

Balochistan: Why Persistent Mistrust?

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Abstract

Balochistan is complementary to the very existence of Pakistan for four main reasons. One, it is the largest province which occupies about 44% of the total landmass of the country. Pakistan minus Balochistan means reducing its geographic size to almost half which brings it into the list of very small countries. With such a reduction in its geographical size, the country would not be able to sustain its independence against disproportionately large and potentially hostile neighbours. Second, Pakistan without Balochistan especially Makran coast loses its geostrategic relevance. In view of the evolving geo-economic scenario, whosoever controls this long coastline would enjoy dominance in the region. Pakistan, in this case, would shrink to irrelevance and find itself at the mercy of those controlling the Makran coast. Third, the natural resources of Balochistan represent the lifeline of Pakistan. Without these, it would have to look towards India and Iran. Its other two neighbours i.e. China and Afghanistan would not be able to help even if they wished to do so because of geographical restraints and geo-political environments respectively. Fourth, it would speed up the process of disintegration, which started in 1971 with the departure of East Pakistan and the making of a separate country.

Independent Balochistan, on the other hand, would not be sustainable on geo-economics and socio-political grounds. Under such circumstances (e.g. a protracted struggle for independence), the likely countries with interests at stake would be USA, UK, Russia, India and China. The province, consequently, would run the risk of becoming another Afghanistan and a battlefield for opposing intelligence agencies and forces. The Baloch people would turn into refugees in neighbouring Punjab, Sindh and Iran. Any third power taking control of the area would initially operate through local influential / notables, the system that was followed by the British and continued by Pakistan's bureaucratic establishment over more recent years. At the same time, any incoming forces would require human resource to maintain them and undertake further explorations / developments. Such trained manpower or even labour would obviously have to come from neighbouring areas, whether these were from Sindh, Punjab (limited), neighbouring Afghanistan or India. The people of Balochistan due to low education and technical knowhow would thus remain

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marginalised. The sparsely populated Balochistan would encounter a change in its demography, with the native Baloch possibly becoming a minority in their own homeland. Consequently, a common Baloch shall neither have any relief nor identity, the very reason of present struggle. Rather their identity would get threatened with the incoming of various new cultures and traditions. After such an alignment with their new allies, they may even lose the moral support available to them from people in Pakistan's other provinces, especially Punjab. Under all these eventualities, the region would get embroiled in large scale internal as well as external conflicts. This article highlights the historical perspective of the issue and aims to propose viable suggestions.

Mistrust and violence in historical perspective

Pre-independence system of governance

Around 1800, Balochistan comprised of four princely states i.e. Makran, Kharan, Las-Bella and Kalat. These states were brought under British suzerainty through a treaty concluded between Khan of Kalat and Sir Robert Sandman in 1876.¹ About three years later in 1879, the Afghan Emir ceded the districts of Quetta, Pishin, Sibi, Harnai and Thal Chotiali to the British. In 1883, the British acquired the Bolan Pass on a permanent lease basis from Khan of Kalat. Consequently in 1887, the major areas of present day Balochistan were declared British territories. In order to mark the western boundaries of British empire, Sir Mortimer Durand managed an agreement with Emir of Afghanistan to draw a line from Chitral to Balochistan as inter empire / state boundary between British India and Afghanistan, known as 'Durand Line'.² So much of present day Balochistan had come under British control by the start of 20th century. However the system of control and governance was quite different.

The British during their era of rule had developed a very simple but an effective instrument to rule the people of Balochistan. Prior to their arrival and control of these areas, the local notables of respective tribes would administer day to day disputes amongst them and rule accordingly. This used to be done through a consultative council of tribal elders known as *Jirga*. Decisions of *Jirga* were based on mutual consultations and agreements of disputing parties. The British identified those chieftains to be used as instruments to rule the tribal people. Therefore they strengthened the local notables of respective tribes and areas by giving them autonomy, powers and financial support. These

¹ Rajinder Puri, *Recovery of India* (New Delhi: Har Anand Publications, 1992), p.44.

² Institute of Strategic Studies, *Strategic Studies*, Islamabad, Vol.26, 2006, p.44.

powers along with financial assistance (rather blackmailing) undermined the traditional social system of tribes based on the moral grounds mentioned above. Under the British system, now in order to administer the people in their respective areas, the notables were provided with levies. With this readily available force, tribal elders could subdue opposing opinion and enforce dictatorial will to some extent under the British governing logic and judgements.

This mechanism changed the character of the *Jirga* which hitherto had been purely a communal court to provide participatory justice. The new style of *Jirga*, commonly known as ‘Shahi Jirga’, divided society into two i.e. dictatorial head and the subject. Under this scenario, the notables could impose tax, even on labour, and could expropriate women. Only the Political Agent could review the decisions of notables.³ The Political Agent under the British system of governance was placed above the local notables. Since they were beneficiaries of British financial assistance, the latter would implement the new policies through brutal means. This is how the British created masters out of the local notables and became the super masters in their own positions.⁴ They had similar experience in other parts of India in one or the other form, so it worked very well here as well. In fact similar system was followed by the Mughals much prior to the British rule in India and it had worked very well.⁵

Post independence developments – history of conflicts

With respect to the accession of Balochistan with Pakistan, there are two opinions: Baloch nationalists are of the view that Mir Ahmad Yar Khan, the ruler of Khanate of Kalat, was coerced by Mr Jinnah to sign the document of accession.⁶ Mir Ghous Baksh Bazenjo has been very categorical in this regards that there was consensus among the tribal leaders in 1947 about maintaining an independent Balochistan. He maintained throughout his life that since the Baloch are a separate nation and they upheld their independent system of self governance even during

³ Balochistan in Historical Perspective, *Balochistan Conflict* – Wikipedia, the free Encyclopedia http://www.the_vision21.org

⁴ Muhammad Waseem, *Politics and the State in Pakistan* (Islamabad: National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research, 1994), p.14.

⁵ I.H. Qureshi, *A Short History of Pakistan*, Book Three (Karachi: University of Karachi, 1961), pp.48-75 and Muhammad Waseem, *ibid*.

⁶ Imperial Gazetteer of India, Vol.6, pp.270-89, *History of Balochistan, Pakistan* – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Balochistan,_Pakistan, accessed 30 January 2012.

the British rule, therefore they should not be treated like other entities of Pakistani federation.⁷ The opposing school of thought is that Khan of Kalat ruled even after the death of Mr Jinnah and supported Government of Pakistan.⁸ Had there been an element of coercion on the part of Mr Jinnah, the Khan would have highlighted and revolted against such a scenario. On the other hand, Mr Jinnah's life presents an historical model of a man of principles. In the view of many people, coercion does not fit well with his nature and personality. He always maintained himself on the principles of truth, trust and straightforwardness. However, it appears logical that Mr Jinnah would never have advocated such a tight control over the administration of Khanate that it interferes too much in their conventional functioning under the local customs (*rawaj*). The understanding between Mr Jinnah and Khan of Kalat had been that the Khanate would maintain its status as existed under the British rule and administer their internal affairs accordingly.⁹ Quaid-e-Azam's speech at Sibi Durbar, on 14 February 1948, highlights his views where he said 'our decisions in the affairs of the state shall be guided by discussions and consultations'.¹⁰

Contrary to the above mentioned understanding, the Government of Pakistan, in April 1948, decided to take complete control of the area and placed the Army on alert for the immediate required actions. This led

⁷ Khurshid Nagori, *Mir-e-Karwan* (Karachi: Block Printing Press, 2010), pp.3-5, 72-3.

⁸ Strategic Studies, Islamabad, Vol.26, 2006, pp.30-50. *History of Balochistan, Pakistan* – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balochistan, Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balochistan,_Pakistan)

⁹ *History of Balochistan, Pakistan* – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, *Accession Issues of Balochistan* [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Balochistan, Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Balochistan,_Pakistan)

¹⁰ New era of progress in Balochistan, Quaid-e-Azam's speech at Sibi Durbar, available at <http://m-a-jinnah.blogspot.com/2010/04/new-era-of-progress-for-baluchistan.html>, accessed 1 October 2012. During the Durbar, he also emphasized:

'I felt it my duty to assure the people of Balochistan on behalf of the Government of Pakistan that all agreements and allowances would continue until such time as they could be modified after the consultation with them'.

'The final constitution, as you all know, will be framed by the constituent assembly in consultation with the representatives of all these areas'.

'The setting of the advisory council will not in any way detract from the status of these areas, nor from the freedom of these areas to mold their future constitution and to form the administration in accordance with their own customs and traditions...'

to a revolt on the part of Baloch nationalists, known to be the first conflict of Balochistan. Prince Abdul Karim Khan, the younger brother of Khan of Kalat, along with other leaders of the nationalist political groups initiated the rebellion for an independent Balochistan. Under stern actions from the Government of Pakistan, these groups of people asking for liberation of Balochistan fled to Kandahar, Afghanistan. In August 1948, Prince Abdul Karim Khan along with his warrior groups re-entered Balochistan and organised a fresh rebellion against the Government. The then Afghan Government provided them necessary aid and, from inside Balochistan, they were also assisted by Mir Gohar Khan Zahrri, tribal leader of Zarkzai clan.¹¹ Through a timely military action, the Prince and his followers were arrested and put before an inquiry. A special *Jirga* was also constituted to study the circumstances which led to the rebellion and give its recommendations. The *Jirga* suggested various penalties and the handing over of Prince Abdul Karim to the Loralai tribal system. However, these suggestions were not agreed to at the federal government level and the Prince was sentenced to 10 years rigorous imprisonment and a fine of Rs. 5000. Other members were also awarded imprisonment and penalties.¹² The point to note here is that neither the government's board of inquiry nor the special *Jirga* sought to find out the reasons of the revolt, or suggested measures to discourage their recurrence in future. The government machinery felt it appropriate to handle the revolt through the use of force.

The second revolt against the Government of Pakistan took place in 1958-59 when Nawab Nowroz Khan, the tribal head of Zarakzai clan, initiated his struggle for independent Balochistan. This was a continuation of the indirect efforts of Mir Gohar Khan Zahrri who had supported Prince Abdul Karim Khan in 1948. However with an even stronger hand of the Army, Nawab Nowroz Khan had to surrender. In fact, he was promised amnesty in return for surrender. He was, however, arrested and put behind the bars in Hyderabad jail. Finally he was executed and all his near relatives including followers tried in military courts.¹³ Whereas, stern military action against the Nawab sent signals of the need for caution to potential rebellion sympathisers, it also seeded

¹¹ Henry Soszynski, *Kalat*, <http://www.uq.net.au/~zzhsoszy/ips/k/kalat.html>

¹² Malleon, *History of Afghanistan, History of Balochistan*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Balochistan,_Pakistan

¹³ *History of Balochistan, Pakistan*, Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, Henry Soszynski, *Kalat*, <http://www.uq.net.au/~zzhsoszy/ips/k/kalat.html> accessed 30 January 2012.

deep rooted hatred in the minds of common Baloch against the federal government and the military establishment for obvious reasons.

After the second conflict, the Pakistan army under the instructions of the government spread out in key areas and built new cantonments. In the absence of negotiated solutions to the problems and mindset of over-centralisation, resentment from Baloch nationalists started resurfacing in the early 1960s. In 1963, some of the tribal chieftains restarted revolt against the government which continued till 1969.¹⁴ This time the resentment was based on the denial of the due share of the local people from the natural resources of their province. In particular, this included the revenue share of Sui gas fields. The tribal leaders demanded due share for themselves as well.¹⁵ The rebellion was led by Sher Muhammad Mari; however subsequently the Mengal and Bugti tribes also joined on the same plea. This time also the army took action and vast areas especially of Mari tribes were destroyed. Baloch nationalists finally agreed to a ceasefire when General Yahya Khan abolished the 'One Unit Policy'.¹⁶ Balochistan was recognised as the fourth province of West Pakistan. It gave a new hope to the people for greater provincial autonomy and control over their natural resources.

The issue of Balochistan, however, once again rose to prominence in 1973 when Pakistan was otherwise facing post disintegration dilemmas after the emergence of Bangladesh. This time the revolt was based on political grounds when Mr Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Prime Minister, sacked the Balochistan Provincial Government of Attaullah Mengal.¹⁷ Additionally the Supreme Court's action of banning Balochistan National Party and charging its members with high treason, led to the situation of ethnic nationalist insurgency. The political unrest turning into all-out insurgency necessitated large scale deployment and operations by the army. Mir Hazar Khan Mari led the separatist groups

¹⁴ 'Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan', report by International Crisis Group, *Asia Report No.119*, pp.4-5, <http://www.crisisgroup.org/home/index.cfm>

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Khurshid Nagori, *Mir-e-Karwan* (Karachi: Block Printing Press, 2010), pp.158-60.

¹⁷ Ayesha Jalal, *The State of Martial Rule: The Origins of Pakistan's Economy of Defence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p.40; Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan Drifts into Extremism* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2005), p.79 and Balochistan Conflict – Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balochistan_conflict

under the banner of Baloch People's Liberation Front.¹⁸ Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti served as Governor Balochistan during this insurgency which came to an end with the military take-over of General Zia ul Haq in 1979. The military government of General Zia defused the Balochistan issue through negotiations with tribal leaders and providing some jobs to people of different affected areas.¹⁹ He also allowed space to the religious parties and groups for armed resistance against USSR in Afghanistan. During this period, Baloch tribal leaders were internally divided on the basis of independence and greater autonomy from the federal government. Pashtun and Brahvi groups were not in favour of separate Balochistan, rather they wanted greater autonomy. However Baloch tribal leaders struggling for independent Balochistan were dealt with iron hand by General Rahimmuddin, the Martial Law Governor of Balochistan.²⁰ General Rahimmuddin isolated them and focused on economic growth. So this period comparatively remained calm and peaceful, however, it failed to develop a long lasting socio-political system of governance under the military regime. As it happens under any establishment based system of governance, the Rahimmuddin period of rule (1978-1984) provided lip service and some line-up of bricks instead of resolving the issue on a sustainable basis.

In 2006, the situation in Balochistan took a drastic and radical turn when Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti was killed during an on-going military operation in Balochistan. This time the background of the issue was that Nawab Bugti and Mir Balach Mari raised their voices for greater control over the provincial resources and demanded a moratorium on the construction of military cantonments. Nawab Bugti was charged with numbers of rocket attacks on law enforcing agencies which ultimately led to his killing.²¹ In 2009, other prominent Baloch tribal leaders like Ghulam Muhammad Baloch, Lala Munir and Sher Muhammad were picked up by unknown individuals and killed. This raised Baloch nationalists' level of resentment.

Elements belonging to Baloch Liberation Army and likeminded groups of Baloch people condemn such killings by the Pakistan armed

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, SIPRI 1988:3000 military + 6000 civilians losses, <http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstat6.htm>

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Khurshid Nagori, *op.cit.*, pp.41-64. BBC Urdu – History of Balochistan, http://www.bbc.co.uk/urdu/miscellaneous/story/2005/01/050121_who_r_ba_loch_asif.shtml.

²¹ BBC News, 15 December 2005, Pakistan General Hurt in Attack, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4531546.stm

forces and intelligence agencies.²² Since 2008, there have been a series of incidents of missing persons and their subsequent killings through brutal means. Their dead bodies have been mostly found in public places littered with bullets and wounds which reflect their torture and subsequent killing.²³ Under such circumstances on 12 August 2009, Khan of Kalat, Mir Suleiman Dawood declared himself as the ruler of Balochistan and set up a Council for Independent Balochistan. With the unresolved issues of missing persons and targeted killings the situation remains very tense and sensitive.

The present Balochistan – wave of unrest and rebellion

There are two aspects of the present, comparatively prolonged, wave of unrest and rebellion in Balochistan. The first aspect falls in the domain of historical perspective and second specifically pertains to complexity of environments after the killing of Nawab Akbar Bugti and continuity of targeted deaths of Baloch people in the shape of missing persons. In the historical perspective, there have been differences in perception about Balochistan being part of Pakistan as elaborated in earlier part of this article. Firstly, the Baloch since centuries maintained their internal socio-political structure based on tribal traditions. Even the British during their era of rule did not interfere in the internal affairs of Baloch traditions. At the time of partition, majority of Baloch tribal chieftains apprehended that as part Pakistani federation, they shall not be in a position to maintain their socio-cultural context. Therefore, the solution was creating an independent Balochistan.²⁴ However, after Jinnah's meeting with Khan of Kalat, this impression was subsided because of former's very well conceived and proclaimed concept of federalism in Pakistan and provincial autonomy as highlighted in the earlier part of this article. Therefore for the Balochis, Balochistan being part of Pakistan meant a state where they would have internal independence of self governance according to their customs and traditions; a mechanism under which they would be able to maintain their historical identity as a Baloch nation and control over their provincial resources. The clash with this understanding came when, soon after the death of Quaid-e-Azam, the Central Government (of Pakistan) decided to control and rule Balochistan as per policies originating from the federal capital unilaterally. The people of

²² G. Carlotta, *Another Insurgency Gains in Pakistan*, 11 July 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/12/world/asia/12balochistan.html>

²³ BBC News, 9 April 2009, Riots as Baloch Chiefs found dead, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7991385.stm

²⁴ Khurshid Nagori, *op.cit.*, pp.3-5.

Balochistan took it as forceful occupation of their motherland; betrayal of mutual understanding and respect. This also reminded them about the earlier perception of their elders about Balochistan's fate in Pakistan.

In the early sixties, the people of Balochistan rightly feared that benefits of Sui gas shall predominantly trickle to other parts of the country especially Punjab and Sindh. Subsequent developments proved that only some portion of the benefits was given to the leading tribal chieftains. The province, as a whole, remained devoid of any major development in public services like construction of roads, rail network, provision of water for drinking and agriculture, improvement of education system, healthcare and alike.²⁵ The central government under an inflexible bureaucratic mind-set retained tight control over the natural resources for development as well as distribution. Basically it was a matter of ownership where people of Balochistan felt that they were deprived of or left out.

The third point pertained to due share in government jobs particularly in civil bureaucracy and armed forces. In view of limited opportunities for better education in the province, the Baloch youth could not compete with those in Islamabad, Peshawar, Lahore and Karachi; consequently they lagged behind. To fill up those vacancies, people from other provinces especially from Punjab came forward and occupied the seats predominantly. This isolated the Baloch youth from those of other parts of the country. Even today it is not possible for a middle class Baloch to join the civil services, those who fill the Baloch seats are either the elite Baloch tribal families or settlers mostly Pashtuns and those from the Punjab. Equal provision of opportunity to the Baloch youth in education and socio-economic domains, would have created a spirit of healthy competition in them with youth in other parts of the country.

The wave of rebellion – movement for independent Balochistan – is predominantly based on a very convincing ideology to the common people. The ideology is that independent Balochistan would enable the people to maintain their national identity, self governance and benefits of the natural resources which hitherto are being exploited by the people of other parts of the country. This ideology is convincing because it has roots in their history based on well proclaimed apprehensions of Baloch elders in the late 40s – that Baloch people will get marginalised in Pakistan and as a consequent they will lose their identity as well as resources. Since the creation of Pakistan, the most sung slogan has been

²⁵ Baloch leaders, To draw weapons is not the solution of Balochistan issue, the daily *Jang* (Urdu) 1 October 2012 at <http://e.jang.com.pk/10-5-2-12/pindi/pic.asp?picname=65.gif>

‘be Pakistani’ and so many similar to those. The question in the minds of common people has been that why Pakistani, why not Baloch, which they have been for centuries. Therefore, anybody who said ‘he is Baloch first’ was taken as anti-Pakistan and his loyalty towards his country became doubtful. Quaid-e-Azam was a visionary – a great leader who could peep far in to the future – he never asked the people of Balochistan to be Pakistani first or later because it was not required. A Baloch while maintaining his identity as Baloch can still be a patriotic Pakistani so why to obliterate his fundamental identity and make him to become something else first? Contrarily when one looks around and sees the things in comparison, there is a wide gap in developments in Balochistan vis-à-vis other parts of the country. Drinking water, for example, is the basic necessity for living, the whole of southern Balochistan and some of its other parts, as well, have no permanent source of water, all depends upon rains. Present crisis of water in southern Balochistan in the absence of rains is a living example of the poorest state of affairs.²⁶ Panjgur, one of the main cities of Balochistan, has no road or rail link; it is linked with other parts of the country through air only which every one cannot afford. Similar state of affairs is in other walks of life, may it be education, healthcare, availability of civil services, electricity, gas and social justice. Had there been compatible developments in these areas as is the case in other parts of the country, the people of Balochistan would have felt comfortable and more satisfied as Pakistanis.

The point is that either central government undertakes the responsibility for such developments or let the provincial government do it without interference. Over a period of time due to demonstrated lack of trust with the provincial mechanism the officials lost interest and ownership. This led to misuse of national resources and corruption. For the short-sighted political gains, people were provided means which never reached (also never meant actually) to the poor people in the form of developments. Resultantly, the poorer state of infrastructure and conditions affecting common people has also given a strong plea to the (so much highlighted) foreign hands to exploit the situation in their favour and put forward convincing arguments to the disappointed Baloch youth for a separate Balochistan. So under such a threatened state of their national identity, deprivation of due share in developments and marginalisation in the state’s affairs, the Baloch youth found ‘Independent Balochistan’ the only way-out to get their fundamental rights. Nuclear explosions, for example, were carried in 1998 in Chagai,

²⁶ For water crisis in Gwadar, *Dawn*, *The News*, *Intekhab*, *Jang*, newspapers, 5-20 July 2012.

Balochistan but its government was kept oblivious – a matter of deficient trust and ownership in state's affairs. Now they have reached to a state where even thousand apologies and clarifications from the federal government and the political leadership would not make any difference till the time there are visible improvements in the affected areas.

As far as unrest in the present context is concerned especially after the killing of Nawab Akbar Bugti, it has roots in three main conceptual domains: First, Nawab Akbar Bugti's case; his killing was announced as a challenge by chief executive of the country much before actual operation through a public address.²⁷ He was chased and extra-judiciously killed in a military operation. The killing was portrayed a successful operation 'to teach lesson to someone'. Unfortunately the person targeted was the one who at that point in time was asking for due share of the Baloch people in natural resources and in a way (visibly) fighting for the rights of his countrymen. On any logical ground, he was legitimate in his struggle. Therefore, it turned out 'not targeting an individual only' but hitting an ideology. Consequently he became martyred and hero of his people. It also strengthened the common perception that outcome of the natural resources is not being paid back to the people of Balochistan in terms of compatible developments, rather whosoever speaks for those rights is challenged and removed. With this, even those who had differences with Nawab Akbar Bugti, got sympathetic and joined the unity bloc against the central government, demanding for independent Balochistan.²⁸

The vengeful killing of Nawab Akbar Bugti was supplemented by subsequent killings of missing persons on the same pattern. The general perception is that these people go missing on behest of intelligence agencies and other law enforcing setups. The perception of Punjabi mindset behind these killings led to a chain of reactionary and revengeful killings of non Baloch especially Punjabis in Balochistan. Since civil and military bureaucracy is predominantly Punjabi, therefore, it did not take long to sink into the minds of common Baloch that all evils against the Baloch originate from the Punjab.

The existing almost non-representative provincial government of Balochistan is another cause of continued unrest. In the general elections of 2008, main political groups of Balochistan did not participate in the polls. Those who participated and succeeded were perceived to be the

²⁷ Speech by President General Pervez Musharraf in national electronic / print media, April 2006.

²⁸ Current Insurgency and Baloch Nationalism, Balochistan Problems and Solutions, Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan, *op.cit.*

sympathisers of intelligence agencies. Such individuals do not have roots in the public and compatible standings even in their own areas. Rather for their own personal security, they look towards law enforcing agencies. Since they do not represent the majority of the people, they made shaky and shadowy government. This is the reason why Chief Minister Balochistan has said number of times that things including actions of the Frontier Corps were not in his control.²⁹ The centre of power is perceived to be the establishment – Pakistan Army. The shallow political leadership turn for everything, even their own shortcomings and incapacities, towards the central government. At the same time, they do not have the resolve to leave the government as well. Their attitude towards resolving public issues is similar to those of political agents of British era. The political agent was a medium to convey the instructions of their master and implement those; they did not have anything from their own side. Showing disownership of happenings in the province by the provincial executive is similar to those political agents of British era. The public representatives avoid resolve and yet prefer to remain part of the government. This is the reason that the present governance mechanism could not come-forth with a doable plan for Balochistan. *Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan* has proved to be a hoax. With a long history of doing nothing and planning for holistic solutions has made the common people hopeless and disappointed. Instead of taking practical steps towards development, it has always been felt appropriate to offer apologies (a political stunt) and use force and settle the issues through sweeping military operations.

The present arrangement of governance in Balochistan is perceived as a mix of civil – military mutual understanding. At its face, it is political setup; however, most of the development activities and other functioning are at the behest of army. The setup itself has been put in place on a common understanding through intelligence mechanism; that is the reason of their shallow relationship with the public. In the eyes of a common Baloch, such political leaders cannot serve Balochistan; they are just part of the government for the sake of it. Once they come under pressure from the public and Supreme Court notices, they simply absolve themselves from the obligations of state functioning and blame the establishment. Therefore, it is an unwritten – uncommitted resolve and understanding to go ahead in dealing with affairs of the province on joint venture basis. It, therefore, lacks ownership and resolve which also deviates from the fundamental principle of effective organisational

²⁹ Statement of Chief Minister Balochistan about Balochistan situation and control of Frontier Corps, *The News*, 20 June 2012.

functioning i.e. delineation of responsibilities and obligations. There is confusion about as to who is in control of affairs of law and order and other development activities.

Balochistan – possible future scenarios

With total disownership at the end of political governance mechanism and deteriorating law and order situation, there are fundamentally two options to normalize things: One, an all out sweeping military operation like those conducted in the past with varying intensities and continuity of military presence in all affected areas till uprising is completely subdued and situation comes to normal. Second, find out a long lasting conciliatory solution through political process by engaging all stakeholders in negotiations and consultations. The former has been tried many times in the past; it has not worked, rather made the situation worse and volatile. Therefore, the only doable is through negotiations and removal of misgivings and feelings of deprivations. This time their ideology which is based on sore history has mobilised the youth. We all understand that ideologies have mostly succeeded against the use of force; exceptions have been where they were countered through superior ideologies with selective use of force or threat to use force. In our case also, the need is to counter the ideology of independent Balochistan through a superior ideology which assures them fulfilment of those fundamentals which forms the basis of their perceived concept of independence. These fundamentals are being deliberated in the succeeding paragraph.

One of the main differences between present rebellion and those that had occurred in the past is that in this uprising, Baloch youth have taken the leading role including their middle and top level leadership. Earlier it used to be tribal chieftains and mostly their followers against the central government. In some cases, one finds that sons and grandsons of tribal leaders who raised rebellions in the 60s and 70s have assumed the leading role in fights for independent Balochistan.³⁰ In this rebellion, the participating youth are more in numbers; they revolted against the government and having fought their way in the initial phases, now have taken shelters in the mountains. However they have their roots in the public who provide them moral and material support. Their ideology of independent Balochistan has been very well taken by the people in general and Baloch youth, in particular, even in the educational institutions. Their ideology is based on three fundamentals: First, under

³⁰ Munawwar Mirza, 'Balochistan – What is the real Issue', *Jang* (Sunday magazine), 29 July 2012.

such a scenario of independent Balochistan, they would be in a better position to maintain their national identity as Baloch nation through appropriate and supportive legislation. Second, natural resources of Balochistan are more than enough to undertake long awaited developments in the fields of communication infrastructure – including roads as well as rail links, provision of social services; a top priority is availability of water. Other priorities include developments in education, including technological and general, healthcare and raising the overall living standards of common people through exclusive management and self governance. Third, long coastline with deep natural seaports at Gwadar, Pasni and Ormara would make Balochistan geo-strategically relevant to the outside world and obviously its benefits shall accrue fast paced developments in all walks of life for the people of Balochistan.

The author visited number of colleges and other educational institutions in Makran Division including Khuzdar University of Engineering and Technology from January to September 2012 in connection with things related to the affairs of Gwadar Institute of Technology. It was consistently observed that there is a strong curtain of misperceptions between youth of these institutions and those from rest of the country. The positive political developments like passage of 18th amendment and some of the nation building tasks undertaken by armed forces have not reached to the people. They have only the history of unfortunate incidents of the past with them. During mutual discussions with the Principal (Mr Khurshid Sahib) and faculty of Government Degree College Gwadar, the author highlighted some of such developments. One of the faculty members asked as to why such developments were not being conveyed to the students or even for that matter to them.³¹ How it should be done, and what role media has to play in this regard, is a point of concern. The fact is that the youth of all these educational institutions should set a true picture of the things happening around them. With poor state of affairs of governance and management, one-sided information strengthens the ideology of departing ways.

The ideology, at the same time, has lot of face value and conviction when a common Baloch looks at present pace of developments in all the above mentioned fields in comparison with those in other parts of the country. May it be the state of communication infrastructure, education or other essential civic services amenities, there is marked difference between what prevails in Quetta, Kalat or Gwadar and other cities of the country, like Karachi, Hyderabad, Lahore,

³¹ Author's visit to the Principal Government Degree College, Gwadar, 30 September 2012.

Faisalabad, Islamabad and Peshawar. With these visible differences and keeping in view cardinal points of their ideology, the Baloch youth have mobilised around their rights. As it happens in international politics, particularly in the regional context, external forces come forward to exploit the situation in their favour. So the Baloch, under the banner of Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) or others alike, have come together at one common point i.e. to get rid of federal government's fake polices and promises for Balochistan. Presently they are neither ready for talks with the government nor willing to participate in any kind of elections. At the same time, they have no trust and hope from the structured political mechanism in place. The unfortunate scenario of missing persons has worsened the situation. It could be suitably exploited by the hostile intelligence setups. So their demands are not less than independence from the present Pakistan. Under such a scenario, the first point is how to bring them to the negotiating table. Their denial to participate in any reconciliatory effort is morally supported on the basis of three main points as explained above. Therefore any reconciliatory effort would first require addressing those apprehensions in one or the other form.

It is clear that lip services like 'Aghaz-e-Haqooqe Balochistan' and offering apologies at any levels would not work; rather repetitive failures of similar attempts have lost their credibility. The Baloch people must have something visible and concrete; provincial autonomy, self governance and control over natural resources of Balochistan are the initial steps. The present government's 18th amendment is a positive sign, as eluded by Raza Rabbani,³² but only when true representatives of the people come forth and become part of governance mechanism. This is possible only through fair and free elections after constructive negotiations with all stake holders on mutually agreed terms and conditions. The foremost important thing in this regards is that the election process should be free of interference especially from intelligence agencies. Even if Baloch nationalists or separatists (whatever we may call them), come in the polls and win, they should be allowed to form the government uninterfered. They would do better than the present rootless leadership who do not hold themselves responsible for anything rather throw everything on establishment. Free and fair elections would ensure three things: First, true representatives shall have ownership and public support as well as accountability; second, they would have the

³² Raza Rabbani, *A Biography of Pakistani Federalism: Unity in Diversity* (Islamabad: Leo Books, 2011), pp.185-230.

resolve to undertake long awaited developments, third, they would be able to bring peace in their respective areas.

Another dimension of present concern is our law enforcing agencies which need long awaited reforms, especially those in Balochistan. Frontier Corps and Levies were raised to serve a particular concept and system of governance in British era. They are no longer relevant in the present environment. Levies were created basically to serve a tribal chieftain – a facilitator to the alien governance mechanism. Similarly Frontier Corps had a specific role to maintain vigilance for the foreign rule. Whatever may be the proclaimed status of Frontier Corps, it remains under the army. Therefore in actual terms, it can never be made to serve the provincial system of governance. Therefore both Levies and Frontier Corps need to be reformed to the ground realities. Under the present circumstance, Levies are not required, rather, police should takeover peace vigilance as is the case in other provinces under normal conditions. Similarly Frontier Corps are the army troops; they should be reverted to them. They should have no role in the management of provincial governance till the time they are requisitioned by the provincial government for a specific task. Under every eventuality, all law enforcing agencies within the provincial boundaries should be obliged to operate and serve the provincial executives on the principle of unity of command. In a state of normal functioning, provincial police should be strong and sufficient enough to maintain peace and order.

The true representative government, after fair elections, should have complete control over the natural resources of the province. Mutually agreed terms and conditions should be worked at national levels. The provincial government should also have complete internal freedom over governance issues including their national identity, legislation within broad parameters of the national policies and rule of law according to their tribal traditions and culture. Intelligence agencies should have only information sharing and assessment based inputs through federal and provincial government mechanisms. Those who do not abide by the rules of the state should be brought before courts and tried instead of killing them through the process of missing persons. A government department or establishment should have no role in assessing whether an individual is loyal to the state or not. Such cases if any should rather be referred to the provincial mechanism and people.

The Baloch and settlers (non-Baloch) issue needs to be resolved. As per existing procedures, a Punjabi, Pashtun or Sindhi, living in Balochistan since years, is considered as a settler, not as Baloch. There are people who migrated from other regions, got settled in Balochistan and now their third or fourth generation is living there, still they are

considered non-Baloch. They are recognised in the official documents as settlers. Contrarily this is not the case for those Baloch families who migrated to other parts of the country, say for example, Punjab; now they have domicile of Punjab so they are part of the Punjabi community. This issue has divided the residents of Balochistan in two different nationalities or communities. It needs to be resolved by the Baloch leadership for developing an integrated community based upon ground realities. At the same time, Balochistan is a large province; to govern it centrally through a single capital is unrealistic. It needs re-demarcation of its political - administrative boundaries or devolution of power to facilitate public services and developments.

Another aspect of deteriorating situation of Balochistan is fixed mindset of a certain group of people who consider themselves as the only loyalists to our beloved country. This fixation has become the main hurdle to any intellectual discourse for a plausible solution. Such people have a narrow scope of patriotism towards a nation or a country but they hold strong positions in the government machinery. Since they belong to comparatively privileged class, so they do not have to pass through those rigours of lives as most of the citizens have to live with. If a citizen is getting justice for basic necessities of his life, his attitude towards state's existence is different. Contrarily, take for example the case of a person who is not getting justice, his basic necessities of life are not being met and his son or brother is picked up by the police and killed mercilessly. His outlook towards nationhood or national pride is different from the person who is socially and financially comfortable. The privileged class generally calls such a citizen as traitor or anti-state element, whereas actually he is not, he is otherwise frustrated because of societal injustices. This point needs a way forward through rational considerations. There is another dilemma attached to the fixed mindset. A perception which commonly prevails about Balochistan is that the Baloch youth do not want to work and their leadership, including bureaucracy, is deficient of vision and management skills for governance and developments. It is generally perceived that they are averse to female education, the tribal chiefs are mostly corrupt and against developments in their respective areas. These perceptions might have some basis in the past but not under prevailing condition. The Baloch youth are competent, have potentials for undertaking developments and they want their female folk to be educated. The allegation of corruption in the tribal and political leadership is also baseless because the leadership is as good or bad as its counterparts in other provinces. So these are the misperceptions about Balochistan and those who control bureaucratic affairs are not ready to accept. We need to change this mindset and

consider mutual respect and non-interference in others' affairs as the way forward.

The foremost point to improve about of Balochistan is to improve its financial health. It has number of facets in view of its large land mass and varying environments in different regions. The northern Balochistan, for example, is rich in orchards, can produce fruits in much greater scales and qualities. It needs water management, application of modern technology for better yields including new species of fruit trees, fertilizers and medicines as well as market access. Eastern Balochistan is rich in agriculture of all kinds, has better system of water availability and natural resources in the form of Sui gas. Western Balochistan is rich in natural resources like huge deposits of copper, gold and other ores. Southern Balochistan has a huge scope of fish industries. These regional potentials are sufficient enough to make this province prosperous and rich. The only thing is that it needs reforms through the people of Balochistan which includes re-demarcation of political divisions of the province and devolution of power to the local level leadership through a political process – elections at local levels.

Instead of federal government, the provincial governments should be encouraged for inter-provincial trade activities. Similarly the provincial governments should be self sufficient to raise funds for development projects within respective provinces and undertake developments with the participation and ownership of people. This would also make the public representatives accountable and motivating for self governance and management of public services.

The solution of Balochistan issue needs to be sought in the light of its historical perspective and long awaited developments for its people. Unfortunately Islamabad has gone farther and farther from Quetta in its outlook towards understanding socio-political complexities of Balochistan. We need to accept the identity and rights of the Baloch nation in the functioning of state affairs. If you look with broader prism, the issue is not big; it is basically accepting their rights of self governance and developments. This includes allowing them to also their natural resources for their own development. Sweeping and targeted operations have not worked; rather have made the situation more and more complex. Political discourse and dialogue is the solution to long lasting peace.