore. This has created resentment among Baloch and it shows that their concerns are genuine. The government is exploiting its resources to give benefit to other communities. If these kinds of things will happen how an environment of peace is possible. Addressing these disparities requires comprehensive development initiatives that prioritize inclusive growth and equitable resource distribution.

### **Resource Exploitation and Alienation**

The province's rich natural resources have frequently been a source of contention. Baloch communities often feel marginalized and exploited as their resources are extracted without commensurate benefits. The relationship between Balochistan's resource-dependent population and the Pakistani state's resource extraction policies is a critical aspect of the region's complexity.<sup>115</sup>

Baloch leaders have consistently emphasized the allocation of natural resources as a key issue throughout the conflict's history. Beyond fossil fuel and mineral deposits, Balochistan's extensive coastline and its potential as a transit route for regional gas pipelines highlight its strategic

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<sup>115</sup> <https://www.issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2-Conflict-in-Balochistan-natural-resources-and-the-way-forward.pdf>

significance. This holds implications for both the Pakistani government, striving to address an energy crisis, and Baloch rebels seeking autonomy or secession to gain control over these vital assets.

Prominent gas fields like Sui, Uch, Pirkoh, Loti, and Zarghun contribute around 36 percent of Pakistan's gas production, yet the majority of this is consumed outside the province. Balochistan also yields over 40 percent of the country's primary energy sources, including coal, oil, natural gas, and electricity but received a very low fraction of it.<sup>116</sup> Sabotage of energy infrastructure by rebels deters exploration efforts, with companies favoring other regions. The state should look into the matter of why rebels are sabotaging development projects. They want their control over their resources.

Furthermore, Balochistan boasts rich mineral deposits such as copper, uranium, gold, coal, silver, and platinum. Recent years have seen the province earn considerable revenue from minerals, issuing exploration and mining licenses. The Saindak copper exploration project, originally controlled by China, faced controversy over profit distribution – with China receiving the majority. A request by the provincial government to transfer ownership to the province has been made, if done it will play an important role in mitigating tensions surrounding resource management.<sup>117</sup> Baloch leaders have long raised concerns about the allocation of natural resources, emphasizing their desire for greater control over resources, land ownership, coastline, and land use. Baloch leaders consistently asserted that they were excluded from consultations concerning the project's initiation. Adding to their discontent, the federal government, in February 2007, bestowed a 40-year lease and 20-year tax exemption upon the Port of Singapore

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid

<sup>117</sup> Haider, Syed Fazl-e-. —“Chinese-Run Gold Mine in Balochistan Is Making Millions, but the Locals Aren't Getting Any of It.” *The China Project*, January 5, 2023.

Authority (PSA) without involving provincial government representatives. Furthermore, the government's decision to limit the involvement of Baloch workers in the construction process escalated tensions. During the project's initial phase, only one out of six workers were Baloch, employed on a daily wage basis. China, the principal financier with a nearly \$250 million investment, provided a substantial \$200 million soft loan and brought their workforce to Balochistan.<sup>118</sup> This move elicited strong reactions from insurgents, culminating in a notable attack that prompted heightened security measures for workers. In 2004, a car bomb resulted in the deaths of three Chinese engineers, prompting Musharraf to intensify security efforts.<sup>119</sup>

Despite these grievances, previous central administrations repeatedly dismissed these claims and failed to utilize Balochistan's resource potential for provincial development. A notable instance of resource exploitation is the delayed distribution of gas benefits, as Quetta, Balochistan's capital, received gas supply only in 1986 – over two decades after other cities like Multan and Lahore in Punjab had obtained their gas supply.<sup>120</sup> Balancing resource extraction with local empowerment and fair compensation is crucial for building trust and reducing tensions.

### **Political Representation and Autonomy**

Balochistan's political landscape has been marked by allegations of electoral manipulation, political engineering, and lack of genuine representation. The governance challenges in Balochistan encompass political and administrative incompetence, weak government authority, and a lack of rule of law. The provincial administration is seen by some as ineffective, with

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<sup>118</sup> China, the principal financier with a nearly \$250 million investment, provided a substantial \$200 million soft loan and brought their workforce to Balochistan.

<sup>119</sup> Fazal-ur-Rahman. "TARGETED ATTACKS ON CHINESE: MYTH AND REALITY." *Strategic Studies* 27, no. 4 (2007): 129–44. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45242422>.

<sup>120</sup> Tariq, Maliha. "Conflict in Balochistan: Natural Resources and the Way Forward." [www.issi.org.pk](http://www.issi.org.pk). Accessed August 16, 2023. <https://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/2-Conflict-in-Balochistan-natural-resources-and-the-way-forward.pdf>.



legislators primarily serving in executive roles, resulting in a dearth of opposition and guidance on governance. The military wields influence over Balochistan, controlling law and order and major governance issues.

Balochistan's voter turnout is notably low due to skepticism toward public services, leading people to rely on informal systems of adjudication and service delivery administered by local tribal elders. In this context, the Sardars wield considerable power and dominance over the populace, maintaining their authority without significant challenge.<sup>121</sup> The region grapples with incomplete policy implementation, lacking essential enabling legislation, rules, and procedures. Public attitudes toward political processes and service delivery reflect profound distrust and modest expectations.

The foundation of a prosperous society hinges on political stability, a crucial requirement that Balochistan currently deserves. Subsequent economic and social progress will naturally ensue from this stability. Disruption in the political sphere carries the risk of generating disorder and discontent among the populace, an outcome that Balochistan must avoid at all costs. The province has made considerable strides, underscoring the necessity for the consistent continuation of this trajectory. Creating a conducive environment for meaningful political dialogue and negotiation is essential for addressing the core issues and finding common ground.

### **Trust Deficit and Dialogue**

The relationship between the Baloch people and the Pakistani government has been characterized by deep-rooted mistrust, stemming from a complex interplay of historical, political, economic, and social factors. This mistrust has had far-reaching implications, contributing to longstanding

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<sup>121</sup> Pike, John. "Balochistan, Status of the Sardar." Baluchistan Status of the Sardars. Accessed August 17, 2023. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/pakistan/baloch-sardars.htm>.

tensions, conflicts, and challenges in the province of Balochistan. Years of conflict and mistrust have deepened the divide between the Baloch nationalist groups and the government. Reports of human rights abuses, including enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and military operations, have fueled resentment among the Baloch population.<sup>122</sup> The perceived impunity of security forces and the lack of accountability for these violations have further strained the relationship between the Baloch and the government. The Baloch had always been betrayed by Pakistan. Whether it is Nawab Nouraz Khan, who was betrayed in the name of general amnesty or it was Akbar Bugti who was humiliated in the name of dialogue. Other than this, in the name of developments and amendments, Baloch has got nothing. The situation in Balochistan has worsened with every day and now the level is that there is huge mistrust between Baloch and the state. The reasons are very clear, when since decades there have been no serious efforts made by the state to solve the conflict, how can Baloch now trust the state? The Baloch need to be treated as equal citizens of Pakistan and it should not be treated as a colony. When Baloch will feel safe in their land and will not be exploited by state institutions there trust will be restored.

Addressing the mistrust between the Baloch and the Pakistani government requires a multifaceted approach. Meaningful political representation, equitable resource distribution, accountability for human rights violations, and inclusive development initiatives are essential steps toward building mutual trust. Transparent dialogue, confidence-building measures, and respect for Baloch's cultural and ethnic identity can contribute to creating a more stable and harmonious relationship. Ultimately, fostering trust between the Baloch and the government is pivotal for achieving sustainable peace, prosperity, and progress in Balochistan. Rebuilding trust

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<sup>122</sup> Patel, Pinal, and Saurabh Sharma. "Enforced Disappearances: A Major Human Rights Issue in Balochistan." *Journal of Social and Political Sciences* 5 (October 17, 2022). [https://doi.org/https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=4250317](https://doi.org/https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=4250317).

and establishing a credible platform for dialogue necessitates addressing human rights abuses, acknowledging grievances, and creating an atmosphere of openness and inclusivity.

### **Management of Conflict in Balochistan**

Conflicts are complex, unpredictable phenomena. Dealing with conflict effectively requires a systematic approach. Different approaches show the management of conflict is either done by using a hard power approach which includes the use of threat or use of coercive power to solve the issue or an accommodationist approach which includes soft power or the use of persuasive power to pursue interests. The conflict between the government and the insurgents can be solved by addressing the grievances of the Baloch people and restoring their trust in state institutions. The government needs to understand what the reasons for sporadic insurgencies in Balochistan are and what the Baloch feel in this state. By understanding these basic issues, the conflict can be solved. The conflict in Balochistan is not new, it is traced back to the time of independence. It is also an expression of disparities in the system including differences in allocation of resources, centralization of power, and undemocratic political structure. Inclusivity, cooperation, and non-violence can play important role in the management of conflict.

Michal J. Buttlar in his book international conflict management suggested five different approaches to solve the conflict. They include traditional peacekeeping, peace enforcement, support operations, negotiation and bargaining, mediation, and adjudication.<sup>123</sup> While in my opinion mediation can work in the case of Balochistan.

Mediation is defined as an intervention between conflicting parties to promote reconciliation, settlement, or compromise. It aims to facilitate negotiated settlements and to end ongoing

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<sup>123</sup> Gräns, Jonas. Journal of Peace Research 47, no. 3 (2010): 347–347. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20752169>.

conflicts through negotiation as it involves a structured exchange of ideas, concessions, and compromises aimed at addressing underlying issues and resolving disputes.<sup>124</sup> It offers a non-violent avenue to bridge differences and pave the way for lasting peace. In the case of Balochistan, the trust deficit between the state and insurgents is so high that the involvement of a third party can play a crucial role. Both sides can negotiate in the presence of a third party. It enables parties to delve into the historical, economic, and political grievances which are at the heart of the Baloch conflict. By discussing these grievances openly, negotiations can lead to creative solutions that address the fundamental causes of the conflict. It can foster trust and confidence among conflicting parties, facilitating better communication and reducing hostility. Trust is essential for the successful implementation of any peace agreement. It ensures that all stakeholders, including Baloch representatives, are involved in decision-making processes. Inclusivity promotes a sense of ownership and investment in the negotiated outcomes.

In the case of Balochistan, the environment for peaceful negotiation is difficult to create because of the trust deficit between the Baloch people and state institutions. Similarly, Mediation takes place when parties in a dispute seek the assistance of a neutral third party to settle their disagreements without using violence or legal authority.<sup>125</sup> It is important to know whom both sides will trust as a neutral observer. Due to the involvement of a third party, both will make sure they do not refrain from their words. For instance, mediators can incentivize ongoing collaboration, offer diplomatic backing for agreement execution, ensure parties' responsibility, and furnish security assurances to lessen the apprehensions of those involved in the conflict. In essence, mediation serves as a pathway to establish self-sustaining agreements and enhances the

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<sup>124</sup> Ibid

<sup>125</sup> Clayton, G., & Dorussen, H. (2022). The effectiveness of mediation and peacekeeping for ending conflict. *Journal of Peace Research*, 59(2), 150–165. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343321990076>

prospects of ending active hostilities. The government should take steps to restore trust as discussed by Rafiullah Kakar. Once the trust is restored, peace talks can begin. Negotiation is not possible if, on the one hand, the state says it is ready to address the grievances of Baloch while on the other hand cases of abduction and military operations continued.<sup>126</sup> Negotiation enables parties to delve into the historical, economic, and political grievances at the heart of the Baloch conflict. By discussing these grievances openly, negotiations can lead to creative solutions that address the fundamental causes of the conflict. It can foster trust and confidence among conflicting parties, facilitating better communication and reducing hostility. Trust is essential for the successful implementation of any peace agreement. It ensures that all stakeholders, including Baloch representatives, are involved in decision-making processes. Inclusivity promotes a sense of ownership and investment in the negotiated outcomes.

The state should understand from the ongoing violence in the province the ineffectiveness of the security-focused strategy in achieving lasting peace and prosperity in Balochistan. While it's evident that rigorous and forceful approaches have managed to somewhat and temporarily suppress terrorism, the underlying menace of terrorism remains a persistent concern. Despite limited achievements, acts of brutality carried out by militant factions continue to sporadically occur. Likewise, the Baloch insurgency continues to escalate despite military operations, heightened security personnel presence, and instances of forced disappearances. The state should understand that it needs to invest in people, only by winning their trust state can bring peace to Balochistan. The peace in Balochistan is possible on people's terms and conditions not on state terms. The narrative of militant groups is very important as one of the leaders of the banned outfit, Bashir Zeb has said that they are ready for negotiation but on the condition that Pakistani

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<sup>126</sup> Kakar, Rafiullah. "Resolving Balochistan's Problem." Dawn, April 21, 2022.

forces should leave Balochistan. One thing is a fact that a military solution is not possible in Balochistan because if it was Balochistan had not have to face the sporadic insurgencies and escalation in conflict. Balochistan needs a political solution. There are several things that the state should do if it wants to solve the conflict in Balochistan. Rafiullah Kakar in his article —A durable recipe for peace” suggests that addressing the Baloch ethnic conflict requires a distinct strategy. Political engagement and reconciliation are very effective to solve the ethnic conflict. I agreed with his solutions that the government ought to formulate a comprehensive strategy aimed at engaging with the Baloch insurgents. This strategy should encompass credible assurances, significant compromises, and measures to foster trust, including the cessation of all military operations, the gradual withdrawal of the Frontier Corps from specific areas, the release of Baloch missing persons, and compensation for families affected by extrajudicial incidents. In the absence of such trust-building steps and substantial concessions, the prospects for successful negotiations remain grim. Mere offers of amnesty will not be adequate to convince insurgent leaders to give up violence and return to peaceful pursuits.<sup>127</sup> Past failures in reconciling Baloch insurgents can be attributed to the intertwining of repression with reconciliation endeavors, as well as the limited authority and freedom of negotiation possessed by those leading the process. Similarly, the anxieties of the Baloch people about their authority over both natural and coastal resources should be addressed. For instance, consider the case of the Saindak copper-gold mining project, which was slated for ownership transfer to the Balochistan government in 2012 under the Aghaz-i-Haqooq-i-Balochistan initiative.<sup>128</sup> However, the federal government declined to effect the project's ownership transfer, citing unsettled dues amounting to Rs27 billion that had been invested in the venture. Alarmingly, the lease agreement for the project has been extended

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<sup>127</sup> Kakar, Rafiullah. —ARecipe for Durable Peace.” Dawn, April 27, 2019.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid

twice by the federal government, all without securing genuine consent from the provincial government the grievances regarding CPEC should be addressed. These steps can play an important role in building trust between Baloch and the state but the problem is whether it is the Pakistan People's Party, PML N, or Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaaf, all have said things verbally. No practical steps have been taken to solve the issue genuinely.

Keeping all this discussion I suggest that mediation can play an important role in managing Baloch conflict. The important thing is to restore the lost trust between Baloch and the state. While having interviews respondents were of the view Balochistan needs a political solution. A military solution is not possible in Balochistan because the more state will suppress the people with hard force, the more people will go against the state. The respondents also said no serious efforts have been made by the state to solve the conflict. If it has, we have not seen it. The state just says things verbally, the lack of practicality is making the issue more complicated. I still remember while discussing with one of the respondents I asked what you suggest how the conflict can be managed. He said hatred cannot remove hatred. The government needs to invest in people. The state is countering people while the solution is in countering the problems of Balochistan. However, one thing is common among respondents, whether they were federalist or radical in their approach they agreed that the problem of Balochistan needs political solution. The conflict cannot be managed until and unless the state considers Baloch as equal citizens of Pakistan.

## Conclusion

Balochistan is the least understood problem in Pakistan. The military conflict with the state and political conflict with the government has always created problems for it.<sup>129</sup> The issue of Balochistan is not new. It is as old as the state itself. The forceful annexation of Balochistan and later on not giving them due status in the state of Pakistan have always remained a bone of contention. Due to economic deprivation, political marginalization, and social injustices, the conflict between the state and Baloch escalated with time.

The rise of sporadic insurgencies in Balochistan is due to the failure of government policies. The rise of insurgent groups was in different eras but it escalated after the death of Nawab Akbar Bugti. Currently, it is the fifth phase of insurgency and it is more violent than other insurgencies. It has reached the urban areas and includes a large number of the middle class. However, the involvement of youth especially the educated youth is the most serious concern. There are various factors behind the involvement of youth in the Balochistan insurgency. This research tries to answer the question of why the educated youth of Balochistan is joining the banned outfits. It includes various factors such as political marginalization, economic deprivation, and frustration with social injustices including enforced disappearances, and kill and dump policy by the state. The role of the military cannot be denied in adding fuel to the fire.

The state has always tried to suppress the people of Balochistan through force. As a result, the more force is being used, the more uprising occur in Balochistan. Similarly, as the nature of oppression changes the nature of youth involvement in insurgency also changes. Now the Baloch women are also participating in insurgency. No doubt, the Baloch women have always been seen

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<sup>129</sup>Siddiqi, Farhan Hanif. *The Politics of Ethnicity in Pakistan: The Baloch, Sindhi and Mohajir Ethnic Movements*. London: Routledge, 2015.



as symbols of bravery and courage and have a history where they have stood for the nation.<sup>130</sup> But in general, Baloch society is patriarchal like Pakistan and women have less involvement in public affairs. She often leaves home for education and a job. But now Baloch women are directly participating in the insurgency which is a matter of great concern. They are joining the banned outfits as militants or working for them in different departments. The prominent example in this case is Shari Baloch who attacked Chinese officials at Karachi University.<sup>131</sup> The other example is Sumaiya Qalandarni who not only work for the media wing of the Baloch liberation army but also later on joined it as Fedayeen and blew herself in Turbat.<sup>132</sup> There is no doubt that Baloch women are facing great hurdles from the state but now it will be more challenging for them. If on one hand, it is making their cause strong, as both male and female members of Baloch society are fighting for their land. On the other hand, it is increasing security concerns and surveillance by the state. As a result, Baloch women are facing disappearances and mistreatment from state institutions.<sup>133</sup>

The problem of Balochistan cannot be dealt with hard power. The state needs to invest in people. Only by winning their trust and involving those in decision-making can reduce the tensions. It is the responsibility of the state to decrease the trust deficit by taking practical steps such as credible assurances, and significant compromises including the cessation of all military operations, the gradual withdrawal of the Frontier Corps from specific areas, the release of Baloch missing persons, and compensation for families affected by extrajudicial incidents.<sup>134</sup> The main demand of the people is to give them their due rights and the exclusion of security

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<sup>130</sup> Baloch, Panah. *Baloch Aurat Tareekhi Manazar Mein*. Quetta, Pakistan: Goshaeadab, 2019.

<sup>131</sup> "Baloch Women Fear Crackdown after Karachi Suicide Attack." *The Guardian*, May 19, 2022

<sup>132</sup> "Who's Is Sumaiya Qalandarni Baloch?" *The Balochistan Post*, June 27, 2023.

<sup>133</sup> Hafeez, Somaiyah. —As Baloch Women Raise Their Voices, the State Cracks Down." *The Diplomat*, June 29, 2022.

<sup>134</sup> Kakar, Rafiullah. —"Recipe for Durable Peace." *Dawn*, April 27, 2019

forces from their land. Baloch wanted to be treated as equal citizens of Pakistan. Their demands are justified and need to be fulfilled to create peace in Balochistan. In the end, it is their land and belongs to them and one cannot suppress them for a long time. The use of soft power is the need of the hour. Peace in Balochistan is only possible if the state does not say things theoretically but takes practical steps to solve the issue. Regaining the trust of local people and investing in them can bring peace to Balochistan.

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