

Insurgency in Balochistan

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Abstract

Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan in terms of territory and is equally resourceful. Due to decades of remorse and hostility toward the federation, it has witnessed several years of deprivation and waves of ethno-nationalist insurgency. Since the inception of Pakistan, a number of social, sectarian, economic, ethnic and political reasons have contributed to this insurgency. However, over the years, a predominantly secular separatist struggle has turned into sectarian and ethnic conflict, primarily after the death of Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti in unfortunate circumstances. Moreover, as this paper argues, these communal rifts among Baloch are being supported and exploited by external actors for the sake of their own interests.

Keywords: Balochistan, Pakistan, Insurgency, Counter Insurgency

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Introduction

According to Bard O' Neill, an insurgency is "a struggle between non-ruling authorities in which, the non-ruling group consciously uses political resources and violence to destroy, reformulate, or sustain the basis of legitimacy of one or more aspects of politics."¹ It can also be defined as "an organised movement aiming to overthrow a constituted government using subversion and armed conflict."² These definitions reflect the desperate situation in Balochistan aptly; as for over seven decades, Balochistan has proved to be the most troublesome province of Pakistan. Unlike many other conflicts, which emerged inside Pakistan, insurgency in Balochistan is the only one that persisted for such a long period. The foundations of separatism were laid in the region since the accession of various administrative units constituting modern day Balochistan in 1948. Over the decades, the insurgency has grown and brewed primarily in several districts of the province. It is the largest among all four provinces with an area as vast as 347,190 km square³ and a population of 12.34 million people⁴. Due to geographical terrain favourable for an insurgency, the region has witnessed several waves of ethno-nationalist insurgency over the past seven decades. The paper addresses following research questions:

- How did the insurgency in Balochistan emerge and proliferate over the years?
- What is the role of ethnic and religious dimensions of insurgency in Balochistan?
- Why the previous regimes could not succeed in taking care of this

¹ Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: Inside Modern Revolutionary Warfare*, (USA: Brassey's Inc., 1990), 13.

² Joint Chiefs Of Staff Washington Dc. "Joint Doctrine for Campaign Planning," 2002. <https://doi.org/10.21236/ada526053>.

³ Administrator. About Balochistan - Government of Balochistan. Accessed December 26, 2019. https://www.balochistan.gov.pk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=37&Itemid=783.

⁴ "Population of Balochistan Census 2017." Population of Balochistan Census 2017 Detail Information Report. Accessed December 26, 2019. <http://www.pakinformation.com/population/balochistan.html>.

insurgency effectively?

- What are the ramifications and consequences of the on-going insurgency in Balochistan?

Theoretical Framework

According to David Galula, there are a few eminent prerequisites of waging a successful insurgency. He argues that the insurgents need to have an attractive cause, “preferably an ideological cause” which can mobilise and gather as much supporters as possible. A long-term ideological cause is impossible to defeat even, by utilising all the machinery of the state itself. Secondly, the insurgents must detect the weakness in Counterinsurgency (COIN) camp. By a COIN camp, he certainly meant that the government and the state’s national military against whom insurgents engage by threatening and challenging their power as part of an insurgency. Thirdly, geographical terrain plays a vital role in this kind of conflict. Rigorous temperatures and unnavigable landscapes can make it difficult for the counter-insurgency forces to operate. However, the insurgents are most likely the indigenous people of those ardent areas. The larger the area, the harder it would be for state authorities to administer properly. Moreover, having a border or two in that area also succours insurgent’s mission. Lastly, Galula believes extrinsic support given to these insurgency movements also plays a vital role in escalating the issue. It is not necessary that the support only comes in the form of military; in fact, it can also be entirely moral, explicitly economic or entirely diplomatic. “The first two are musts, geography is usually predetermined and the last one is help that might become a necessity.”⁵

The host nation of the counterinsurgent camp is relatively at the losing end of such a warfare primarily, because “it is usually a cheap war for the insurgents, but likely very costly for the COIN.”⁶ Galula used the

⁵ Galula, David, and John A. Nagl. *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2010.

⁶ Ibid. 11

metaphor “A lion and a fly”⁷ depicting them as the state and the insurgents. Just like a fly, an insurgent can cause a great deal of trouble if he reaches up to the eye of a lion. Even though the lion is invincible if compared to a fly, in this scenario the lion will lose. Insurgents do not have to use sophisticated machinery or update their weaponry in order to strengthen the cause. Once they gain supporters and an audience among the general masses, they become impossible to tame.

While explaining the prerequisites of counterinsurgency warfare, Galula highlights four basic instruments which a state needs to utilise in order to gain victory over the insurgents namely the political structure of the government, the administrative bureaucracy, the police, and the armed forces.⁸ The political and administrative establishment are necessary to keep the show running as they resolve day-to-day matters. Their smooth functioning gives a sense of hope and purpose to the COIN movement. As the police and armed forces are the first ones to interact with the supporters of the insurgency, their behaviour with the local people largely determines the support of these people for the insurgents or the government. Moreover, loyalty or repatriation of the members of the armed forces is also crucial.⁹

Galula describes two patterns which the insurgents follow in pursuit of their objectives. Galula labelled the first as an orthodox and the second as a shortcut pattern. The former lasts longer than the latter as it engages in and involves political parties or fronts in the insurgent’s plan. In case of Balochistan, the Baloch insurgents are following an orthodox pattern of insurgency. This includes five steps: creation of a political party, formation of a united front, initiation of guerrilla warfare and movement warfare, and lastly, annihilation of government, all this in order to completely

⁷ Ibid, 15

⁸ Ibid. 27

⁹ Vrooman, Stephen. “A Counterinsurgency Campaign Plan Concept: The Galula Compass,” 2005. <https://doi.org/10.21236/ada436240>.

destroy the government and to bring the political party on the front.¹⁰ The insurgency in Balochistan certainly tried to follow this game plan however, their trajectory over the last few years explains where and how they lost.

Historical Background of the Insurgency

Due to its strategic location, Balochistan was part of a great game between the British and the Russian empires of history.¹¹ While reaching a truce, both the actors divided this land among each other. The Great Britain in India, along with Iran and Afghanistan, took a part of Balochistan and redrew their boundaries. In pursuit of maximising their wealth and resources, both the empires neglected

the potential of an uprising.¹² Pakistan got its independence in 1947 from a united India which was then ruled by the British Empire. During the partition of Indian subcontinent, 565 princely states were given an open choice to accede with their desired state (Pakistan or India) based upon their geographical proximity and religious affinity.¹³

In 1947, Balochistan was divided into the following three parts:

- Chief commissioner's province (directly administered by the British Empire)
- Princely states (Kalat, Kharan, Lasbela and Makran)
- Gwadar (under the rule of Oman)

The princely states of Kharan, Lasbela and Makran formally acceded to Pakistan in 1952, whereas, state of Kalat acceded to the country in

¹⁰ Galula, David, and John A. Nagl. *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*. New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2010.

¹¹ Heathcote, T. A. *Balochistan, the British and the Great Game: the Struggle for the Bolan Pass, Gateway to India*. London: Hurst & Company, 2015.

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ "Political Integration Of India". 2019. Cs.Mcgill.Ca. https://www.cs.mcgill.ca/~rwest/wikispeedia/wpcd/wp/p/Political_integration_of_India.htm.

1955.¹⁴

The Surrender of the Khan

Following the accession of Kalat to Pakistan, the first wave of insurgency triggered when Khan of Kalat's brother Prince Abdul Karim rebelled with 700 fighters only to die later in 1948. The second wave of insurgency dates back to the 1960s when, Nauroz Khan of Zarakzai (Zehri) tribe rebelled with a thousand guerrilla fighters following the arrest of Khan of Kalat Ahmed Yar Khan. Khan was arrested based on the charges that he colluded with the Iranian officials for the independence of Balochistan.¹⁵ He also revolted against Ayub Khan's One Unit system. The uprising soon turned into a tragedy when the Pakistani government convinced him via his nephew "Doda Khan" to lay down arms and in exchange, the government was ready to accept his demands. Nauroz set his differences aside, only to find himself in jail in Hyderabad where he and his son were tried in military courts.¹⁶ His cause of death is still unknown however, the government claims that he died of old age while the nationalists believe that he was hanged to death, just like his son.¹⁷

The third wave of insurgency was more like a continuation of the second wave since the political and security landscape of Balochistan never stabilised after the death of Nauroz Khan. The Parrari movement of Sher Muhammad Marri also gained support during this very decade. Parraris were held responsible for multiple attacks on civilian and armed forces before a ceasefire was reached in 1969.¹⁸ A new cadre of political leaders started to emerge during the 1970s but, another uprising only came into

¹⁴WestminsterResearch [http://www.westminster.ac.uk/Research ...](http://www.westminster.ac.uk/Research...) Accessed December 26, 2019. https://westminsterresearch.westminster.ac.uk/download/e50e6b14a1447e03082205d9c0a4f9648d4665a9389f1b2e24d7f107c2f492e7/2206365/Gulawar_KHAN_2014.pdf.

¹⁵ Tft. "Roots of Resentment – II." *The Friday Times*, August 5, 2016. <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/roots-of-resentment-ii/>.

¹⁶ *ibid*

¹⁷ *ibid*.

¹⁸ Schmid, Alex P., and A. J. Jongman. *Political Terrorism: a New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, & Literature*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2017.

play when in 1973, the then chief minister of Balochistan Sardar Attaullah Khan Mengal and the governor of Balochistan Ghaus Bux Bizenjo were dismissed from their positions.¹⁹ Later, on 15th February 1973, Nawab Akbar Khan was appointed as the governor of Balochistan, only to resign on 1st January next year.²⁰ By this time, the differences and mistrust between the central and provincial governments had increased manifold. The situation worsened as foreign support from neighbours like Iran and Afghanistan was now being provided to ethno-nationalist militant groups.²¹

Therefore, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto decided to launch a military operation in Balochistan. The decision of military operation resulted in more violence in the province as about 55,000 individuals rebelled against the government.²² In brief, every time, when an attempt was made to curb an insurgency using military strength, the situation only exacerbated.²³

Latest Wave of Insurgency

The latest wave of insurgency started in the early 2000s, when General Pervez Musharraf was in power. At that time, Pakistan was already busy in fighting militants in its tribal areas as part of the Global War on Terrorism and was assisting American troops in Afghanistan against Afghan Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Meanwhile, the Baloch ethno-nationalist militants saw an opportunity in such a state of affairs. The insurgents were only multiplying in number and their attacks were gaining exponential strength. There were around 122 explosions²⁴ only on pipelines alone during this period.

¹⁹ Rehman, I.A. "Bizenjo and His Politics." DAWN.COM, December 21, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1377965>.

²⁰ Muhammad Rizwan, Baloch Alienation, National Politics and Conflict Resolution in Pakistan, Pakistan Journal of History and Culture, Vol. LX, No. 1, 2019. http://www.nihcr.edu.pk/Latest_English_Journal/2019,%20No.1/7.%20Baloch%20Alienation,%20National%20Politics%20,%20M%20Rizwan.pdf

²¹ Tft. "Roots of Resentment – II." The Friday Times, August 5, 2016. <https://www.thefridaytimes.com/roots-of-resentment-ii/>.

²² Pike, John. "Military." Balochistan Insurgency. Accessed December 26, 2019. <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/balochistan-1973.htm>.

²³ "Committee Finalizes Balochistan Report." DAWN.COM, January 19, 2005. <https://www.dawn.com/news/380536>.

²⁴ Mir JmilurRehman, Stage managed Turmoil, opinion, The News, 29 January 2005. Pg. 90

One of their main high-profile attacks was the murder of Chinese engineers who were working on the Gwadar project.²⁵ In an attack that took place on December 2004, around 11 people were killed and 30 were wounded.²⁶ In 2004 alone, 30 bomb attacks took place in Balochistan, the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) claimed responsibility for the attacks, by saying that such attacks are mere endeavours “to free Balochistan from Punjabi dominance.”²⁷ Amidst this seemingly endless turmoil and grievances of Baloch nationalists, common Baloch people were also siding with ethno-nationalist militants by this time.²⁸ Due to the economic disparity in the province and targeted attacks on governmental facilities, it started to get obvious that if not dealt with an iron fist, Pakistan might lose Balochistan just as East Pakistan.

On 2 January 2006, a military captain allegedly raped Dr. Shazia Khaled on the premises of Pakistan Petroleum Limited in Sui, Balochistan. This incident sparked province wide uprising and revolts, Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti was outraged with such a turn of events. Bugtis who number around 150,000 implicated the rape incident on Army and asked them to “go back to where it belonged and refrain from perpetrating such incidents on Baloch soil.”²⁹ Meanwhile, insurgents and militants also ransacked Pakistan Petroleum facility. The insurgents were targeting workers, gas pipelines, Frontier Corps and everything that was related to the armed forces. The fight between insurgents and Pakistan army lasted for full four days. During the standoff, insurgents fired 14,000 rounds of small arms, 436 mortars and 60 rockets.³⁰ At such a blatant act of rebellion and such massive ammunition support to ethno-nationalist militants, the state of Pakistan finally started to question the role of external factors in

²⁵ Bansal, Alok. *Balochistan in Turmoil: Pakistan at Crossroads*. New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2013. pg. 89

²⁶ Ghazi Salahuddin, *A crisis of Governance*, The News, 16 January 2005. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/307416-the-crisis-of-pakistan>

²⁷ Azizullah Khan, *Sui Airport Razed in terrorist attack*, The Herald, Karachi, 29. July, 2005

²⁸ Bansal, Alok. *Balochistan in Turmoil: Pakistan at Crossroads*. New Delhi: Manas Publications, 2013.

²⁹ Massoud Ansari, *Nightmare at Sui*, Newline, 25 February 2005. Pg 37.

³⁰ Syed Irfan Raza and Arshad Sharif, *Troops to protect Sui plant: Sherapo- operation in the offing*- ISPR. DAWN, Karachi, 13 January 2005.

this wave of insurgency. Where were the insurgents gaining support from internationally and internally in Balochistan, while the state was setting in motion every plan to put them down. While addressing citizens at the ground-breaking ceremony at Gwadar port in September 2007, President Musharraf categorically said, "These elements (of insurgency) should be wiped out of the country.... Nobody will be allowed to challenge the writ of the government. This would not be allowed at any cost."³¹ Intellectuals and students of history, consider the assaults on President Musharraf on December 14, 2005 to be executed by ethno-nationalist aggressors, as when he was tending to Frontier Corps in Kohlu, eight rockets were terminated at his camps.³² Later, on 15 December 2005, an attack was carried out by the Baloch ethno-nationalist militants on Major General Shujaat Zamir Dar, Inspector General of Frontier Corp and Deputy Inspector General FC Brigadier Saleem Nawaz, in Kohlu while they were analysing the situation on the ground via helicopter, this was among one of the many reasons for which the 2006 operation started.³³

On 2nd August 2006, Nawab Akbar Bugti along with his cadres died in one of the caves at Kohlu. The entire country other than the province of Punjab observed days of mourning over his death.³⁴ A Baloch author Yousaf Ajab Baloch described the killing of Nawab Bugti as the 9/11 of Balochistan.³⁵ The then Khan of Kalat, Mir Suleiman Daud convened a grand Jirga after Nawab's demise and vowed to take up the assassination in International Court of Justice against the state of Pakistan.³⁶ This promise was nothing more than rhetoric as the international community has no say

³¹ "President's Address at Groundbreaking Ceremony of Labour Colony (Gwadar Port Operation)", 17 November 2006, at <http://presidentofpakistan.gov.pk>; "President Musharraf urges Balochis to resist those against development", 3 September 2007, at <http://presidentofpakistan.gov.pk>.

³² Why Musharraf had Bugti killed. Accessed December 26, 2019. <https://www.rediff.com/news/2006/aug/30guest.htm>.

³³ Alok Bansal, *Balochistan in Turmoil Pakistan at crossroads*, New Delhi: manas publications, India. Chapter 3, pg 97.

³⁴ *ibid*.

³⁵ Yousaf Ajab Baloch, Who caused the 9/11 of Balochistan, 25 October, 2013 <https://dailytimes.com.pk/107849/who-caused-the-911-of-balochistan/>

³⁶ Nocenti, Annie. "The Khan of Kalat Gathers the Tribes." *CounterPunch.org*, January 29, 2016. <https://www.counterpunch.org/2006/12/16/the-khan-of-kalat-gathers-the-tribes/>.

in the internal matters of the state. In 2007, Balach Marri of BLA also died under mysterious circumstances. Since then, Harbiyar Marri is leading BLA.³⁷

In 2009, when PPP was in power, the government launched an operation in Balochistan called “killing the killers.”³⁸ Intelligence agencies, Frontier Corps and armed forces, all took part in this operation and curbed the ethno-nationalists largely. The international community and Human Rights Watch highlighted human rights violations in the province, particularly after Declan Welsh wrote an opinion article in the Guardian upon this matter. Welsh held the Pakistani intelligence agencies responsible for human rights violations in the province.³⁹ Moreover, he claimed that hundreds of people in the province are going missing every day and around 15 bodies per month have started to show up on road sides in Balochistan, which were all brutally tortured.⁴⁰ The Senator Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, in conversation upon this matter, categorically denied any involvement of the Pakistani armed forces or agencies in any sort of torture or inhumane activities on ground. However, he indubitably acknowledged that, “whenever you put boots on the ground, a certain level of violence definitely takes place but even in such a scenario, the Pakistani Armed forces never committed any act of violence against the local civilians.” When asked about the grievances of Baloch regarding the large influx of outsiders in Balochistan, which may turn them into a minority the Senator replied that, “Anyone from around the world and even from any corner of Pakistan could come and work in Gwadar. We do not want to cap the economic flow, in any way whatsoever. If Baloch fear a minority dilemma than they should rather start occupying seats and start working on a project with Chinese and Pakistani forces.”

³⁷ Shahid, Saleem. “Balach Marri Killed: Violence in Quetta, Schools Closed.” DAWN.COM, November 22, 2007. <https://www.dawn.com/news/277009>.

³⁸ Newspaper, From the. “Insurgents Suffer Bloody Reprisals.” DAWN.COM, June 26, 2011. <https://www.dawn.com/news/639427>.

³⁹ Ahmed, Khaled. *Sleepwalking to Surrender: Dealing with Terrorism in Pakistan*. Gurgaon, Haryana, India: Penguin/Viking, 2016.

⁴⁰ Walsh, Declan. “Pakistan's Secret Dirty War.” The Guardian. Guardian News and Media, March 29, 2011. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/mar/29/balochistan-pakistans-secret-dirty-war>.

Role of Sectarian and Ethnic Groups

The sectarian and ethnic violence in Balochistan is interlinked. Such kind of violence is not decades old, rather, it only started to emerge prominently during the last two decades. However, seeds of sectarian conflict were sown as early as 1979 Iranian Revolution. The initiators of Iranian revolution were keen in exporting revolution all around the world. Pakistan has the second highest Shia population in the world after Iran, which constitutes 10-15 per cent, which is about 17-26 million people in numbers.⁴¹ Majority of Shia population reside in Balochistan, the Hazara community, which consists of around 700,000 members, are predominantly Shias.⁴² Islamist terror outfits like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Al-Almi (LJ-A), Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Hizbul Ahrar (HuA) and Islamic State (IS) have been actively involved in targeting Hazara community in Balochistan.

Lashkar-e-Jhangvi Al-Almi (LJ-A), TTP, HuA and Islamic State are Islamist terror organisations, which are still active in Balochistan. LJ-A has mostly claimed the responsibility of attacking Hazara community. The aim of the militant outfit is to transform Pakistan into an orthodox Salafi state.⁴³ A popular opinion among Baloch nationalists is that the state of Pakistan is supporting extremist outfits like LJ-A in order to fight ethno-nationalist militant outfits. According to Shahmeer Baloch, during the Operation Zarb-e-Azab, many militant organisations were disbanded but not all. He claimed that the then chief minister Balochistan Dr. Abdul Malik, and the commander of the Army's Southern Command Lt Gen Nasir Khan Janjua, worked to stabilise the province but the situation only worsened. This is because the disbanded and jobless death squads joined the Islamic State, which has now gained some momentum in the region.⁴⁴ "In five recent

⁴¹ "Mapping the Global Muslim Population." Pew Research Center's Religion & Public Life Project, April 30, 2018. <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/10/07/mapping-the-global-muslim-population/>.

⁴² Cafiero, Giorgio, and Vinay Kaura. "Sectarian Violence in Balochistan." Middle East Institute, December 10, 2019. <https://www.mei.edu/publications/sectarian-violence-balochistan>.

⁴³ Nicholas Howenstein, "The Jihadi Terrain in Pakistan: An Introduction to the Sunni Jihadi Groups in Pakistan and Kashmir" Pakistan Security Research Unit, Research Report 1, 2008, 35.

⁴⁴ Baloch, Shah Meer. "The Long Insurgency." DAWN.COM, December 31, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1379817>.

attacks claimed by IS, some 220 people were killed and many more injured.”⁴⁵ Meanwhile, Pakistan Army argues that since the ban in 2002, LeJ has been and still is treated as a terrorist organisation, by the state and its institutions alike.

Results

The most prominent flaw in the cause of ethno-nationalist organisations (BLA, BRA or any other militant organisation) operating in the province currently, is their support for secular Balochistan. For the dynamics of the region and as Khaled Ahmed in his book “Sleepwalking to Surrender” promotes that a secular objective cannot establish a strong hold for itself in this region. On the contrary, only a religiously driven ideological cause can gather enough people for changing the maps of this region again. Moreover, the ethno-nationalist insurgency has lost its genuine leadership, people who ‘talked and walked’ the struggle. Either they have expired, or are in a self-imposed exile. The new generation of ethno-nationalist outfits is based in countries such as Britain and Switzerland. Apart from Dr. Allah Nazar of Baloch Liberation Front, no organisational head (such as Brahmdagh Bugti and Harbiyar Marri) is currently fighting on the ground with the forces; in fact they are just giving mere lip service to Baloch cause. Their supporters or the people of Balochistan have finally started to realise this fact. Moreover, the two prominent tribes - Bugti and Marri - have also been divided between anti-establishment and pro-establishment forces. For instance, Baloch who are fighting under the umbrella of Bugti Aman Forces (BAF) have started to pick up arms against BLA fighters, whom they see as nothing but members of Brahmdagh Bugti’s outfit that is surviving on Indian funding.⁴⁶ For sustaining and giving military training, BLA fighters obviously cannot wage such an insurgency against the state. Thus, foreign involvement is undeniable.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ “The Good Guns of Balochistan: Why Fighters like Nawab Din Bugti Dropped Their Pens and Picked up Guns.” Blogs. Accessed December 26, 2019. <https://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/72309/the-good-guns-of-balochistan-why-fighters-like-nawab-din-bugti-dropped-their-pens-and-picked-up-guns>.

Following the arrest of Kulbushan Jadhav from Balochistan, the Indian linkage with ethno-nationalist insurgency became more vivid. Jadhav was a serving Indian-naval officer cum spy. He was sent to Balochistan via Iran in order to sponsor terrorist activities and target China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.⁴⁷ Gwadar has attracted various foreign hostile intelligence agencies from around the world due to its economic and strategic importance.⁴⁸ Meanwhile, “external powers also want its resources to be governed by an independent Balochistan rather than Pakistan.”⁴⁹ The United States does not acknowledge and support the Chinese plan for Belt and Road Initiative, as well as the creation of Gwadar port in Pakistan. Considering the fact that containment of China⁵⁰ is the top most priority for Washington right now, it would be justifiable to say that the US is looking for every possibility to curb the economic growth of China. Thus, it is also supporting India to plot against Pakistan-China economic nexus.⁵¹ Iran is also keen regarding Balochistan, primarily because the deep seaport of Gwadar will be an opponent to Iran’s newly built, Indian funded Chabahar Port. Despite the fact that the Iranians have often voiced Chabahar as Gwadar’s sister port, yet their reservations are obvious.⁵²

Saudis are trying to neutralise the Iranian influence by generating a sectarian conflict in the province. It is no secret that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has supported Sunni religious groups around the world against Iran. Similarly, in Balochistan they have laid out their cards in an obvious

⁴⁷ Jawed Naqvi, KulbushanYadav Not alone, DAWN, 2 January 2018.<https://www.dnews/awn.com/1380273>

⁴⁸ “Submit Documents to WikiLeaks.” The Global Intelligence Files - PAKISTAN/SECURITY- Foreign powers have dangerous designs in Balochistan. Accessed December 26, 2019. https://wikileaks.org/gifiles/docs/70/703080_pakistan-security-foreign-powers-have-dangerous-designs-in.html.

⁴⁹ Shafaqat Mehmood, Center does not hold, The News, 21 January 2015.

⁵⁰ “Library.” Institute of Policy Studies. Accessed December 26, 2019. <http://www.ips.org.pk/library-2/>.

⁵¹ Shahid, Usman. “Balochistan: The Troubled Heart of the CPEC.” – The Diplomat. for The Diplomat, August 24, 2016. <https://thedi diplomat.com/2016/08/balochistan-the-troubled-heart-of-the-cpec/>.

⁵² Notezai, Muhammad Akbar. “Iran-Pakistan at the Crossroads?” – The Diplomat. for The Diplomat, July 15, 2017. <https://thedi diplomat.com/2017/07/iran-pakistan-at-the-crossroads/>.

pattern.⁵³ Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Pipeline project is also another attraction for states to keep their eyes stuck at Balochistan. This is because it aims to bring natural gas from Galkynysh and adjacent gas fields in Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India therefore making the region energy-efficient and economically progressive.⁵⁴

Such internationalisation of the insurgency where every state is trying to secure its stakes and where sincere Baloch leadership is missing from the picture, has led this insurgency to become fatuous. However, the recent attack on five-star Pearl Continental Hotel in Gwadar, on 11 May 2019, which a faction of BLA took responsibility for,⁵⁵ has opened another Pandora's box for the cause of Baloch nationalists for according to some disputed claims one of the terrorists who took part in the operation was among the lists of missing persons.⁵⁶ Missing persons are believed to be involved in militant activities by state security agencies. There might even be a chance that the ordinary civilians are not even aware of this vile cycle initiated and supported by the militants.

However, over a period of nine years, the political set up in Balochistan and Islamabad has changed to a great degree; the government initiated a series of dialogues with the Baloch leadership in exile. To be specific, in 2015 the Pakistani government approached the Khan of Kalat, and asked him to come back to Pakistan and start a prosperous life here.⁵⁷ Moreover, after May 2013 election in Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif's government adopted a mature policy of appointing Dr. Abdul Malik instead of local

⁵³ Correspondent, The Newspaper's Staff. "Centre Struck Deals for Balochistan without Its Consent: Jamaldini." DAWN.COM, November 9, 2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1444462/centre-struck-deals-for-balochistan-without-its-consent-jamaldini>.

⁵⁴ Kiani, Khaleeq. "Pakistan, Turkmenistan Sign Deal for TAPI Gas Pipeline." DAWN.COM, March 13, 2019. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1469315>.

⁵⁵ "Terrorists Storm Gwadar Pearl Continental Hotel." Pakistan Today. Accessed December 26, 2019. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/05/11/armed-gunmen-attack-pearl-continental-in-gwadar/>.

⁵⁶ -, News Desk, -, and News Desk. "Gwadar PC Terror Attack: Yesterday's 'Missing Person' Is Today's Terrorist?" Global Village Space, May 13, 2019. <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/gwadar-pc-terror-attack-yesterdays-missing-person-is-todays-terrorist/>.

⁵⁷ Akbar, Malik Siraj. "Breakthrough in Balochistan." HuffPost. HuffPost, July 18, 2016. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/breakthrough-in-balochist_b_7825970.

party boss Sana Ullah Zehri as the chief minister of Balochistan. In 2018, with the PTI government coming into office, the situation in Balochistan is gaining new pace as the government is addressing and investigating into the matter of missing persons. Official government reports and provincial facts state that the people who disappeared have started to show up, some being gone for as long as eight to nine years.⁵⁸ Such initiatives taken by the government have left very little room for militants to breed. When asked about the curious case of missing persons, Senator Anwar Kakar⁵⁹ assured that, “the security forces were only taking people who were involved in some sort of crimes.” He also went on to point out the fighters who returned to Pakistan after fighting against ISIS under the command of “Zainabiyoun Brigade” of Iran.⁶⁰ The senator was convinced that the security personnel are operating against these fighters, in order to hold them accountable for taking part in “someone else’s war.”

Conclusion

Considering the socio-political and sectarian dynamics of ethno-nationalist militancy in Balochistan, the militants have long lost the essence of their primary objective. However, despite this development, the government still needs to urgently address the grievances of masses. Albeit, that government officials and office holders prefer to believe that the recent wave of ethno-nationalist insurgency is entirely foreign supported but one cannot deny the fact that without putting your own house in order it is not possible to inculcate others. The modern, educated, and progressive generation of the local Baloch is more sophisticated in their approach. They are asking for their share in the land resources and provincial autonomy while still being a part of Pakistan. Nevertheless, the future of Balochistan will keep on standing on a precarious turn if productive measures like

⁵⁸ Akbar, Malik Siraj. “Eight Months in, How Is Balochistan Faring?” DAWN.COM, August 16, 2019. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1473862>.

⁵⁹ Anwaar Ul-Haq, Kakar (Senator at Pakistan Senate body), interviewed by Mahnoor Saleem, Islamabad, Pakistan, 2019.

⁶⁰ Kakar, Abdul Ghani. “Iran’s Zainabiyoun Brigade Steps up Recruiting in Pakistan.” Pakistan Forward. Pakistan Forward, October 5, 2018. https://pakistan.asia-news.com/en_GB/articles/cnmi_pf/features/2018/10/05/feature-02.

cultural exchange programmes, people-to-people interactions, provincial institutional strengthening and reconciliation of trust between the province and the federation will not be ensured. Economic incentives for Balochistan can also repair the wounds of history, opportunities like National Finance Commission award can also help in providing a breath of fresh air to the poverty-stricken province.

The current Chief Minister of Balochistan Jam Kamal Khan is taking on all the hurdles coming in the way of prosperity but without creating a space for the local people in provincial development projects, the disparity will only increase. Considering the opportunity, it is bringing to province, smooth operation of Gwadar port, CPEC is of paramount importance to Pakistan, similarly ensuring peace with militants, nationalists, and local population of Balochistan is equally important. A generation of Baloch was born and brought up in an insurgency-engaged province, their attitude toward the centre and government is justifiable on several grounds, and as problems left unattended have a tendency to turn into crisis. A military solution of this province is no longer a reliable resolve, just as the former President Pervez Musharraf once thought, for in affairs of COIN and counter terrorism you cut off one head, two shall rise against its place. Therefore, there is a dire need of genuine negotiations between the federation and locals on ad hoc basis for the prosperity of the state and province.