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CHANGING CONTOURS OF CONFLICT IN BALOCHISTAN- INSURGENCY IN THE FIFTH PHASE-2005 TILL PRESENT

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the evolution of the insurgency in Balochistan, from 2005 to the present, highlighting significant shifts in its dynamics. Unlike earlier conflicts dominated by Marri and Mengal tribes, the current phase sees increased involvement of other tribesmen across the region. The insurgency, marked by coordinated violence among groups with extremist leanings, is largely fuelled by opposition to economic initiatives like the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), perceived as threatening territorial rights and democratic representation of the local Balochs. The Pakistan government mainly Army's response, is characterized by enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings, further intensifies dissent, leading rebels to target infrastructure and military installations using insurgent tactics. Discontent over resource exploitation exacerbates tensions among Baloch leaders of different hues, while a burgeoning nationalist movement especially among the educated middle class, demands provincial autonomy - distinct from the separatist aspirations of traditional nationalists. Additionally, the rise of Islamist influences, facilitated by sectarianism and the presence of militant groups like Tehrik-E-Taliban (TTP) and Lashkar-E-Jhangvi, adds a layer of complexity to the conflict. Furthermore, the insurgency's radicalization is accentuated by its transnational dimension, facilitated by diaspora-led social media campaigns aiming to garner international attention to human rights violations. Organizations like the Baloch Youth Wing and Baloch Republican Army employ hunger strikes and demonstrations to mobilize support and draw global scrutiny to extrajudicial killings within their home country-Pakistan. The emphasis of this paper is therefore to critically analyse this new dimension in insurgency during fifth phase continuing on to present date which is characterized by greater degree of complexity and sophistication in insurgent techniques in comparison to previous phases in the way in which they are resisting politico-economic policies of federal government and how this complex nature of violence has characterized the intensity of insurgency and how the Pakistan state has responded to the demands of insurgents and grievances of ordinary Baloch citizens.

Keywords- Insurgency, Baloch, Violence, Autonomy, Sophistication

INTRODUCTION

Balochistan a province with a strong sense of cultural milieu and strong socio-linguistic identity has always held significant geopolitical, economic and cultural importance both within the region and globally. Located in South-Western part of Pakistan, the province is bordered by Iran and Pakistan. Geoeconomically and strategically, Balochistan is a very sensitive and important region having abundant supply of natural resources such as minerals, oil and natural gas along with other critical elements (Kupcz 2023). Similarly the geostrategic location of Balochistan makes it an important region where energy rich resources continue to occupy interests of major powers such as United States, Europe, China and other Indo-Pacific nations. At the same time the region links Pakistan with several Central Asian Republics along with countries of Indian Ocean region for the purpose of trade and investment. Balochistan with its fairly long coastline is a hub of maritime activities as can be seen in Karachi in Pakistan and this includes Gwadar deep sea port which offers regional connectivity in the region. Unfortunately, the province has been marred by series of recurring conflicts that has its history in longstanding socio-economic and political grievances amongst the inhabitants with the state that political reconciliation has not stood a chance in stemming the violence in the region. This article will explore conflict in Balochistan in fifth and current phase that has been exacerbating since 2005 and examine the purpose, motivation of rebels along with the significant underlying elements in the conflict that seemingly make it different from previous phases.

At one level, one can attest to poor socio-economic indicators in the region such as illiteracy, poverty and lack of healthcare facilities in aggravating the problems to the state and its lack of responsibility towards the development of the province, others such as Abdul Basit have pointed out to 'Insecurity-Underdevelopment Nexus' in Balochistan where economic projects such as China Pakistan Economic Corridor which have touted to bring development in the region through infrastructure development, creation of ports has only increased confrontation

between community members and led to separatist violence in the region (Basit 2024). Ted Gurr a renowned political scientist in Minorities at Risk project has concluded that the most dangerous and protracted ethno-religious conflict has its roots in poor, weak heterogeneous states such as Africa (Gurr 1994). Socio-economic disadvantages such as discrimination, poverty restrictions to higher political positions are all associated with socio-economic grievances and demand for political rights. This acts as determining factor for conflicts to break out (Gurr 1994). An additional factor as corroborated by Gurr in his thesis is that presence of high rate of unemployed locals in a region coupled with mis-management of development funds lowers the opportunity cost of joining a rebellion. This makes it facile for unemployed youth to join a rebellion (Gurr 1994).

HISTORICAL DRIVERS OF THE CONFLICT IN BALOCHISTAN

The history of Baloch nationalist movement is synonymous with several anti-colonial movements of 19th century in the subcontinent. The entire Balochistan before the advent of British in the region was under Khan of Kalat and the region was divided into four provinces- Kalat, Lasbela, Makran and Kharan. The Khanate of Kalat further extended his rule into Iran and Afghanistan where there was significant Baloch population. The British saw Balochistan as an important strategic location when they were defeated after the first Anglo-Afghan war. There was a danger of Russian expansion towards the Indian subcontinent and it is in this pursuit that we see by forging cordial relations with state of Kalat in Balochistan. According to Tilak Devasher- "The British demarcated their border with Iran and Afghanistan giving away large parts of the princely state of Kalat to these two countries". This was done to appease the rulers of these two countries and to make it a buffer zone against Russian advancement. Apart from this, Balochistan provided easy access to Kandahar and Herat and developments in Central Asia had a profound impact on British policy making. An agreement was signed between British and Khan of Kalat, Mehrab Khan for movement of British Indian troops without any obstruction (Gattani 2021).

Several developments happened in following years that had an impact on politics of Balochistan and conflict there. In 1871, the Gold Smith line between Iran and Balochistan that gave Western part to Iran and Eastern part remained with British. This was based on understanding between British empire and Iranians to demarcate many of the villages which

were under Khan's control to Iran. A number of Boundary commissions, one in 1896 and other in 1905 were appointed to divide Balochistan between Iran and Britain. A formal demarcation of Boundary between Iran and Pakistan came into being in 1893 based on Durand Line Treaty in 1893 negotiated between Mortimer Durand with Amir Abdur Rehman that was running from Chitral to Balochistan and therefore became the boundary between Afghanistan and British India. The boundary was further drawn in 1984. The 1876 Treaty with Khan of Kalat led to territories like Kharan, Makran and Lesbela under the control of British empire which indirectly controlled these territories. Territory of Bolan Pass was leased from Khan of Kalat in perpetuity (Khan 2013). This treaty was done under Sir Robert Sandman who gave control of taxation and internal affairs to the local tribes and chiefs who wanted a harmonious relation with them for wider strategic goals (Akhtar 2017).

The British tried to subdue the population in Balochistan by following a Close Border Policy whose main imperative was to exercise direct control of the local Baloch population so that there was no resistance and by collectively punishing all tribes. The Forward Policy was aimed at expanding the frontiers of British empire by initiating various infrastructure projects with an aim to curtail Russian influence in the region. After the independence of Pakistan in 1947, the Khan of Kalat vouched for an independent state of Balochistan. In negotiations which took place between Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Khan of Kalat, internal autonomy was granted to the Baloch tribesmen. However the instrument of accession, signed by Ahmad Yar Khan was rejected by both Houses of Kalat and also led to increase resentment against Tribal Sardars (Khan 2013). The three tribes in the region are Marri, Bugti and Mengal tribes with suspicions between them. The Bugti tribes seem to be the main sponsor of anti-state insurgency. There are genuine grievances and dissatisfaction with government the tribes have been accused "political rhetoric" to extract revenues for natural resources (Kupecz 2023). The most widely recognized insurgent groups include Balochistan Liberation Army and Balochistan Liberation Front.

Abdul Khan, Muhammad Azhar and Ayaz Muhammad in their work *The Reasons of Violence in Balochistan: An Analytical study of Various Uprisings* have talked of conflict in Balochistan as being a post-colonial legacy based on failure to comprehend aspirations of the Baloch people and not understanding the ground realities to provide solution to conflict (Khan, Azhar and Muhammad 2013). Following are the list of conflicts which Khan, Azhar and Muhammad mentioned based on misunderstandings and foreign involvement.

REBELLION OF 1948

After the British departure from subcontinent, the state of Kalat was declared independent only to be annexed by Pakistan military and subsequent arrest of Mir Ahmad Yar Khan. Baloch nationalists under the leadership of Prince Abdul Karim Khan launched offensive against the military which initially found support but soon Afghanistan, Baloch nationalist parties found the conflict as unfeasible. Demand of Pashtunistan by Afghans and other features led to end of conflict and cessation of hostilities. Khan was arrested in 1950 and federal authority was introduced in the region.

1958 UPRISINGS

The One Unit Scheme that led to the incorporation of various territories in Balochistan such as Sind, NWFP and Punjab into a single unit had consequential impact and led to further Baloch grievances against the wilful federal authority to strengthen national unity. Several demonstrations were held against the scheme and in 1955, Prince Karim formed Ustoman Gal (People's Party) and Khan of Kalat voiced their grievances against forceful centralisation of the province. Likewise in 1958 Khan of Kalat was arrested for sedition which further galvanised his supporters leading to second Baloch insurgency under the leadership of Nawab Nawroz Khan. Nawab and several of his leaders were subsequently arrested, tried and sentenced to death. Meetings between Baloch nationalists and President Ayub Khan led to the decision to drop military formula to Baloch insurgency. Khan of Kalat was also released from House Arrest. What was significant was that in the 1960s, series of Guerrilla wars were fought by Baloch rebels against the government in what was called the Parari Movement under leadership of Sher Mohammed Marri. The insurgency stopped after Yahya Khan removed the One Unit Plan and led to a Baloch ceasefire. Balochistan finally became a province in 1970.

1973 UPRISINGS

The uprisings in 1973 were in reaction to policies adopted by President Bhutto that led to dismissal of Baloch government and imposition of Governors rule in the region. The People's Party along with NWFP based party National Awami Party was in alliance with Jamaat-Ulema-i-Islam to oppose President Bhutto. The alliance demanded greater Baloch representation in government and development. The removal of Provincial Assembly led to fourth phase of insurgency where several oil industries were attacked by Marri tribesmen and Baloch students. With the help of economic aid and arms provided by Iran, Pakistan was able to suppress the rebellion that continued till 1977. The Baloch People's Liberation Front was formed in 1976 and led by Mir Hazar Khan Marri that demanded greater autonomy .

REVIVAL OF INSURGENCY- IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

With the preceding decades in 1980s and 1990s having a relatively calm and tranquil atmosphere in Balochistan with reduced violence, the situation became volatile in early 2000s especially with the coming in of Pervez Musharaff as President of Pakistan. Under President Musharaff, a slew of development projects and several military installations were inaugurated for boosting economic development, providing jobs and boosting employment and trade in the province. However such is the level of opposition against these economic projects that violence in current phase has become systematic indicating usage of disproportionate force, extrajudicial killings becoming a common occurrence. Nevertheless, there are several other characteristic features belonging to this phase that demand a closer attention.

New and emerging 'Middle Class'

The fifth wave of insurgency is also characterized by new and emerging middle class where in earlier stages leadership was in hands of nawabs and tribal sardars, the situation is now different with middle class and well-educated youth taking over the leadership roles in conflict. This is also a result of multiplicity of insurgent or political groups (Baloch Liberation Army, Baloch Republican Army, Baloch Republican Force , United Baloch Army) even though there might be differences and multiple internal issues between these groups regarding autonomy of province. BLA and BRA are the

two most prominent groups led by Dr. Allah Nazr and Brahamdugh Bugti. Similarly the Baloch Student Organization that is aligned with BLA has swayed the minds of youth and educated middle class to engage in conflict. (Baloch 2023)

Similarly, the rise of individualities like Dr Nazar in the province's ethno-nationalist movement represents the changing dynamics of the insurgent movement. A medical doctor by profession, he took to arms upon witnessing the marginalized socio-economic fabric in the region and state- military repression. Nazar's rise and his leadership also signifies a shift away from movement's epicenter from Balochistan's north-east that is home to Marris, Mengal and Bugtis to the southern part of province which is slightly urbanized and home to educated professional class that has not actively participated in provinces' politics. The Southern part comprising Makran Belt bordering Iran and Balochistan's coastline witnessed increased smuggling and remittances which led to urbanization of this province. Thus an emerging middle class came into being that wanted more than just being elevated from concerns about everyday survival and thus involved in the politics of the region. In cities such as Karachi and Islamabad, organizations such as Baloch Liberation Front and Baloch Student Organization are gaining support from middle class and intelligentsia for support for separatism (Ahmad 2014).

Women as 'actors' of resistance

One of the distinctive features of this phase has been role of women as being participants in challenging military repression against extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearance. There has been widespread resistance and movements among Baloch citizens against enforced disappearances and killings against dissidents. Many counter terrorism activities and 'Kill and dump' policies of state have led brutal killings and subsequent antagonistic sentiments between periphery and center. Violent protests which have been a feature of all phases have been distinguished by this phase by non-violent protests along with the prominent role of women leading it. The increasing role of women reflects where militants groups are embracing social

progressivism allowing gender minorities to assume leadership role and women defying traditional roles and fight for a common cause. Besides this organizations such as BLA and Baloch Students Organization are actively recruiting women due to their open recruitment policy and mobilizing youth and educated class towards extremism to seek retribution from state. Following the death of Balaach Mola Bakshsh by Counter Terrorism Department in an apparent staged encounter, there were broader campaigns against kidnappings of dissidents and state repression. In December 2023, Dr Mahrang Baloch, a prominent human rights activist from the Baloch Yakjehti Committee led the movement 'March Beyond Silence' which was a peaceful women- led march from Turbat to Islamabad signifying a new wave in non-violent resistance in the face of state sponsored repression. Acts of resistance by women have also comprised several violent extremist activities in response to state's aggression. In April 2022, Shari Baloch detonated a suicide attack on Karachi University targeting Chinese investments in the region. in June 2023, Summaiya Qalandrani Baloch acted as a suicide bomber and attacked Pakistan military convoy. The attacks were claimed by BLA that has been designated as a terrorist organization by United States and European Union. One of the major reasons of the increased involvement of 'women soldiers' has also been due to the uncommon involvement of women in recent years in guerilla warfare where ambushes, hit and run tactics involve women playing a variety of roles from combatants to medics thereby making it hard for the state to identify and isolate.

CPEC as tool of 'Neocolonial Exploitation'

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor which is part of the million-dollar Chinese investment project Belt and Road Initiative has been at the forefront of Baloch agitation for many years. The China Pakistan Economic Corridor which passes through the majority of the province links Kashgar in China's Xinjian region to Gwadar in Pakistan's Balochistan. The CPEC consists of a network of roads, railways, pipelines and other infrastructure projects that are slated to bring development in the region which includes Pakistan and also become a nodal point for maritime commerce and activity accruing huge benefits for the state and region in general. The project represents the growing bonhomie between Pakistan China relations. For China the project apart from connecting the project with Central Asia and Gulf region also shifts the focus away from

the Malacca Strait which is the focal point for the transportation of goods and services and a major 'choke' point due to its narrowness and shallowness of strait and impacting the huge quantity of traffic following through it. As a result it is subject to geopolitical problems and subsequent supply chain disruptions. This is evident as in the case growing political and diplomatic tensions between China and US where China is trying to find alternative routes for addressing its energy demands meets and keep the supply chain movement fluid in case of any conflict.

We are discussing how socio-economic marginalization of Baloch population which is in turning fuelling insurgent attacks on infrastructure projects like CPEC thereby undermining its long-term economic sustainability. While the conflict impacts successful implementation of CPEC Projects in Pakistan, CPEC itself acts as a catalysing factor in promoting ethnic tensions and strife with the federal government. All of this is cyclical and nature of violence continues in one form or the another where long term demands Baloch interests and demands will remain unanswered.

Competitive bidding for the construction of this expressway was waived off by the federal government and permitted only Chinese companies to bid for this project. Construction of this expressway severed the connection between the Gwadar low lying population centres and the sea. Thus preventing the natural drainage of water during rains. In February 2024, a heavy rainfall caused severe flooding in low lying area of Gwadar causing immense damage to the life and property of people living in that area. This was mainly due to lack of natural drainage and impeding the flow of flood water towards the sea by this expressway (Aziz, S 2024) .

Issue of Security Check Points impacting local lives of people as they have to go through number of check points when moving around Gwadar port and the surrounding districts. Security Infrastructure has been built together with port development. Rights of fisherfolk, traders are at risk along with common masses who are not part of the CPEC project. Fishermen are not able to carry out their daily duties, fish out in open waters due to highly securitized environment with VIP restrictions. At the same time the promise of CPEC and its fortunes seeping down with the provincial economy and lives of people has not happened due to several factors. Local businesses are not functioning (Notezar).

The Issue is of Makran Trench located of Southern coast of Pakistan is prone to earthquakes and could damage Gwadar port should there be any tectonic disturbance. Makran Trench is the meeting point for 2 tectonic plates and is close to Gwadar.

At least 80% of districts with population of 185,000 people have been ignored. Locals are not contributing to development of CPEC project. Many fishermen from Gwadar have been forcibly relocated to Sur Bandar and other areas and vice versa. Many people have relocated to new areas have not been compensated by virtue of hospitals, schools, and roads. Many of their properties have been captured by land mafias. Former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said about 1,100 km of road would be built in city and as a result new townships, schools, hospitals and other institutions would come up leading to prosperity. Apart from this vocational training courses would be offered to locals who could then contribute to the economy. However local insecurity of people especially those locals who have been working here for generations have developed insecurity of these activities. They are less literate and less skilled workers than other workers who might be more educated and technically skilled leading to loss of traditional job opportunities. Even if locals acquire skills, they may find it difficult to earn as much required. Added to this are issues of power and water crisis. Overuse of water resources and their unequal distribution to power CPEC facilities has led to water shortage and scarcity among the locals further leading to frequent power outage in rest of villages (Zafeen Ibrahim 2017).

Degree to which promise of development as envisioned in the Gwadar port project and its infusion in local economy remains to be seen. Select economic opportunities where development of local communities remains absent. A large chunk of jobs is hired out to labour contracted outside of Baloch region and even Pakistan. Further many small businesses have been hampered by coming in of new experienced industrial ventures in the region. Through investments in many projects new infrastructures such as Gwadar International Airport and East Bay Expressway to improve infrastructure projects. Select economic opportunities, increased securitization, worries for fishing community, social fabric, eviction, investment (Bhardwaj S 2024)

Inequality, development and conflict tango go hand in hand especially when applied to the case of how CPEC impacts fishing and local community along with entire socio-economic

setup of Gwadar. Here Jarvis (2008) propounds theory of risk society which talks of development of a modern society in which ecological, social, political and individual risks formed by energy of innovation progressively avoid control and defensive institutions of an industrial society. Thus, resources for the people of the society are achieved all at the advantage of cost of poor. Upper class benefits from wealth accumulation and lower class is vulnerable to various risks. Wealthiest nations have resources and strategies to mitigate risks which poorer nations don't have. Many underdeveloped societies play catch up with developed societies and adopt development strategies that inherently their exposure to risks. In process of development, poorest people lose their land, property and livelihood due to displacement. When we apply this to Gwadar we can see how displacement in name of development has had physical and economic impact. Sea resources have been exploited by Chinese and Pakistan fishing vessels. Moreover fishing has been banned in places such as East Bay but new areas such as West Bay area has also been affected by restrictions. Fishermen used to fish is affected and business narrowed down to 10-15 acre land only. Similarly old sites, habitations, industries have been abandoned further affecting employment opportunities and hence affecting socio-economic conditions.

The various fishing based industries hurt by restrictions include the traditional boat making industry, net and engine shops associated with boat industry, donkey carts along with salt industry and ice factories.

According to Zahid Ali and Sannaudin, CPEC could be a harbinger of possible developmental activities in Pakistan. It could bring modern infrastructure, investments and create job opportunities for the youth. At least that's the sentiment echoed by some who have got pucca houses and other amenities during their relocation. However there are many who are still yearning for employment opportunities and basic necessities such as electricity, gas and health facilities. Their initial expectations have not met the desired results. People are relocated in areas that are sparsely located with poor access to schools, hospitals and workplaces especially the fishermen. There is degree of alienation among Baloch folk, illegal fishing using conical nets for example to capture large quantity of fish etc. Similarly the civic authorities unfortunately have not played a helpful role by restricting the locals to Old part of Gwadar with poor civic amenities. Roads have been built in areas with no people and people inhabit areas with no roads. Authorities it seems are interested in land of Gwadar and not the people. It also needs to be brought out that most of the academic literature it seems are

devoted to studying how CPEC would bring prosperity to Pakistan national level and ignoring cost at some local level that could be paid by Gwadar people. Fears and expectations of locals also needs to be accounted.

The question of internally migrated people in Gwadar has had an impact on locals in the region. While this points to opportunities for economic development that CPEC has provided for, one of the major challenge related to internally migrated movement is discriminations based on ethnicity and religion where they are denied of basic amenities. Also political disenfranchisement and silences of their voices in decision making process has made the matters more worse further inhibiting their collective decision making process in governance in the region. Even though the internally migrated people in Gwadar also face difficulties related language barrier, discrimination from locals. There is conspicuous absence of social and community building practices in the region between locals and migrated citizens that can assuage tensions and bring calm to region, bring relief and provide information, resources along with social and economic opportunities that help in well-being of the region. However the fact is that the internally migrated people are offered lower wages and are part of larger pool of migrant workers making it preferable to higher them over the locals. Arrival of migrants in Gwadar has also led to socio cultural divide in the region between them and locals.

Lethality and Intensity of violence

One of the trademark feature of this phase of insurgency is the usage of more sophisticated and coordinated attacks by the rebels against the Pakistan armed forces. Keeping in mind the fact that the current phase calls for outright independence rather than autonomy as dictated in previous insurgencies. Similarly, the prolonged phase of current phase that has lasted for more than two decades as compared to short phases of previous insurgencies. We also see the acts of involvement having both religious and separatist undertones. So apart from the Baloch Liberation Army being active in the region, you have Islamic State Khorasan, Pakistan Taliban all being active in region which makes the conflict even more complex and protracted. The militant and separatist

groups have greater collaboration and coordination, with greater ambush and hit and run capabilities. The situation has become highly volatile and dangerous for even civilians who have been targeted by militants especially local Punjabi workers. For example- in 2012 approximately 18 people were killed by in Turbat, mostly Punjabis by Baloch Liberation Tigers (Grare). Groups such as Baloch Raaji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS) which were formed in 2018 gave a new life to insurgent movement in Balochistan. The BRAS is a coalition of three militant groups- BLA, BLF and Baloch Republican Guard. The main aim of such a coalition is to fructify strong intergroup relations and enforce collective power of Baloch separatist groups (Nabeel 2019). Similarly, the nature and intensity of violence has also compounded with 'Fedayeen' attacks with the intent of causing maximum damage by self-sacrificing themselves and also attempting to capture hostages. Usage of suicide bombing has been a novel feature in this accounting where engineers, business class from both Chinese and Pakistan side have been attacked. The role of female combatants in this case has been seen thus blurring the line between public and private or male or female (<https://jamestown.org/program/baloch-separatists-continue-to-launch-more-sophisticated-coordinated-attacks-against-pakistan/>).

Military's repressive policies and silencing of dissidents through extrajudicial killings, kidnappings have been met complete disapproval from the Baloch separatists and militants. The Pakistan military elite comprising intelligence agencies in cohorts with death squads that would target Marris, Mengals and Bugti tribes. In pursuit of militants many nationalist forces comprising students, teachers, lawyers and journalists have been targeted. Cases of out-migration from the province setting up of puppet regime by the state have been reported with clear affinities to the federal government (Grare 2013).

Sectarian and Ethnic contributors to the conflict

One of the worrying features of Balochistan over decades has been series of ethnic and sectarian violence due to radicalization of Islam which wasn't there before. Mushrooming of Deobandi centres of Islam has led to augmentation of multiple sectarian groups such as Sipah-e-Sahaba, Usman Kurd and Qari Hayi group and Lashkar-e-Janghavi. At the same time Shia

groups have been targeted and killed along with several Baloch nationalist leaders who have strong ties with the centre (Grare 2013).

Many of the non-state actors find it easy recruit people due several socio-economic deprivations prevalent in the region. Some provinces like Punjab are more developed than others and socio-economic disparities are at large. Reason for lower school enrolment and unemployment can be attributed to the dissatisfaction that people have knowing the fact that schooling and employment will not yield enough opportunities as these opportunities are reserved for others. This breeds radicalization and proliferation of Madrassas, seminaries and other religious schools also have a role to play (Malik, 2009).

In his work Social Mobilization Theory and Balochistan Conflict, Abdul Rauf Iqbal states that Balochistan being the poorest region in all of provinces In Pakistan with very low literacy rate and low earnings. Thus grievances driven by the fact that rebels have nothing to lose compels them to rebel. Added to this is the geographical terrain which favours the rebels. Low dense population and low urbanization along large mountain valleys and deserts makes it a favourable terrain for rebels to execute target attacks. The Pashtuns speaking Baloch located in north eastern part of Balochistan are far more prosperous and engaged in trade and business owing to owing to British control over the region and developments in that time . The Baloch people are highly diverse such as Pashtuns, Brahui's and non-resident Baloch. Thus this diversity along with a strong tribal setup provides basis for clearer communication and strategies for rebel (Ahmad, 2005 and Iqbal). Geographical and ethno-nationalist factors are found in areas such as Quetta, Mastung, Sibi where Pashtun dominated groups with religious tendencies and towns like Dera Bugti, Nasirabad and Jaffrabad where a strong tribal structure is strong (Azam 2020).

Organized crime is another problematic element in the region. This is manifested in the organized political violence and infighting amongst various Baloch factions. Proliferation of armed groups and intensity of political violence can be characterized in Balochistan civil war. Similarly the split between Baloch Liberation Army and United Baloch Army due to leadership differences, seeking weapons, resources and personnel from outside group is another feature which led to differences amongst various members of the group and ultimately individual attacks on territories (Gassebner, Schaudt et Wong 2023).

The Golden Crescent route between India, Iran and Afghanistan has been for a long time a hub for smuggling of opium and weapons. Bribes along with a network of independent smugglers being mostly Afghan nationals bring drugs inside Pakistan. According to United Nations Office on Drug and Crime more than \$30 billion worth of drugs are transported from Afghanistan via Pakistan to other countries. Criminal activities such as murders, kidnapping for ransom of ethnic groups, government officials and transnational aid workers are frequently common (Hasan 2016). The Makran coast of Balochistan has been a transit point for transportation of weapons from Oman to Afghanistan resisting British empire. Several factors explain the presence of weapons in hands of Baloch militants including weapons left behind from Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, weapons stolen from US military smuggled through various checkpoints, small manufacturing centres for firearms. Many of these weapons have been used by other militant organisations like TTP and QST. Baluch separatists in Pakistan known as Samachars purchase their weapons from narcotics traffickers (Watson 2015). Many corrupt intelligence Officials are complicit in the trafficking of arms and drugs and therefore finance the rebels to buy ammunitions. The Baluch Governor in 2005 explained how arms worth 6.4 million euros crossed the province despite presence of approx. 600 check points.

Many Baloch people smuggle fuel and minerals across the border into Afghanistan or Iran in exchange for money often traversing in dangerous terrains for profit knowing the fact that many parts of Balochistan are hit by inflation with no industries along with uneducated and unemployed youth (Baloch and Lashari 2021). Diaspora, transnationalism and ethnic dominance and infighting, geographical advantage, are the main motive of rebel attacks.

Global support and Diaspora engagement

Baloch intelligentsia and middle have propagated a new wave of Baloch nationalism. Most of them have been educated outside province and have various ideas which they want to implement it at their home country. However they feel marginalized excluded from administration and other areas of governance. Lack of power devolution, resources, education and unemployment, not hearing grievances of people and most importantly radicalization. Thus the destruction of pipes, infrastructure projects which signify colonial sentiments. In addition

to this targeting the Punjabi population who Baloch think are in majority and dominate the province. However this precise reason has led to social strife and tensions in the region as many Punjabi workers don't want to come to Balochistan and better qualified people escape from there along with resources. This plays an impact on social relations (Mroczek 2014).

Diaspora activities by Baloch population who are able to mobilise and support funding of rebels. Like many Baloch living in Gulf in places like Oman and Dubai are able to sympathize on the atrocities committed on Baloch people. As discussed, a well developed network of finance and commerce encourages rebellion to be funded. Strong criminal nexus and drugs trade helps in bypassing laws covertly in gulf states. Other means of funding include the informal Hawala network, secretive formal banking sector based in Dubai and courier system. At the same time Baloch dissidents living in western countries like USA, UK are able to lobby governments, voice their concerns in media, write op-eds towards the cause for Baloch freedom(Samad 2014). Various Baloch groups have established connections with sectarian and international militant organizations. After 2001, Balochistan also became a playground for militants who escaped from Afghanistan and entered tribal areas and FATA because of the terrain (Azam 2020). The use of social media and internet to rally support has also been there amongst various Baloch factions such as Baloch Student Organization formed in 1967 who according to Azam have more than 17.4k followers and regularly update their content (Azam 2020).

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