

# The Baloch nationalism in Pakistan: Articulation of the ethnic separatism after the end of the Cold War

Hoshang Noraiee

## Abstract

The tribal structures of the society in Balochistan has strongly influenced Baloch nationalism in Pakistan. The Baloch nationalism has been shaped in the process of widespread politico-tribal rivalry, in the context of a weak state in Pakistan interacted with the post-cold war conditions marked by the absence of the Soviet Union hegemonic power, and the processes of globalization. In this framework, the attitudes, scope, and directions of the Baloch nationalism, in this area, have shifted. The radical nationalism predominantly has become more aggressive, more exclusionary, more puritan, and more ethnically oriented. It has become more relaxed in using unethical and deceitful means such as indiscriminate killing, kidnapping, ransom; arm trafficking, and sometimes some of the nationalists, if not directly, gaining benefit from the drug trafficking, and banditry to achieve their objectives. Considering the geopolitical conditions in the whole region, particularly in Pakistan and Afghanistan; and the strength of tribal-*sardari* values associated with inter and intra rivalries, it is not surprising to find a peculiar situation in Balochistan. This research is mainly based on literature review, but also some limited conversations with a few anonymous informants and contacts with some of the Baloch political and community organizations and activists.

## Keywords

Baloch nationalism, Balochistan, Brahui, Nawab, New wars, Pakistan, Sardar, Soviet Union

## Introduction

This article intends to explain the process of changes that occurred in the characteristics, attitudes, and alliances of the nationalists in Balochistan in Pakistan, before the 1990s and after (during and post-Cold War). Whereas, it investigates the emergence and characteristics of the Baloch ethnic nationalism, it looks at the potential consequence of the current hostilities.

Since the article is a longitudinal-based comparative study, the events, to some extent have been presented in chronological order; and while evidence is provided to support the arguments, methodologically it does not pursue a positivistic approach and this belief that the facts speak for themselves. In this respect, interpretation is valued, and it is aware of the fact that in interpretation there is a degree of opinion by the agency. Now, we look at the area and some general characteristics of the Baloch nationalism to gain further insights about the context.

The area known as Balochistan (Baluchistan) is a vast territory, currently divided between Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. The largest section is in Pakistan which is the focal point of discussion in this article. The section in Pakistan constitutes about 43% of the country's territory but less than 7% of the population of Pakistan. Balochistan Province is a highly multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, and multi-lingual area. It is home of the Baloch (Baluch), Pashtuns, Brahui, Jats and Lassis, Dehwaris, Hazaras as well as Punjabi, Sindi, and Sarikis (see BBC, 2013).

According to scholars in fields of history, politics, sociology, and international relations, nationalism is a modern

---

University of Westminster, London, UK

### Corresponding author:

Hoshang Noraiee, 20 Holmesdale House, Kilburn Vale, London NW6 4QU, London, UK.



phenomenon (see Anderson, 1983; Gelner, 1998; Hobsbawm, 1991, 2007; Hobsbawm & Roger, 1983; Smith, 1999). In this respect, nationalism in Balochistan is not an exception. Previously, the highly localized people in Balochistan hardly could imagine themselves as being part of a whole community, apart from a vague sense of religious belonging. The social and political context for the emergence of nationalist perceptions in Balochistan can be identified in the colonial British political exercises and modern conceptualizations produced in the relevant literature by the British. The British political agents, military officers, and travelers, provided an enormous body of literature and maps on the Balochistan issues, which to a certain extent, laid the political sense of the nationalist ideology(ies) in Balochistan.

The British exported and applied modern concepts to create a unified body of knowledge from what they observed, experienced, and heard about geographical conditions and historical stories, which previously existed in highly fragmented and mythical forms at that time. In this way, they started to codify Balochi language through writing dictionaries, syntax books, and publication and distribution of stories and epic poems, and maps. At the same time, at political and organizational levels, the indirect rule and highly complex, competing and multilayer forms of governance, introduced by the British, to discourage nationalism in Balochistan. It means that the emergence of nationalism in the area was not an inevitable product of the British literary stuff but, in that context, relatively widespread of the literature supported some of the local elites.

The Baloch nationalism started to emerge just a few decades before the formation of Pakistan in 1947. It was constructed in the process of rivalries and competitions among the *sardars*, in a broader context of conflict of interests and building alliances, among the foreign forces. First under the influence of anti-colonial struggles of Indian National movement against the British Empire (see Titus & Swindler, 2000). Second, after the emergence of Pakistan in 1947, in the context of the conflicts of this country with India and Afghanistan (Titus & Swindler, 2000).

The Baloch nationalism developed from inside tribal structures and represented by some elites as *sardars* and *nawabs*, many of whom had educated in the British institutions. The earlier nationalist leaders such as Yusuf Ali Khan Magsi, Abdul Aziz Kurd, Muhammad *Sardar* Khan Gishkauri, emerged from weaker factions of tribal divisions and argued for a more pluralistic form of nationalism with a quite strong religious approach (Kurd, 2018; Magasi, 1978; Titus, 2008, pp. 384–386).<sup>1</sup> This sense of defining power exacerbated the rivalries among the established and powerful tribal leading elites, *nawabs*, and *sardars*, whose older generations were supported by the British political and military agents (see Noraiee, 2015). These elites were apprehensive about pervasive claims of newly emerged competing forces on the political scene, but could not break their strong tribal links to overcome the problem of fragmentation and rivalries.

Tribal rivalries and fragmentations reflected in both ideological approaches and cultural activities exercised since then. Nationalists, structurally and ideologically, are not necessarily a coherent force, but the Baloch-Brahui is an unusual case regarding much internal divisions, conflicts, and instability. Structurally, the nationalist movement in Balochistan has fragmented in line with tribal divisions evolved in a historical process in which indirect rule was enforced, first by the British and then in some forms by Pakistan. Through indirect rule, the tribal structure and values have undergone some changes but not in a direction to abolish the tribal relations. The state's methods of control have been complex and hybrid, associated with manipulating the inter and intra-tribal rivalries, not just over economic resources, but also social resources and bureaucratic positions particularly over local, provincial and national posts and parliamentary seats which have channelized the resources (see Noraiee, 2015; Swindler, 1979, 1992). Tribal fragmentation led some researchers to consider the dominant nationalism in Balochistan as a traditional and tribal-feudal movement led by *sardars*, rather than being a modern nationalist movement initiated by the middle-class intellectuals (see Ahmad, 1973; Breseeg, 2002, and also with less clarity Harrison (1981).

In contrast, some others, similar to a dominant primordial approach of nationalists, have considered all forms of oppositions as Baluchi and Baluch Nationalism (e.g. Hosseinbor, 2000, mainly on Iran).

Through literary-poetic, and exploring the history, the nationalists, mainly the Baloch and Brahuis, searched for “Balochness” assumed to be a spirit hidden in the course of the history, and use it as a basis for constructing and supporting the Baloch nationalism. The Baloch historians, deeply influenced by primordial ideas, in many respects, reproduced the historical notes that the British had left but gave them a more heroic direction, and further combined them with myths existed, imagined, or newly invented. For a long time, the Baloch nationalist historian, similar to the western commentators, focused on the racial origin of the Baloch, as Aryan-Iranian or Samite-Arab, as was reflected, for example in Muhammad Sardar Khan, Mir Khodabakhsh Bijjarani, and Mir Gul Khan Nasser's historical accounts (see Harrison, 1981). Being influenced by such arguments, most leading figures of the nationalist including Bizenjo proudly believed that the Baloch are Aryan.

Along with these developments, cultural and ideological products have been growing. Jan Mohammad Dashti (1982) and also Inayatullah Baloch (1987) further elaborated the cultural basis of the Baloch nationalism. However, Dashti in earlier stages in the 1980s, using the pseudonym of Shay Ragam, criticized the militant tribal nationalists in favor of Bizenjo's constitutional approach.<sup>2</sup> Sayed Zohurshah Hashemi had tried to produce a Balochi dictionary (now it is called Sayed Ganj), based on Makorani dialect, to support another aspect of the cultural-linguistic basis of parochial nationalism. Some monthly magazines in Balochi

contributed to this process by promoting Balochi language. Among these publications, *Ulus* (People), *Mahtak Balochi* (monthly Balochi), *Labzank Balochi* (Balochi literature), as well as Quetta Balochi Academy played some tremendous roles in producing and spreading the image of nationalism and nationality among the Baloch.

From a tribal perspective, nationalism, in a cultural sense has been perceived as a tradition and customs (Rasm-o Rawaj), a matter of tribal honor for young or old males to be protected and celebrated. According to this tradition, men are obliged to retribution against the gangs who supposedly have strangled and raped the “Mother” land. A Balochi short story, by Mohammad Bakhsh Bizenjo (n.d.), called “*washin wab salamatin jan*” (The Sweet dream and the healthy body) is an excellent example of this analogy which emotionalizes the relation between land as the mother and the Baloch people (mainly men), as her sons.

In the Balochi nationalist literature, a typical nationalist is symbolically portrayed as a young male, with a long beard and thick curly mustache on his face and long hair covered with a turban and wearing loose Balochi garments, expressing his anger in a very aggressive way. This outraged man is carrying a gun on his shoulder while climbing a rocky hill or riding a camel in a desert away from his black tent or sometimes resting under the shade of date-palm trees, romantically painted as the Aden garden, in the burning temperature of wilderness. This is a portrait, which reflects the tribal and rural elements of the Balochi nationalism mixed with romantic values which nationalism usually appeals to.

In the changing circumstances, the *sardars* had to define, redefine, and modify their tribal *sardari* (related to tribal leaders) approach to absorb some elements of a middle-class perspective of nationalism. This has evolved through competition with other *sardari* factions, and growing internal divisions, on one hand, and in conflict with the central or provincial government on the other hand; to find new allies among the local middle-class.

Although, because of the influence of tribal-feudal values and structures, the political organizations of the nationalists are predominantly kin-based, strongly biased on women equal rights, and lack modern structures and constitutions. Moreover, if there is any, they are hardly more effective than some abstract ideas on papers. But the nationalists’ functions and alliances have varied along with essential changes in society and the ability of the central government and global shifts of hegemonies. This broader changes in Pakistan and also the collapse of the Soviet Union and even the communist government of Afghanistan have significantly changed the attitudes and functions of nationalism in Balochistan. The earliest, to some extent, flexible and semi “pluralistic,” approach, which was compatible with civic nationalism, after the 1990s gave its place to a harsher form of ethnic nationalism. Considering the characteristic of the state in Pakistan, now we turn to explain further the characters of nationalism in Balochistan during the Cold War.

## Nationalism in Balochistan during the Cold War

As was mentioned earlier, initially, the nationalists in Balochistan, for example, Yusuf Ali Khan Magsi, were working together with Pashtun. In the 1930s, even they were talking about “oneness” of Baluchistan and referred to people as “Baluchistani” (see Noraiee, 2015; Balochistan and All India Baloch Conference, 1933). Later, the Pashtun nationalist party, the Pakhtoonkhawa Milli Awami Party (PMAP) led by Achagzai argued for the separation of Pashtun areas from Baluchistan and Joining the North West Frontier Province (NWFP; Titus & Swindler, 2000).

The earlier approach, to some extent, continued after incorporation of Balochistan into Pakistan, at least by most influential intellectuals in the area, who were presenting an anti-Sardar, cultural movement. For example, “Latt Khana,” in Quetta, was a good example of this cultural-political association (A. J. Jamaladini, 1985). Azat Jamaladini and Gul Khan Naseer could be seen as representatives of this movement. This movement was about freedom of ordinary people from the sardars considering them as “bloodsucker” and “oppressor,” rather than arguing for ethnic-based territorial independence of Balochistan (A. A. Jamaladini, 1985; Naseer, 2011). The intellectuals in Latt Khana, at that time, did not define their nationalism on the basis of language or even strong sense of ethnicity, as they were using Urdu as well as Balochi to express their ideas in their political poems. They wrote poems in Urdu and translated poems from Urdu to Balochi and were closely supported by famous Urdu poets and writers such as Faiz Ahmad Faiz (1911–1984).

During the Cold War, the superpowers’ global hegemonic roles strongly influenced the local and international conflicts, including the nationalist disputes, all over the world. The nationalists in Balochistan, in ideology and strategy (or just as a tactic), were mainly influenced by the ideological hegemony of the Soviet Union (USSR). Pro-Chinese and pro-American governments in Pakistan, was an important factor for the nationalists in Balochistan to find supporters from the Eastern Bloc. The Soviet Union pursued a strategy based on “non-capitalist path to development” in which priority was given to building their alliances, rather than genuinely considering the nature of alliances as feudal or tribal; and promoting social and political change.

The *sardars* and their proponents, who presented themselves as a powerful representative of nationalism and tribal relations in the area, ideologically relied on an amalgamation of tribalism, feudalism, capitalism, and also socialism (Socialism was part of the amalgamated ideas until 1990s), in a very an inexplicable way. Even if some intellectuals appeared as anti-sardars, they culturally moved in the same direction, and their criticisms of Sardari-tribal relations remained quite shallow, as poets like Gul Khan Naseer and Azat Jamaladini and some other did (see Haqqani, 1987; A. A. Jamaladini, 1985; A. J. Jamaladini, 1985; Naseer, 2011).

This hybrid product was consistent with the primordial assumptions and the methodologies that many Baloch nationalist scholars applied. In many ways, these assumptions were explained by borrowing Stalin's objective criteria of defining a nation (see Stalin, 1913), but without Stalinist modernist elements to consider Nationalism as a modern phenomenon and to reject the "natural," ahistorical factors in defining nation and nationalism. Probably one of the most attractive concepts for the nationalists, in the Russian literature, was the vaguely defined thesis of "the rights of nations for self-determination."

However, the Soviet Union used the jargon of "the rights of self-determination of nations," but it was rather a political tool to attract the nationalist movements, particularly in territories controlled by the western colonial powers and their allies, and put pressure on the United States and her allies whenever it was necessary. Otherwise, the Soviet Union, considering the risk of disintegration inside the country, hardly encouraged narrowly defined ethnic nationalism and their desires for separation and changing the boundaries already existed. To benefit from the Soviet Union support, the ethnic/cultural nationalists had reasonably adopted a soft approach in which the existing borders and the principle of the "peaceful coexistence" were not openly challenged. Thus, this approach had a less exclusionary impact on relationships with "others," because it could damage the relationship with other pro-Soviet forces, particularly communist parties in the same country. The nationalists in Balochistan, in a broad sense, had accepted the hegemonic role of the Soviet Union in choosing their alliances and defining their strategy. However, the Soviet Union had not entirely abandoned the card of supporting separatism, as a tool, for the Baloch nationalist in Pakistan (Harrison, 1981, pp. 127–132).

Benefiting from the feudal-tribal relationships, the sardar nationalists in Balochistan considered themselves progressive and egalitarian, as it was a fashion among the nationalists at that time, when they ascended to power in 1972. But the Balochistan Government under the leadership of Bizenjo, Ataullah Mengal, and Khair Bakhsh Marri, did not hesitate to oppress their opponents for securing their feudal-tribal *sardari* interests. They would continue taxing their tribal members or farmers working on their lands, denigrating women and lower costs. A good example was the brutal suppression of the peasants' resistance, under the leadership of Abdulkarim Bizenjo, a petty farmer, in Awaran and Jaljao in the early June 1972. This insurgency was against paying one-sixth of the products and *saddlery* taxes, to *Sardars*, in an area where *sardars* particularly Gous Bakhsh Bizenjo and Ataullah Mengal were the big landowners. It was reported that in this oppressive action, 400 peasants were arrested in Jaljao and thousands had to leave the area (Ahmad, 1973).

Despite the internal conflicts and tribal rivalries, the nationalists in Balochistan, during that time, were arguing

in favor of a multi-ethnic unity in which ethnic division was less critical. Balochistan was considered as a historical entity which survived as a distinctive political unit over a "long period." Since the emphasis was less on a narrow concept of "Balochness" in an ethnic and cultural sense (being Baloch and speaking Balochi), the secular tribal nationalism to some extent shared pluralist values and openly had no exclusionary elements in their approach. However, the women, both Baloch and non-Baloch were ignored entirely.

Relatively, a good level of consensus among some *Sardar* politician was developed, when they formed the first provincial government, lasted from 29 April 1972 to 15 February 1973, in Balochistan. Less emphasis on the ethnic nature of nationalism led to broader cooperation with the none Baloch and also adopting a more positive approach toward the Pakistani based political parties. This approach was continued, even after the dismissal of the Balochistan provincial Government. The following examples are used to support this suggestion further.

Affiliation to the National Awami Party (NAP) led by Wali Khan, a Pashtun politician, reflected the broader perspective of the Baloch nationalism at that time. Hardly any of the prominent Baloch-Barahui nationalists argued, at least in public, for ethnic cleansing, and killing Punjabis or other non-natives in territory of Balochistan. Being silent or rejecting separatism might have been a tactical position, but was successful in gaining the sympathy of the non-Baloch, particularly Punjabi, progressive activists during the guerrilla wars erupted after the dismissal of the government of the triangle leaders: Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, Ataullah Mengal, and Khair Bakhsh Marri.

It was acceptable for NAP in Balochistan to send Zamrod Husain, a Punjabi intellectual politician as a senator to Islamabad. Or even more importantly some Punjabi intellectuals joined the guerrilla war in Balochistan. Initially, the Parari Baloch guerrilla Group was inspiring for some urban Punjabi intellectuals who were very much looking to Balochistan as a testing ground for the realization of Che Guevara's and Regis Debray's revolutionary ideas which were very dominant and inspiring at that juncture of history.

These Punjabi intellectuals, who were known as London group and many of them were from highly influential families, included people such as Mohammad Bhabha (Morad Khan); Asad Rahman (Chakar Khan) and Rashid, his brother, who were sons of Rahman, a well-known Chief Justice of Pakistan. They also included Najam Sethi (a well-known Pakistani journalist who became the interim chief minister of Punjab, and then the Acting Chairman of Pakistan Cricket Board). Another member was an internationally very well-known writer and Journalist Ahmed Rashid (Balach), writer of a best-seller book, "Taliban." Furthermore, Dalip Dass, who was killed by Army at that time; and Mohammad Ali Talpur who is a Sindi Baloch was

also a member of the group, who joined the Baloch nationalists (see Harrison, 1981; Khan, 2012).

In the context of the lethal conflicts erupted after the dismissal of the elected Balochistan Provincial government by Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, the gaps between the militant and moderate *sardars* started to be visible. Both Ataullah Mengal and Khair Bakhsh Marri who had very tight links with their tribes undertook harder lines and took arms against the Pakistani government. But the tribal-nationalists insurgency was crushed by the Pakistani military supported by the Iranian Regime.

In spite of an optimistic view, that the nationalism in Balochistan would overcome the coalition of tribal-feudal division (Harrison, 1981, p. 41), the post-Cold War developments have become more divisive and fragmented. It may be argued that in the process of frequent conflicts with Pakistani governments, the nationalist awareness has broadened and deepened, but this hardly has put behind the tribal-feudal conflicts. Even, in a golden time when they captured the power, the nationalists were rarely united. Harrison by over-relying on the self-image of some powerful *sardars* had overestimated their power and influence, while underestimated the power of the opponent *sardars* such as Jams, Khan of Kalat, Akbar Khan Bugti and many others, who did not trust the triangle *sardars* alliance. Therefore, the level of fragmentations already existed and the weakness of nationalism in mobilizing forces has not been adequately covered.

During and after the dismissal of the provincial government, *Nawab* Akbar Khan Bugti vigorously challenged his previous colleagues and cooperated with the Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Federal Government against the triangle of the Baloch-Brahui political power. For that reason, he was rewarded by Bhutto, and was appointed as the provincial governor of Balochistan. The powerful Baloch-Brahui-Jam *sardars* and *nawabs* such as Khan Ahmad Yar Khan and Jam of Lasbila also ascended to power. Whereas, at that time, Akbar Khan Bugti (Governor of Balochistan in 1973–1974), like other *nawabs* and *sardars*, considered himself a nationalist, for Bizenjo, Mengal, and Marri's followers he was seen as a hateful "traitor."

After some negotiations, General Zia ul-Haq, as the military ruler of Pakistan from July 1977, released the imprisoned Baloch-Brahui *sardars*, but their political activities in Pakistan were banned. After that, the gap between Mengal, Marri, and Bizenjo was further widened. These *sardars* moved in different directions, which remarked the end of their alliance and the end of NAP in Balochistan as well. Bizenjo who was not entirely trusted by hardliners followed a more moderate policy and tended to pursue a constitutional approach through the foundation of Pakistan National Party (PNP) after he was released from prison. However, his party was banned, he continued to act in the same way until his death in 1989.

*Nawab* Khair Bakhsh Marri went to London and then moved to Afghanistan, in the hope of gaining the support of

Afghan and Soviet Union to restructure his power and mobilize the forces led by Mir Hazar Khan Ramkani and Sher Mohammad Marri in Afghanistan. Russia and its allied Government in Afghanistan, indeed, needed to strengthen their power through supporting and strengthening the nationalist movements, particularly the Baloch in Pakistan. Marri's leaders, led by Khair Bakhsh, Sher Mohammad, and Ramkani from Bijjarani branch, and also BSO (The Baloch Student Organisation) and BSO Awam, had succeeded to send over 100 of young male Baloch, including three sons of Khair Bakhsh and son of Ramkani, mainly from Pakistan but also some young male students from Iran to Russia.<sup>3</sup>

It was not strange that these Baloch students from Pakistan and Iran hardly included any female student. The young Baloch were provided with Afghanis Passport, facilitated by the Tribal and Minority Ministry of Afghanistan. Broadcasting a Balochi program from Kabul and also the translation of a Russian magazine of "Problems of Peace and Socialism" into Balochi were part of a broader strategy the Russian pursued in the area.

*Sardar* Ataullah Mengal moved to London where he tried to establish a political alliance by Sindhi and Baloch nationalist dissidents in London; created an organization called "World Baloch Organisation." However, none of these organizations succeeded. Only Bizenjo stayed in Pakistan and organized PNP. Under that condition, when Zia ul-Haq's military rule, none of the triangle *sardars* had an effective organization.

What was important during the Cold War up to the late 1990s, the nationalist leaders were not talking in clear words that they would fight to establish an independent Balochistan. None of them were talking about separatism; however, the phrase of "self-determination of nations" was a familiar buzzword. During the 1990s when the cold war came to its end, many things globally and regionally started to change and affect the Baloch nationalist policies and alliances as well.

## Post-Cold War and dilemma of the ethnic nationalism

The emergence of civilian rule after general Zia ul-Haq's death (August 1988) in Pakistan, shortly followed by few historical events: the victory of Mujahideen and collapse of the pro-Russian government of Afghanistan, and much more critical event was the collapse of the Soviet Union and entire Eastern Bloc which brought the Cold War to its end.

The impacts of post-Cold War conditions entangled with the process of globalization (see Held, 2003; Hobsbawm, 2007; Scholte, 2005; Giddens, 1999). This condition also questioned the old and relatively stable identities in Pakistan. The process was associated with further instability of the present state which meant the weakness of the state in controlling of arms flow and protecting the borders, which had already been flattened by Mujahideen and then

the Taliban. It also meant the failure of the state in maintaining the loyalty of the people particularly in areas such as Balochistan with a relatively more impoverished and marginalized population (see Ahmed & Baloch, 2017; and Grare, 2013). This situation became very visible both in Pakistan and Afghanistan and led to the collapse of these countries into zones of instability.

The conflicts developed in a way which reflected the interests of various forces, both from ethnic groups such as the Baloch, and some factions from inside government/military security forces (e.g., ISI in Pakistan). However, in Pakistan, the state had never reached a status to monopolize all coercive forces in its hand. Because of the existence of a level of indirect rule and fragmentation of power, many tribes had their own private/tribal armies, prisons, and rules and this was not very strange to find some tribes in Balochistan in such positions. Before the 1990s, in the context of more stability and a stronger state, the conflicts were generally more under control, and the tribal activities were relatively more regulated than the years after.

After the death of General Zia ul-Haq, a period of civilian rule started in Pakistan. For about a decade during the civilian rule of both prime ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, in spite of much disturbances in the country, politically situation in Balochistan was reasonably calm. However, as all other places in Pakistan, corruption, nepotism, injustice, and poverty, as a result of introducing neo-liberal policies by both governments, had further intensified and had alienated a large section of the population.

During the civilian rule, both Khair Bakhsh Marri and Ataullah Mengal, as the leaders of armed conflicts in 1973–1977, had returned to Pakistan and handed their tribal political legacies to their sons. The young *nawabzadas* (sons of nawabs) and *sardarzadas* (children or descendants of sardars) entered the parliamentary politics to increase their shares of power and resources through the patronage system in Pakistan. At that time, the senior sardars did not seem more than some defeated commanders who had accepted their destiny. However, many of them were still engaged in brutal inter and intra-tribal conflicts, as it was the case between Bijjarani and Gazzini factions among the Marris (see Noraiee, 2015).

Akhtar Mengal, son of *Sardar* Ataullah Mengal, and then the leader of the Balochistan National Party (BNP) became a provincial chief minister (February 1998–July 1999), and Hyrbyair Marri became a provincial minister. At that time, there was not any open talk about militancy against the Pakistani Government. Simply detribalization of society was not something that the sardars and nawabs wished to accept, but under civilian rule gaining share, the political corruption and tribal acts of revenge and murdering, were the issues of political deals and compromise. For example, the killing of Justice Muhammad Nawaz Marri, a prominent figure of the Bijjarani faction and a senior judge of the Balochistan High Court, in a rivalry between Bijjarani

and Gazzini Marris, became a matter of compromise between the Government and Gazzini Marris.

Whether the continuation of civilian rule and the usual participation of the Sardars in the political process could prevent the new wave of militancy in Balochistan or not, is a hypothetical question, but it was a possibility which was ruined by General Musharraf (1999) military rule in Pakistan (see Grare, 2013). Even under such a hypothetical condition, it is doubtful that the tribal sardars had any capacity to tackle the problems of under-development, high rate of illiteracy and promote the democratization of society in Balochistan. General Musharraf's ascendance to power, however, reflected the pressure of a high level of instability, fragmentation, and corruption in Pakistan, it triggered a new wave of nationalist militancy in Balochistan.

In the new conditions, old militants split. Whereas, some of them such as Ataullah and his son and also Bijjarani ex-militants refused to enter an armed struggle, Gazzini Marris led by Balach, Hyrbyair (and now also their younger brother Mehran) started an armed struggle. Then they found some new alliances such as Akbar Khan Bugti and his grandson Brahamdagh and some others. It happened in a context that the world political order significantly had changed and influenced the behavior of all political forces, both old and new.

Since a new wave of disturbances in Balochistan started with Musharraf's military rule, we further explain the consequences of his rule.

General Musharraf, a migrant nationalist and an admirer of Ata Turk, intended to isolate the most traditional political forces led by powerful sardars in Balochistan. As a military ruler, Musharraf abolished the parliament and appointed some middle-class Baloch figures to some key posts and introduced some new elections at local areas to achieve his goal in Balochistan.<sup>4</sup> However, this policy created some tensions in the local forces against predominant sardars, as Musharraf wished, but where traditional social relations were strong and modern forces were very weak, it was not an effective and popular policy to bring positive changes through authoritarian rule.

Another critical issue which turned into disputes between the Federal Government of Musharraf and the discontent *sardars* and nationalists in Balochistan was a decision made by Musharraf to build the Gwadar deep-sea port in Makoran. Musharraf, saw the project of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as an opportunity to build a closer relationship with Chinese, and consider it as a massive development for modernization of Balochistan and undermining the power of influential tribal leaders. However, some Sardars and nationalists questioned the nature of the policy and regarded it as a "colonial" and a major conspiracy for total "occupation" of "homeland" and marginalization of the "native" population of Balochistan. Sardar Ataullah Mengal, who had adopted a more moderate approach than the 1970s, argued that it was a conspiracy for

making the native people minority in their land (Axmann, 2008, p. 272, see also Wirsing, 2008). A nationalist wrote that the CPEC project is not for prosperity but for destruction, which is an element of a broader colonial plot for taking away the Baloch land as they do for destroying their language (Nagoman, 2006, 2007).

Others such as Jamil Bugti, son of Akbar Khan Bugti, rejected the “modern” nature of the project in Gwadar. Jamil Bugti, son of Akbarkhan Bugti, who supports militants in Balochistan, believes that being dependent on Pakistan means 60 years of slavery, barbarism, and torture. He had argued that they did not want to develop Gwadar or other ports—to have another Dubai in Balochistan, which means to develop another “whorehouse” or a “Hira Mandi,” the red-light district in Lahore (Lieven, 2011, p. 363). However, some moderate nationalists criticized the plan for lacking enough consultations with the provincial government and the political organizations and the local communities.

Opposing the projects in Balochistan by the Baloch and Brahui sardars is not new. Weaver (1990), during a visit of Balochistan, when *Nawab* Akbar Khan Bugti was Chief Minister (1989–1990), reported that the project of building roads and bridges in Balochistan, supported by the United States, were under severe attacks by *sardars* and nationalists who considered the projects, at that time, as the US imperialistic plans. But as it is clear now, the same militants, with a strong separatist approach, are seeking to gain the US support, while targeting Chinese expatriates attached to the CPEC project in Pakistan. The separatist nationalists sometimes argue that being “slave of one power is better to be slave of a slave of a power.” Which means the Baloch are the slave (dependent/colony) of Pakistan and Pakistan is a slave (dependent/colony) of the United States or other Powers (see also Marri, 2009).

These oppositions reflected some concerns existed about the impacts of this project on the local communities and environment. But this deeply reflected the xenophobia the *sardars* had about the consequences that the process of modernization would have on social and economic conditions and the traditional power relations existed in the whole area. Despite all criticisms, sardars hardly have been keen on the necessity of modernization and improving education and the living conditions of the people; and dealing with widespread corruptions that people have been suffering from in Balochistan.

Even since the US-NATO, attacks on Afghanistan in 2001, the dimension of instability started to increase in Pakistan. In that context, the nationalists in Balochistan who had lost supports from Afghanistan and the Soviet Union, and initially lost the sense of direction, they started to take advantage of diverging aspects of the same phenomenon emerged in the forms of polarization and instability inside Pakistan. Under new conditions, notably since Musharraf rule, a large section of the Baloch nationalists, changed their strategies in terms of relationship with the

central government in Pakistan, and their international alliances to gain new resources and support. Attacking Taliban in Afghanistan, in early years of the 21st century was seen as an opportunity for many middle-class nationalist Baloch to express their ideas more clearly and argue for gaining support from the United States to enhance the chance of independence or further freedom inside Pakistan. Many of the nationalists simply started to argue that as the Soviet Union and Balkan collapsed and new national states emerged, similar disintegration “inevitably” will happen in Pakistan as they considered as “superficial” state.

### *A new wave of conflicts*

The new wave of nationalist militancy started in Balochistan, has been associated with a high level of brutality from both sides. The violence has taken a much broader dimension than ever and led to the violation of every basic ethical and human rights values. Whereas, a significant section of the nationalists has openly adopted armed struggle for separation, the Pakistani security forces have pursued a harsh policy of “zero tolerance” involved in dirty wars of killing and dumping.<sup>5</sup> Killing Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti was apparently another issue which further enhanced the level of the conflicts.<sup>6</sup>

According to Wirsing (2008), the security based policy strongly related to Pakistan’s desperate needs for energy. Wirsing explains three different aspects of this policy as (1) information management, psychological warfare, information operations, and public diplomacy; (2) Political management: political harassment and intimidation, decapitation of separatist leadership, divide and rule, and co-option of tribal leadership; (3) Military management which led to the increase in deployment of security forces; new cantonments, further military roads, and other infrastructure; and reliance on military repression. There are some elements of truth in Wirsing’s arguments; however, it seems that he has underestimated the broader interests of the state to protect itself.

The weakness of the state in Pakistan intensified much more after 9/11th and led to further coercive action of quick fixing by military and security forces. During Musharraf’s rule kidnapping, imprisoning, brutally torturing, killing and dumping policy started in Balochistan. Systematic and widespread disappearance of the opponent nationalists hardly could be enforced without the involvement of ISI secret forces, either directly or indirectly by the dependent militia. The dimension of these brutal killing and dumping has been well documented by the Human Rights organizations (Human Rights Watch [HRW], 2010, 2012; International Crisis Group, 2007).

Hyrbyair Marri (2016) announced that over 20,000 people had been abducted in Balochistan. However, a website which has sympathy with the militants ideas and provide information about missing persons, has listed the names of

about 888 people (included few people from 1969s and one person from “Iranian Occupied Balochistan”) as abducted and missing, about 294 people as “abducted and killed,” and name of 161 people as released (Bygwaah, 2019). An anonymous informant in late 2017 said that the security forces had kidnapped his relative in Noshki and he was missing for a long time until he was suddenly released. He also believed that the figures given about missing people in Baluchistan by the militant nationalists had been inflated.

Axmann believes that at earlier stage Musharraf’s Government was very willing to negotiate and find a solution, but the Main Sardars in Balochistan were very reluctant to accept negotiation. When a bomb blast in Quetta’s busy bazaar killed 11 people in December 2004, then Musharraf changed his mind and said “this is not the 1970s when you can hit and run and hide in the mountains. This time you won’t even know what hit you!” (Axmann, 2008, p. 276). This harsh policy regarding the Baloch-Brahui nationalists seems to be similar to the tactics Pakistani security forces applied to the nationalist separatists in Kashmir, to physically destroy the Baloch activists and key nationalist figures (Lieven, 2011, p. 189).

The tribal sardars have been very divided and involved in inter and intra-factional rivalries (see Ansari, 2003; Butt, 2013a, 2013b; Manan, 2013; Shah, 2013). For example, the rivalry between Gazzini and Bijjarani, is still very acute as Joma Khan Marri, son of Ramkani, accuses BLA and its leader Hyrbyair Marri as poppet of India, who get money and ignore conditions of ordinary people. Even from inside the Khair Bakhsh Marri’s family, his older son *nawab* Jangayz Marri is closely cooperating with Pakistani Government and considers himself as the legitimate chief of Marri tribe and the successor of Khair Bakhsh Marri. Jangayz Marri was acting as a senior member of the provincial Government in Balochistan before the 2018 election. In Bugti tribe apart from severe rivalry with Kalpur subtribe, Aali Bugti, son of Akbar Khan Bugti and an ally of the central government, consider himself the legitimate Nawab of Bugtis and against Balochistan Republican Army (BRA).

On this ground, Pakistani security forces have effectively used the old tricks of “divide and rule” among the *sardars* and political groups, but at the same time, this may be simplistic to ignore the choice and interests of different factions of the tribes. The nationalists also argue that Pakistani security forces have used the card of strengthening the radical religious groups; and opening many new madrasas, to promote loyalty to the unity of Pakistan and vigorously oppose the nationalists in general and separatists in particular. These policies have deepened the crisis and widened the gulf between a large section of nationalists and the Pakistan government. In spite of the post-Musharraf civilian governments’ willing to negotiate with militant nationalists, the continuation of the same harsh policy has considerably discredited the civilian governments’ authorities. These have raised serious questions not

only about the ability of the Pakistani political system but its legitimacy, ethics, and intention to treat people who are considered as its citizens fairly. In this context, reactions of the militant nationalists have also been inflexible and disastrous. The nature of current conflicts will become clearer if we further look at the characteristics and functions of the ethnic nationalism.

### ***Corruption, kidnapping, and indiscriminate killings***

Despite some fair criticisms of the corrupt and unjust government policies in Pakistan, by the rebellious nationalist sardars and landlords, they hardly have a clean record to defend. It seriously limits the capacities of the political forces, both militants and moderates, based on sardari structures, in addressing the social, economic, and political problems in Balochistan.

In Balochistan, as in many other parts of Pakistan, being a provincial minister and an MP, is and has been a supplementary channel of traditional power. It has served them as an essential source of gathering wealth through bribery and commissions they receive by allocating the budget to their favorite clients (people/companies) for some projects which may not start, or never completed and left discontinued or finished but with a very poor standard.

Under the civilian governments (after Musharraf), the provincial governments have been elected, but there have not been fundamental changes, and the insurgent nationalists have continued to act in a similar way. The more moderate nationalists have been in and out of the provincial government as the current insurgents’ leaders were before Musharraf Governments. The most stable political parties are tribal affiliates with the quite stable structure of leadership controlled by the tribal chiefs. Beyond the traditional tribal politics among Brahuis and Baloch and also Pashtuns, other political parties rapidly appear and disappear. Influence of the Pakistan’s national parties, such as Pakistan Peoples Party or Pakistan Muslim League (N) and Pakistan Muslim League (Q) is very much depends on the support of weaker factions of tribal chiefs (e.g., Raisani, Magasis, Bizenjo, Rends, Zehris, Jams and some factions of Ahmadzais of Kalat, as well as some factions of Bugtis, Marris, Mengals), who constantly change their political loyalty to one party or another, to defeat their rivals and gain power.

In provincial election 2018, many of the weaker factions of the tribal leaders created a new coalition called “Balochistan Awami Party” (BAP), which won an unexpected number of 24 seats. BAP succeeded as a result of a wave of sympathy following a massive suicide attack on election rally in Mastung, in which 149 people including Siraj Raisani, a candidate and a leader of BAP; and the brother of Aslam Raisani, the ex-provincial chief minister, were killed (“Death Toll in other parts of Pakistan Election

Rally Bombing Rises to 149,” 2016). Mengal group, known as BNP had successfully won 10 seats, compared with 1 seat in 2013. The Islamic groups under the coalition of Muttahida Majlis-e Amal, led by Jamiat Ulama Isalm of Fazlurahman, become second with winning 11 seats, and Pakistan Tahrir Insaf became fourth with winning 7 seats. The previous National Parties, such as Pakistan Muslim League (N), which was the biggest party in 2013, has nearly collapsed (see Provincial Assembly of Balochistan, 2018). However, generally, this election does not show clear patterns to believe that it can bring more political stability in the province.

Talking about election and seat, to some extent, may be misleading because the radical nationalists and radical Islamist do not participate in election and turnout was reported to be about 45%, slightly higher than 42% in the previous election (see Aamir, 2018), and election is hardly could be held in fair conditions. However, it shows that Islamic groups are still powerful and the BAP could be very fragile, and many of its members are accused of being corrupt and too close to security forces. With great doubt, if BAP and BNP succeed in their policies and continue to succeed in the next elections and Imran Khan’s Government succeed to stop killing and dumping policies. But if they succeed, there will be much pressure on Militant nationalists in Balochistan.

But instabilities have deep roots in society as corruption to a large extent has been institutionalized in political activities and there is a plenty of examples to support this claim. An example of corruption and patronage was the structure of the Balochistan’s provincial government which was based on local patronage networks. From 65 of the provincial MPs, many of whom considered themselves nationalists, in the 2009 election, 62 of them joined the provincial government, as ministers, advisors with ministerial status or ministers without portfolio. Three others were absent because two had died and one could not attend Quetta because of a blood feud with the provincial Chief Minister. On top of their ministerial salary, each one got 50 million rupees (£385,000) personal share of the provincial budget (Lieven, 2011, p. 364).<sup>7</sup> This provincial government ended in 2013, but the nature of power and the patronage networks and some key political figures are the same.

Another undeniable form of corruption is a phenomenon called the business of ghost education, which is widely spread all over Balochistan. Whereas, a significant section of the provincial budget is allocated to education, actually a big percentage of it is not spent on education at all. The ghost teachers/schools in Balochistan (also in a lesser extent in Pakistan), who are known or unknown to the public or does not exist at all, get salaries and budgets for doing nothing. The budget is used by the corrupt networks of the provincial/local *sardars* or bosses to support their patronage groups, many of whom are very likely to be members of one or another local nationalist political groups as well

(see a “Ghost Teachers in Balochistan,” 2011; Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization [UNPO], 2013). Some reports have given the figure of 3,500 for the ghost schools and about 10,000–17,000 for the ghost teachers (see Babar, 2017; Zaman, 2018; Zehri, 2017). The militant at the same time are proudly state [As an anonymous supporter of a militant group said to the Author] that they have made schools free with hanging their flags, which likely to be the result of intimidation or killing of non-Baloch or non-compliant teachers, led to ruining of the schools or left the schools without education.

Since in many places the schools are closed down and teachers are absent, or they are very inefficient in delivering teaching, there is a vacuum, in which religious madrasas quickly replace them. The networks of the religious madrasas, which are sanctioned and safe from sabotage of the local powers, are rapidly increasing. The election in 2013 also shows that in many areas in Balochistan religious, political parties such as JUI (F) and JUI (I), and even radical militant groups close to ISI are rapidly growing. These networks undermine *Sardari* and Khanate systems and potentially create a massive challenge for all secular forces not just ideologically but also politically (“Ghost Teachers in Balochistan,” 2011).

Similar to the security forces, a large section of the nationalists in Balochistan, who have adopted armed struggle and set the strategy of separatism, such as Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), led by Hyrbyair Marri; Balochistan Republican Party (BRP) led by Brahamdagh Bugti; and Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) led by a non-sardar figure, Doctor Allah Nazar, have pursued brutal policies of intimidation, harassment, kidnapping, and indiscriminate killing of the civilian, particularly people from Punjab. These groups now have made an alliance under the name of Free Balochistan Movement. These militant groups hardly have differences in their ultimate aim to create a separate Balochistan, and the main operational tactics to achieve their goals, but they have differences in terms of leadership and priority in gaining foreign alliances. Considering the chaotic social and political context, in many cases, it is very difficult to draw a clear boundary between armed criminal gangs, corrupt local officers and security forces, and many militant ethnic nationalists.

Indiscriminate killing executed by the militant ethnic nationalists has been widely associated with kidnapping and ransoming of the NGO’s workers, foreigners, opponents, minorities, business people, and even officers from international organizations. For example, killing some Chinese worker started during the first-half of the first decade of this century in Makoran and adjacent to Karachi by BLA and BLF (Axmann, 2008, pp. 273–278). A few years later, John Solecki, an American citizen and the regional head of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), allegedly was kidnapped by the nationalist militants (CRSS, 2012). Intimidation and indiscriminate killing of so-called

non “native,” workers, teachers, and others have also been frequently reported (HRW, 2010).

Hyrbyair Marri (2016) had warned China about disregarding Baloch sentiments on CPEC issue and had said that Baloch people could not guarantee the safety of Chinese citizens who are working for the state of Pakistan against the interest of the Baloch nation. Consequently, BLA killed 10 road workers near Gwadar and a spokesperson of BLA, Jeander Baloch sent a statement to Al Jazeera that “We accept responsibility for the Gwadar attack,” and had added that

this conspiratorial plan [CPEC] is not acceptable to the Baloch people under any circumstances. Baloch independence movements have made it clear several times that they will not abandon their people’s future in the name of development projects or even democracy. (Al Jazeera, 2017)

However, Hyrbyair Marri believes that they are fighting for the freedom of a nation as “one of the oldest in the region,” and a “homeland of the Baloch for thousands of years” against an “occupier” and “colonialist” Punjabis. He also states that “We believe that such resistance must be according to international and human rights conventions. Moreover, these freedom fighters are immensely popular and respected by the Baloch masses” (Marri, 2016).

BLA was also involved in attacking Chinese Consulate in Karachi, where four people were shot dead (BBC, 2018). A newly founded group, The Baloch Raaji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS), which is allied with BLA and other ethnic separatist armed organizations, killed 14 passengers after removing them from passenger buses in coastal Makoran between Ormara and Gwadar. However, this group had claimed that by checking their ID cards they were the members of the security forces (Hashim, 2019). Pakistani officials have accused the Iranian government of supporting BRAS to organize its plan inside Iran, while Iran has frequently accused Pakistan to be behind Jundallah and their successor militant group, Jaish al-Adl, acting inside Iranian Balochistan (Shahab, 2019).

Considering the chaotic circumstances in the area, it is not very surprising to see that arms and drug trafficking, become very profitable businesses and essential sources of income, which the political groups and militants, both religious and the nationalists, as well as security forces and government officials directly or indirectly benefit from. Since there is no clear definition of nationalism in Balochistan, all Baloch, Brahui MPs or activists, either they are attached to the central government or not, consider themselves nationalists. There are many influential and powerful sardars, who are or been MPs, senators or minister despite being involved in the murder or/and in drug trafficking or supporting them. For example, Haji Sahi Dust Jan Notizai and now his son Amanullah; Yaqoob Bizenjo son of Imam Bheel have been MPs and well-known drug traffickers. However, they have no apparent relationships with separatist nationalists, and even some of the

separatists consider them as traitors and the stooges of the Pakistani security forces, they do not talk much about the nature of the drug trafficking in the area.

Since the criminal gangs, including drug traffickers, safely act in territories that militant separatist are active, and in many cases, they are part of the same or close tribal networks, the essence of criticisms made need to be considered with many doubts (see Aftab, 2014; Green, 2012). Even some sources believe that the smugglers are acting as channels of communications between Iranian Security forces and some armed separatists such as BLF (see Durden, 2018).

### *Balochistan as a field of proxy wars*

Currently, Baluchistan is a field of proxy wars between regional and international powers. Now Iran, alongside with India and Afghanistan, as well as the United States, seems to be actively involved in proxy wars in Balochistan in Pakistan. It is claimed that Allah Nazar, the leader of BLF, accuses Hyrbyair Marri as an admirer of Saudi Arabia’s moderate Islam while Hyrbyair accuses Allah Nazar as an Iranian puppet (see Durden, 2018; Sellin, 2018). Some anonymous sources from Iran also claim that BLF (also BRA) benefit from the support of Iranian Security forces and gain shelter and resources even inside Iran and their injured members including Allah Nazar have been hospitalized in Iran particularly in Imam Ali Hospital in Chabahar. According to some anonymous informants in Iran, some hardliner Sunni clerics in Iran had been angry with Allah Nazar’s commuting to Iran on the basis of their belief that Allah Nazar is a Zegri. BRA led by Brahamdagh Bugti has been accused by Jaish al Adl (an Iranian Baloch Militant group), of being in close relationship with Iranian security forces and taking part in betraying, attacking, and killing Jaish al-Adl members (see Jaish al Adl, 2017).

There has been an argument in India about persuading Iran and Afghanistan to support the Baloch insurgents against Pakistan and also providing facilities for the Pakistani Baloch in western countries to raise their plans (see Chaudhuri, 2016). A seminar held by the Democracy Forum and Lord Diljit Rana in the House of Lord in February 2017, in London, in which Hyrbyair Marri and Mir Suleman Khan of Kalat participated, was likely to be in line with the Indian policies (Democracy Forum, 2017).

The United States has much concern about the Chinese who have heavily invested in Balochistan. A group of Republican congressmen led by Rohrabacher have frequently met the Baloch nationalist representatives not only from Pakistan but also from Iran, in Washington, London, and Germany (see Hosainbor, 2012; Rohrabacher, 2013). Whereas, it is supposed that Pakistani security forces support Iranian Baloch ethno-religious militants such as Jaish al-Adl, Iranian Security forces support Pakistani Militant Baloch against Pakistan. Indian Security forces have always been supporting the Baloch nationalists in Pakistan. The

situation developed in the area is reflecting some characteristics of what has been called New Wars (see Browning, 2013; Kaldor, 2006).

### *The problem of puritan ethnic nationalism*

The conditions explained earlier, provided the ground for the emergence of hardliner ethnic nationalists. A primordial and ethnic-related approach reflected in some of their arguments, in which the Baloch are seen in their essence free natured and consider land as their faith, and even historically consider pluralism as a disaster in Asia and Africa (Dashti, 2002, p. 10, 2012). This is a telling story which reveals the meaning of the puritan Baloch ethnic nationalism.

Defining Balochistan's population purely based on a homogeneous identity is dangerous and has been precarious so far. Based on such an ethnic ideology, widespread corruption and brutality, not only from inside against each other but also against others as outsiders, have been justified. Moreover, in this way the nationalists plant the seeds extensive ethnic-linguistic conflicts, as the militant ethnic-tribal nationalists in Balochistan tend to consider Balochistan as the land of the Baloch and emphasis on the ethnic-linguistic purity.

Since Balochistan is widely a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic society, a puritan ethnic Baloch nationalism obviously levels the path for more internal ethnic conflicts, Balochi nationalist assumptions are based on a claim that the Baloch is a "nation" in its nature, and as a natural phenomenon its inevitable destiny is to reach its legitimate rights and create its "Balochi state." By this logic, ethnic-linguistic homogeneity of a "nation," legitimize exclusion of other ethnic-linguistic groups. This divisive and anti-pluralistic approach, sooner or later, depends on circumstances, likely to lead to alienation of others such as Brahuais, Lasis/Jats, Dehwaris, Hazaras, Pashtuns, and so on. For example, in Karachi and Nasirabad Sindhi speakers (Jats) have identified themselves under a separate political organization called "*Jamote Qaumi Movement*" (Jamote National Movement). Even on some occasions, some Brahuais have talked about "Brauhistan." Lasis/Jams also have some similar claims.

If these ethno-linguistic groups, with the same token, use the same "objective" elements to define their own political "rights," of being nations; then an "integrated" one-unit nation of Balochistan loses its meaning from the start. Do the Baloch desire to dominate others by coercive means? Or with the same ill-defined, logic of ethnic-linguistic definition of nationhood, are they able to recognize others possible claims as "nations" and give them the freedom to choose their destiny even by forming their sovereign states? In spite of using the popular jargons of the "rights of nations for self-determination," the ethnic nationalists, who argue for the purity of the "nation," have shown little capacity to accept a liberal principle to unite people with diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. This means

that for the nationalists, rights of self-determination is about taking the rights but when they have the power not to give it to other similar groups.

The existing puritan ethnic, cultural groups, who consider multi-ethnicity as a demon, enhance ethnic conflicts by directly targeting "others" such as Punjabis in Balochistan and at the same time accusing many others as collaborators and so on. By categorizing the residents in Balochistan as "native" and "settlers," they create a basis for further tensions and discrimination against "settlers" and dividing society with dreadful means of the sense of hatred and bigotry. The exclusionary policies pave the path for ethnic cleansing at very early stages.

The nationalists ignore that such kind of categorizations is purely based on subjective and mythical values because, in a longer period, nobody can settle this argument that who are not "immigrant" in Balochistan? Because even the most powerful separatist and "anti-settler" tribes in Balochistan are proudly claiming that they are from Rind tribe, who immigrated to Balochistan a few centuries ago. Nobody has an answer to these questions of how long and with what criteria, someone should be settled in a specific area to be entitled as native and why? And nobody can say who has been really native on this land? Furthermore, the dominant tribes arrived and conquered this region had not come to distribute sweets and flowers, but they had captured the area with swords and oppression and confiscated, the properties and ruined lives of those people who had resisted.

Irredentism, associated with the claims of the separatist nationalists, is another issue which should be taken seriously. The ethnic nationalists, who are more adamant about creating a "Greater Balochistan," are contradictory regarding being ethnically puritan on one hand, and territorially act as irredentist and ignore multi-linguistic and multi-ethnic characters of the society in Balochistan on the other hand. Irredentism is a factor which makes the whole issue more complicated and at critical points could create an extremely hostile policy of the neighboring countries and potentially internal non-Baloch adjacent communities.

Regarding an "imagined" independent Balochistan, for example, what will be the response of the other bigger neighboring countries such as Iran and Afghanistan, who have already been irredentist states and have territorial claims over Balochistan, particularly the part located in Pakistan? If Pakistani Balochistan finds a chance to emerge as a new sovereign state, again as an irredentist state, to create greater Balochistan, inevitably will enter clashes with already strong and established, and also irredentist states. It will be very likely that the whole area sees many further atrocities, divisions, conflicts, and ethnic cleansing, as the consequences of any hostile break up in this area.

### **Conclusion**

Nationalism in Balochistan, in Pakistan, has been and still is, fragmented in line with tribal *sardars*' and landlords'

interests and their inter and intra-factional rivalries. However, at the same time, there are some obvious distinctions between previously more compliant nationalism of the Cold War era and narrowly defined puritan ethnic Balochi separatist nationalism developed after the end of the Cold War.

Spread of radical ethnic identity politics is comprehensible in the context of widespread corruption, injustice, and inequality in Pakistan. This situation, more than any time, has created a fertile ground for further instabilities in the society, and for security forces to intervene in the whole society. The intrusion of the security forces, more seen explicitly in Balochistan, where the security forces pursue brutal killing and dumping policies, to physically eradicate ethnic nationalists (particularly radical separatist functions), supposedly to protect integration of the country and also secure abundant energy and mineral resources.

At the same time, Balochistan has become a field of proxy wars by rival powers to inflame ethnic conflicts. The militant Baloch nationalists have also applied highly unethical methods of ethnic wars against non-“native” workers and teachers. Whereas, the sardar nationalists fairly criticize the corrupt political system in Pakistan, most of them have no clean record from the time they were in power, and hardly, have had any clear and well-defined policy concerning the improvement of education and miserable living and health conditions of the ordinary people.

Hardliner Baloch ethnic nationalists have disregarded the great features of the multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-cultural society in Balochistan. Based on some ill-defined, objective-based meaning of nationhood, the ethnic nationalists with also irredentist approach, has already planted the seeds of internal ethnic conflicts in the society.

The current conflicts are ruining lives, hindering the development of education and prosperity and creating further hatred and hostilities which could enhance widespread ethnic cleansing in the area. Abandoning the killing and dumping policies by authorities could give the civilian governments some credits to persuade or put pressure on the ethnic militants to abandon their uncompromising, puritan, and rigid policies and enter negotiations to find some solutions beyond puritan ethnic-minded approaches.

### Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

### Notes

1. This claim is inconsistent with claims made by many Baloch nationalists that the Baloch are “essentially” or in their “nature” have always been secular. The Baloch nationalists, dominantly, are not religious at present but they are not homogeneous as some factions have quite strong religious tendencies.
2. For a critical view of Nationalism in Balochistan see Swindler, 1996.
3. Iranian Baloch, according to some anonymous informants, were four groups, which were sent through their

arrangement, some were from Tudeh Party, other from Aksaryat (Sazeman Fedayan Khalaq), and some were related to Raj-e Zorombesh. Some also were related to a smaller and less-know group called Maobarzin-e Baloch. Their number could be about 20–30.

4. A key figure who was appointed as Baluchistan’s governor by General Musharraf was Amir Ul-Mulk Mengal from Noshki. Amir Ulmulk Mengal (from 1999 to 2003) was an independent middle class, a poet in Brahui language, and the Chief Justice of the High Court in Balochistan. Judge Mengal was a secretary of NAP when he was young and was a close relative of Gulkhan Nasir, the well-known Balochi poet and a prominent figure of NAP and a minister in the provincial government.
5. The brutality exercised is far from being random. After the end of the Cold War, ethnic nationalist and leftist groups in many countries used similar methods of indiscriminate massacre and collateral damage, as the Jihadists have done. The ethnic wars in the Balkans, the Tutsi massacres by Hutu in Rwanda, and the violence in Somalia, Sudan, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Syria, Pakistan, and Libya are some examples of similarly catastrophic incidents. Security forces, particularly within failed or dictatorial states (such as Peru, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka), have exercised “dirty war” on their citizens and used indiscriminate and extra-legal attacks against their opponents.
6. Bugti, who was killed in August 2006, was a warlord and the chief of the Bugti tribe, who was previously considered as a “traitor” and disloyal to the cause of nationalism in Balochistan, but after he was killed, he turned into a hero for all militant Baloch nationalists.
7. This should be noticed that most leading rebellious sardars, for one or several turns, have been MP or a minister in provincial or federal parliaments and governments. Even in worse conditions, when they have been fighting with military, they have had their affiliates, families, and close political allies in the provincial and federal governments. It also means that the Baloch tribal sardars always have had a high status in both provincial and national governments but there has been no visible improvement in the life of ordinary people and corruption has remained as usual.

### References

- Aamir, A. (2018, July 30). Three quarter of votes polled in Balochistan went to electables. *Daily Times*. <https://daily-times.com.pk/275310/three-quarters-of-the-votes-polled-in-balochistan-went-to-electables/>
- Aftab, S. (2014). *Post 2014: The regional drug economy and its implications for Pakistan*. [https://www.cidob.org/en/content/download/38315/597263/file/FEBRUARY\\_2014\\_SAFIYA+AFTAB.pdf](https://www.cidob.org/en/content/download/38315/597263/file/FEBRUARY_2014_SAFIYA+AFTAB.pdf)
- Ahmad, A. (1973). The national question in Balochistan. *Pakistan Forum: Focus on Balochistan*, 3(8–9), 4–18.
- Ahmed, M., & Baloch, A. (2017). *The political economy of development: A critical assessment of Balochistan, Pakistan* (MPRA: 1-21). [https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/80754/1/MPRA\\_paper\\_80754.pdf](https://mpa.ub.uni-muenchen.de/80754/1/MPRA_paper_80754.pdf)
- Al Jazeera. (2017, May 13). *Gunmen kill 10 labourers in Balochistan’s Gwadar*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/05/gunmen-kill-10-labourers-balochistan-gwadar-170513111330168.html>

- Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities*. Verso.
- Ansari, M. (2003). The guns of Mehrgharhassoud. *Archaeology*, 56(2): 62–66.
- Axmann, M. (2008). Phoenix from the ashes? The Baloch national movement and its recent revival. In C. Jahani, A. Korn, & T. Paul (Eds.), *The Baloch and others: Linguistic, historical and socio-political perspectives on pluralism in Balochistan* (pp. 261–292). Reichert Verlag Wiesbaden.
- Babar, Z. A. (2017, August 16). Balochistan: Still a land of ghost schools, ghost teachers. *Cutting Edge*. <https://weeklycuttingedge.com/balochistan-still-a-land-of-ghost-schools-ghost-teachers/>
- Baloch, I. (1987). *The problem of 'Greater Balochistan': A study of Baloch nationalism*. Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH.
- Balochistan and All India Baloch Conference. (1933, May 1). *A brief summary of evidence from the working committee of Balochistan and all India Baloch conference*. Daily Gazette Press Ltd.
- BBC. (2013). *Pakistan country profile*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-south-asia-12965779>
- BBC. (2018, November 23). *Karachi attack: China consulate attack leaves four dead*. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-46313136>
- Bizenjo, M. B. (n.d.). *washin wab salamatin jan* [Sweet dream healthy body]. <http://bamposhti.blogfa.com/post/263>
- Breese, T. M. (2002). *Baloch nationalism: Its origin and development*. The University of London.
- Browning, C. S. (2013). *International security*. Oxford University Press.
- Butt, Q. (2013a). *Balochistan condundrum: Face to face with a son of the soil*. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/551022/balochistan-condundrum-face-to-face-with-a-son-of-the-soil>
- Butt, Q. (2013b). Princely liaisons: The Khan family controls politics in Kalat. *The Express Tribune*. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/538820/princely-liaisons-the-khan-family-controls-politics-in-kalat/>
- Bygwaah. (2019). *The enforced disappeared: International voice for Baloch missing persons*. <http://www.bygwaah.com/modules/bygwaah/index.php?start=880>
- Chaudhuri, P. P. (2016, April 7). How India can play the Balochistan card against Pakistan. *Hindustan Times*. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/analysis/how-best-can-india-play-the-balochistan-card-against-pakistan/story-vOq6lkRKSdlzGYYKkI7pJK.html>
- CRSS. (2012). *Kidnappings in Balochistan: The new source of sustenance for criminals and militants*. <http://crss.pk/story/2900/kidnappings-in-balochistan-the-new-source-of-sustenance-for-criminals-and-militants/>
- Dashti, J. (1982). *The Baloch cultural heritage*. Royal Book.
- Dashti, N. (2002, February). Raji Zend o Rawa dari [Existence and legitimacy of nationality]. *Mahtak Balochi*, 16(186), 7–13.
- Dashti, N. (2012). *The Baloch and Balochistan: A historical account from the beginning to the fall of the Baloch state*. Trafford.
- Death toll in Pakistan election rally bombing rises to 149. (2016, July 16). *Reuters*. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-politics-blast/death-toll-in-pakistan-election-rally-bombing-rises-to-149-idUSKBN1K61AJ>
- Durden, T. (2018, March 22) *The Iran-Pakistan border is a geopolitical powder keg*. <https://www.zerohedge.com/news/2018-03-22/iran-pakistan-corridor-geopolitical-powder-keg>
- Gelner, E. (1998). *Nationalism*. Phoenix.
- Ghost teachers in Balochistan: With political backing, attendance is a mere formality. (2011, January 27). *The Express Tribune*. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/109721/ghost-teachers-in-balochistan-with-political-backing-attendance-is-a-mere-formality/>
- Giddens, A. (1999). *Runaway world: How globalisation is reshaping our lives?* Profile Books.
- Grare, F. (2013, April 11). *Balochistan: The state versus the nation* [Report]. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2013/04/11/balochistan-state-versus-nation-pub-51488>
- Green, M. (2012). Special report: Murder spotlights Pakistan's "heroin kingpin." *Reuters*. <https://uk.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-kingpin/special-report-murder-spotlights-pakistan-heroin-kingpin-idUSBRE88401R20120905>
- Haqqani, A. (1987). *Darwon (Darwon Mountain in Jao)*. Almakhan Prenters Karachi.
- Harrison, S. S. (1981). *In Afghanistan's shadow: Baloch nationalism and Soviet temptations*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Hashim. (2019, April 18). Gunmen kill 14 bus passengers in Pakistan's Balochistan. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/04/gunmen-kill-bus-passengers-pakistan-balochistan-official-190418045138814.html>
- Held, D. (2003). *The global transformations reader: An introduction to the globalization debate*. Polity Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (1991). *Nation and nationalism since 1780*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (2007). *Globalization, democracy and terrorism*. Little, Brown Book.
- Hobsbawm, E. J., & Roger, T. O. (1983). *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hosainbor, A. (2012). *Charkhesh Estrategy Amrika dar Asiy-e Markzi va Jonub-e Asia: Masaleh Balochistan?* [A shift in American Strategy in central Asia and South Asia: The question of Balochistan?]. <http://www.taptan.com/contact-us-2/چرخش-استراتژی-آمریکا-در-آسیای-مرکزی-و-ج>
- Hosseinbor, M. H. (2000). *Iran and its nationalities: The case of Baluch Nationalism*. Pakistani Adab.
- Human Rights Watch. (2010). *Pakistan: Balochistan militants killing teachers*. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2010/12/13/pakistan-balochistan-militants-killing-teachers>
- Human Rights Watch. (2012). *Testimony of Ali Dayan Hasan before the US House Committee on Foreign Affairs regarding human rights in Balochistan*. <http://www.hrw.org/news/2012/02/08/testimony-ali-dayan-hasan-us-house-committee-foreign-affairs-regarding-human-rights>
- International Crisis Group. (2007). *Pakistan: The forgotten conflict in Balochistan*.
- Jaish al Adl. (2017, August 19). *Byaniyeh* [Announcement]. [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2017/08/blog-post\\_20.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2017/08/blog-post_20.html)
- Jamaladini, A. A. (1985). *Rozhn* [Light]. Almakhan.
- Jamaladini, A. J. (1985). *Azat-e Zende Haal* [Life history of Azat]. In W. A. Baloch (Ed.), *Rozhn* [Light] (pp. 6–42). Almakhan.
- Kaldor, M. (2006). *New and old wars* (2nd ed.). Polity.
- Khan, S. (2012, October 31). RIP Asad Rehman: "Chakar Khan" buried in Lahore, remembered in Balochistan. *The Express Tribune*. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/458650/rip-asad-rehman-chakar-khan-buried-in-lahore-remembered-in-balochistan/>
- Kurd, S. (2018). *Yusuf Aziz Magasi aur Balochistan reforms movements*. Balochi Academi.

- Lieven, A. (2011). *Pakistan: A hard country*. Penguin Books.
- Magasi, Y. A. (1978). *Makatib-e Yousuf Aziz Magasi* [The correspondences of Yousuf Aziz Magasi] (An'am al-Haq Kausar, Ed.). Majles Taraqi Adab.
- Manan, A. (2013, April 23). *Balochistan crisis: Zehri-Mengal feud puts PML-N in a quandary*. <http://tribune.com.pk/story/539280/balochistan-crisis-zehri-mengal-feud-puts-pml-n-in-a-quandary>
- Marri, H. (2009, July 4). *Interview with Najam Sethi* [Dunya TV]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTB3fdyHmS4>
- Marri, H. (2016, July 23). *India must extend support to our freedom struggle: Balochistan separatist leader Hyrbyair Marri* (Exclusive) [an email interview with *Indiatvnews.com*]. <http://balochwarna.com/2016/07/26/india-must-extend-support-to-our-freedom-struggle-balochistan-separatist-leader-hyrbyair-marri-exclusive/>
- Nagoman. (2006, February). Bedar soramagin golzamina ma rout [Don't let beautiful land to be taken away]. *Mahtak Balochi Quetta??* (in Balochi). *Nagoman (pseudonym)*, 20(234).
- Nagoman. (2007, April). Balochistan. *Mahtak Balochi Quetta??* (in Balochi). *Nagoman*, 21(246).
- Naseer, G. K. (2011). *Balochi Sheirani Daptar (Kuliat-e Naseer)* [The book of poems (Collected poems of Naseer)]. S.A. Publishers.
- Noraiee, H. (2015). The modern roots of the social and political fragmentations in Balochistan in Pakistan. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 3(1), 15–27.
- Provincial Assembly of Balochistan. (2018). <http://www.pabalochistan.gov.pk/index.php/members/bydistrict/en>
- Rohrabacher, D. (2013). *Speech by Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA)*. <http://www.unpo.org/downloads/609.pdf>
- Scholte, J. A. (2005). *Globalization: A critical introduction* (2nd ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Sellin, L. (2018, March 22). *The Iran-Pakistan border is a geopolitical powder keg*. <http://www.southasiaathudson.org/blog/2018/3/22/the-iran-pakistan-border-is-a-geopolitical-powder-keg>
- Shah, S. A. (2013). *Cases lodged against Sanaullah Zehri's guards on BHC orders*. <http://dawn.com/news/1030341/cases-lodged-against-sanaullah-zehris-guards-on-bhc-orders>
- Shahab, S. (2019, April 20). Pakistan asks Iran to act on militants behind Baluchistan killings. *Reuters*. <https://af.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idAFKCN1RW0EN>
- Smith, A. (1999). The nation: Real or imagined? In E. Mortimer (Ed.), *People, nation and state*. London, New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Stalin, J. (1913). *Marxism and the national question*. <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1913/03.htm>
- Swindler, N. (1979). Brahui political organization and the national state. In A. T. Embree (Ed.), *Pakistan's western borderlands* (2nd ed., pp. 110–125). Royal Book.
- Swindler, N. (1996). Beyond parody: Ethnography engages nationalist discourse. In P. Titus (Ed.), *Marginality and modernity: Ethnicity and change in post-colonial Balochistan* (pp. 168–190). Oxford University Press.
- The Democracy Forum. (2017, February 7). The history of Balochistan revisited.
- Titus, P. (2008). To join the caravan of history: External influences on the Baloch national movement. In C. Jahani, A. Korn, & P. Titus (Eds.), *The Baloch and others: Linguistic, historical and socio-political perspectives on pluralism in Balochistan* (pp. 377–390). Reichert Verlag Wiesbaden.
- Titus, P., & Swindler, N. (2000). Knights, not pawns: Ethno-Nationalism and regional dynamics in post-Colonial Balochistan. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 32, 47–69.
- Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization. (2013). *Balochistan: Calls for free education*. <http://www.unpo.org/article/15516>
- Weaver, M. A. (1990, January 15). Balochistan. *New Yorker*. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1990/01/15/balochistan>
- Wirsing, R. G. (2008). *Baloch nationalism and the geopolitics of energy resources: The changing context of separatism in Pakistan*. [https://www.voltairenet.org/IMG/pdf/Baloch\\_Nationalism\\_and\\_the\\_Geopolitics\\_of\\_Energy\\_Resources.pdf?\\_\\_cf\\_chl\\_jschl\\_tk\\_\\_=6da06985c9e589bf51937141199c71dc87a8eb70-1578455588-0-ARrweixdNAtMjx1CV-3VvNLhZq5rURASkpOgVmI9OI27M0D0z3wCOoHMQtchNaSRi5BrGEQE-ZRBQ9VX1ym8XdvoJ-r066Z-fs9ej-lkLY\\_CyIYRRMfXc8v8luhfBYg7EhziCVvsetZtfP\\_mx\\_F-8dQPfYzFE8CMObMPNs\\_yIANrIrx4S4\\_LJPQU2aUMnUY\\_UvCz1okkwrPmlMr\\_paAHA5tytB-J9BMqDcsBgKnREsUFq6bo-Vy2I1Sd2cOjYqfEO1MR-8WgBGNod2X8QcTM0sH\\_caquRe2bTw-RQbGh9wyKs-bojHudWRwyK-7gV0XhrdhaS0fLUE06\\_TDcww1HdZ\\_HH8tvCNnYJYyYx9LEPZaZaFcsz](https://www.voltairenet.org/IMG/pdf/Baloch_Nationalism_and_the_Geopolitics_of_Energy_Resources.pdf?__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=6da06985c9e589bf51937141199c71dc87a8eb70-1578455588-0-ARrweixdNAtMjx1CV-3VvNLhZq5rURASkpOgVmI9OI27M0D0z3wCOoHMQtchNaSRi5BrGEQE-ZRBQ9VX1ym8XdvoJ-r066Z-fs9ej-lkLY_CyIYRRMfXc8v8luhfBYg7EhziCVvsetZtfP_mx_F-8dQPfYzFE8CMObMPNs_yIANrIrx4S4_LJPQU2aUMnUY_UvCz1okkwrPmlMr_paAHA5tytB-J9BMqDcsBgKnREsUFq6bo-Vy2I1Sd2cOjYqfEO1MR-8WgBGNod2X8QcTM0sH_caquRe2bTw-RQbGh9wyKs-bojHudWRwyK-7gV0XhrdhaS0fLUE06_TDcww1HdZ_HH8tvCNnYJYyYx9LEPZaZaFcsz)
- Zaman, F. (2018, August 9). Education in Balochistan. *The Nation*. <https://nation.com.pk/28-Aug-2018/education-in-balochistan>
- Zehri, U. (2017, July 27). *Ghost schools and teachers in Balochistan*. *Balochistan Point*. <http://thebalochistanpoint.com/ghost-schools-and-teachers-in-balochistan/>