CHAPTER 4

EVOLUTION OF BALOCH ETHNO-NATIONALISM IN PAKISTAN

The unrest in Pakistan’s largest but least populous province of Balochistan has increased steadily over the past few years, as the tribes have taken up the cudgels against Islamabad demanding an end to the injustice done to them for decades. A series of explosions have rocked the province, specifically targeting the development activities and infrastructures such as gas pipelines, railway tracks, telephone exchanges, power transmission lines, bridges besides military and government installations. This may be gauged from the following facts that in a single year of 2004, 626 rockets were fired in the province, of which 378 were alone aimed at Sui area, the principal gas-producing centre in Balochistan (Public Opinion Trends, 2005: 624) and thereby, these assaults were multiplied with each passing day, triggering concern elsewhere in the world. So much so, they fired a rocket on the former President Pervez Musharraf, who was attending the meeting in Kohlu and, few days later, they fired rockets at a helicopter carrying the commander of the para-military unit – the Frontier Crops-Balochistan (Dunne, 2006:56). Nonetheless, this is not the first time that conflict has erupted in the province between the central government and the Baloch nationalists, where the Pakistan security forces are fighting pitched battles with Baloch militants demanding economic and political autonomy. Instead, the present day insurgency that commenced in 2004-5 is a continuum of the sporadic guerrilla struggle against the Pakistan state that has characterised Balochistan since 1948. The only difference between the present day insurgency to that of the ones in 1948-52, 1958-60, 1962-69 and 1973-77 is in the scale of violence and its geographic spreading (Foreign Policy Centre Paper, 2006:25). Not surprisingly, in comparing today’s insurgency with the earlier insurgencies, one may find several continuities. Take the case of central government that vigorously followed the policy of continual denial of granting any legitimacy to Baloch nationalism or to engage the Baloch nationalists in serious political negotiations, are prominent among those. These refusals run in company with its parallel tendency to secure its aims in Balochistan primarily by military means (Wirsing, 2008: 2).

At the root of this problem lies the asymmetrical distribution of power, which invariably favours the centre at the cost of provinces in Pakistan. The Baloch
nationalists have long demanded a restructured relationship that would transfer powers from an overbearing centre to the provincial government, including a greater share of resources and a stake in the decision-making structures of the state. Unfortunately, successive governments in Islamabad instead of accommodating their legitimate demands reduce it to the law and order problems, rather than part of governability and thus, are subduing their claims by using brute force besides employing other means to impose central control over the province. These include repression, killing, mass arrests, disappearances, torture, indiscriminate bombing and artillery attacks, including the policy of divide and rule (Crisis Group Asia Report, 2006: i-ii). A veteran writer Selig Harrison gives the description to these methods as ‘slow-motion genocide’ being inflicted on the Baloch nationalist adversaries by the Pakistan state (Harrison, 2006:1).

Not only this, the Musharraf regime like his predecessors has accused the nationalist leaders for Balochistan’s underdevelopment, arguing that it is a handful of tribal chiefs who are resisting economic development, because their power base might be eroded by Islamabad’s plans to develop the province and therefore, the government has few options but to meet the challenge head on (Bansal, 2006:1). While the Baloch nationalists have always argued that they never oppose to the modernisation and development of the province provided the development programmes were not exploitative in nature. In the words of Khair Bux Marri:

Of course we want to…modernise and to develop in ways and at a speed that we think makes sense under our conditions. We were starting to do this when we were in power. But they do not want us to carry out modernization under our own control. They want to modernize us in their own way, without listening to us. Most of the roads built in Balochistan…were not for our benefit but to make it easier for the military to control us and for the Punjabis to rob us (Harrison, 1981:47).

Nonetheless, a survey carried out by Karachi based Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC) in 2001 revealed that those areas falling under the control of veteran Baloch nationalists like the late Nawab Akbar Bugti, Nawab Khair Marri and Sardar Attaullah Mengal are often more developed in terms of road networking, primary school enrolments, access to clean water and irrigation than the rest of areas aligned to the central government (Fulcher, 2006:1). Hence, ethnicity intertwined with a sense of political isolation and relative economic deprivation seems to be a persuasive force invoking Baloch mobilization. Such a feeling amongst the
Baloch people as compared to other ethnic groups in Pakistan has been found more acute (Bansal, 2006:1). It is in such a situation, the Baloch see the insurgency as the only viable option to challenge the onslaughts of Pakistan state both on their natural resources and their very existence as separate ethnic group having distinct identity.

Broadly, the Baloch grievances may be divided into two categories. First is the dispute between the Baloch and the Punjabi dominated central government where they have clashed many a times with the establishment. The other dispute is between the Baloch and the local Pashtun populations in the province, where they are often in competition with one another in the provincial economy, including for political space in the province that often creates tensions. It is to be noted here, such rivalries often provides ample opportunity for the government interference and manipulation (Wirsing, 2008: 33). However, most of the present day ethnic turbulence in Balochistan revolves around the local issues with Baloch nationalists demanding more control over their natural resources, a meaningful role to the Baloch in the decision making especially in the constructions of mega projects in the province, equal representation to Baloch people in various central and provincial services and to check the influx of non-Baloch people in the province, including the suspension of military operations against the Baloch youths and abandoning the plans for more cantonments in the province. The last but not the least is the feelings of betrayal and exploitation by the central government, including the heightened strategic significance of Balochistan are few other factors responsible for the current spate of violence in the province (Dunne, 2006:64-68).

In order to locate the precise reasons responsible for the present day turmoil in Balochistan, it would therefore be prudent to examine the Baloch ethnic uprisings historically. The current chapter is a modest attempt to seek answers to the basic questions that who are the Baloch people, what are their grievances, particularly, economic aspects of their problems and why they are feeling marginalised inside Pakistan. Present chapter takes into consideration, the historical aspect of these and related questions.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Balochistan province of Pakistan came into being on July1, 1970 while merging the administrative divisions of Quetta and Kalat after the abolition of One Unit Scheme. However, the province remained under the central rule until after the elections of December 1970 and the restoration of civilian rule in December 1971.
Powers were therefore provided officially to the province only with the convening of the Provincial Assembly in April 1972 (Ahmed, 1975:6). In terms of landmass; it is the largest province of Pakistan with an area of 347,190 square kilometres that covers 43 percent of country’s total area and, least populated with just 6 percent of Pakistan’s total population and worse, the least literate (Crisis Group Asia Report, 2006:2). Besides, the province of Balochistan can be divided into four major areas. The first is Upper Highlands or Khorasan, a mountainous area situated within central and eastern portion of Balochistan. The Second is the Lower Highlands area surrounded by the three mountain ranges. These are the Mekran, Kharan, and Chaghi. Where as the areas of Kachhi, Las Bela, and Dasht River valley together form the third, the Plains region. The last is the Deserts area comprising the northwest portion of the province having the unique mixture of sand and black gravel (Dunne, 2006:13). The province is surrounded in the west and northwest by Iran and Afghanistan; in the north by the provinces of the North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Punjab; on the east by the province of Sindh and on the south by the Arabian Sea with strategically important port of Gwadar on the Makran coast commanding approach to the Strait of Hormuz. Above all, the geo-strategic importance has decisive role to play here. It can be gauged from the fact that it not only links the other provinces of Pakistan with the countries of Iran and Afghanistan through road and rail links but also provides international routes connecting Pakistan with the Central Asia, the Middle East and the Europe. As a matter of fact, the land locked Central Asian countries in their quest for access to the sea have already showed keen interest for the routes through Pakistan- via Afghanistan as a viable option. The Great Asian Game notably played by Russia, Britain and Persia in the 19th century and the Soviet-American intervention during 20th century was primarily motivated by the strategic significance of this region, where the Britishers and later on, Americans were engaged to check the advance of the Russians/Soviets towards this region. Even today, Balochistan for the US has a decisive significance because of its vast borders sharing Iran and Afghanistan, where the sole super power of the world has vital stakes ranging from strategic to economic, including to complete the ‘war on terrorism’ where the US has used Dalbanden, Shimshe and Pasni air bases in Balochistan during the operation against Taliban after 9/11. Not surprisingly, China has also succeeded in accessing Balochistan’s warm waters for strengthening a strategic foothold in the Persian Gulf region or what a recent Pentagon report has described the same move as Beijing’s
“string of pearls” strategy intending to project Chinese power over the sea and to protect energy security at home (Ramachandran, 2005:1). What is more, Balochistan in the changing scenario is becoming the future passageway to the emerging energy-hungry India, China and Asian Pacific markets, particularly with the construction of Gwadar deep sea port at the Makran coast, which is due to be completed in 2010. Even inside the Pakistan, it is being argued that Gwadar port besides giving economic gains to Pakistan will also bolster country’s strategic defensives by providing an alternative port to Karachi, which was often blockaded by the Indian navy during the war times. Indeed, Pakistan’s growing energy insecurity – a product of rapid increase in demands coupled with rising scarcity and the region’s intensified energy rivalry – has increased the economic and strategic significance of Balochistan even more than what it was during the cold war era (Wirsing, 2008:VI).

In Pakistan population census and population figures are highly politicised issues. Depending upon the vested interests various governments and ethnic groups have projected their own figures. In case of Balochs in Balochistan, according to the 1998 census, it is estimated that the community constitutes of 54.7 per cent of the total population of the province which is said to be about 6.5 million. Pashtuns are estimated to constitute of 29.0 per cent in the province, by the same source and, who are mostly settled in the northern areas of the province adjacent to NWFP and in Quetta (See Appendix I). According to another official source, Baloch were said to constitute 45 per cent in the province followed by the Pashtuns with 38 per cent and others 17 per cent in 2004 (Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan, 2005:67). Meanwhile, Balochs and Pashtuns have their own respective positions as far as the proportions of their communities in Balochistan are concerned. Hence, whereas the former claim that they outnumber the Pashtuns in the province, which is also substantiated by the 1998 census, the latter contend to the contrary. Pashtun claim a 40-60 per cent ratio. On this count Baloch leaders have accused the Pashtuns of including Afghan refugees in their population who have obtained false documents or have settled in the province permanently (Crisis Group Asia Report, 2006: 2). Here it may be mentioned that following the Marxist coup in Afghanistan in 1978 and the subsequent Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, thousands of Afghanistan refugees comprising Pashtuns, Tajik, and Hazara flooded Pakistan’s border area. Many of whom are believed to be settled in Balochistan with the central government’s pat as the latter, as argued, wanted to tilt the population balance against Balochs so as
to weaken their ethnic position and their ethnic nationalism. Apart, the influx of refugees led to cross tribal marriages that also diffused Baloch homogeneity. What is more, the worst effect of influx besides altering the demographic situation was bringing the ‘Kalashnikov culture’ in the province by the refugees. This in turn imparted to the local men the knowledge of modern and heavy weaponry (Dunne, 2006:40). Meanwhile, internal migration as a natural sociological and economic process has also played a vital role in creating heterogeneity and determining demographic composition of the province. An interesting feature of the Baloch population is that majority of them live outside the province, most conspicuously in Karachi and western districts of Sindh. This trend particularly became prominent since the second half of the decade of 1970s, when a large number of Balochs emigrated from the province to different locations within the country (particularly Sindh) and outside the country (particularly in Gulf countries) to escape the persecution in the wake of military operation launched by Bhutto government, including for green pastures (Bokhari, 2003: 868-70). It is estimated that 4 percent of the people from Balochistan have gone abroad since the mid 1970s, particularly in the gulf countries for employment (Phadnis & Ganguly, 2001:270). It is to be mentioned here, Balochis have especially sought in the armed forces of some of the smaller Gulf States. For instance, some 5000 Balochs were said to be serving in the army of Oman in early 1980. Apart from this, diffusion of Baloch population also increased due to the large scale influx of non- Baloch people from the other provinces into Balochistan (Bokhari, 2003: 868-70).

In case of the origin of Baloch people, nothing can be said certainly as there are no authentic sources to be banked upon. Whatever information is available in this context has been collected from their genealogical records, including their age-old traditions as described in their legendary literature. However, such myths do not reflect much light on the historical roots of these people besides demonstrating a people’s belief in the antiquity of their origins (Breeseeg, 2004:114-15). As such, the historical record itself is unclear on whether the Baloch are natives or arrived here during one of the many waves of migration that swept the ancient Middle East. Notwithstanding, there are two competing theories having their own versions on the origin of Baloch. The first is native theory that considers the Baloch as the original inhabitants living in their present homeland since the ancient times. It is based on the
logic that bulk of the Baloch nation comprises the indigenous people of Makkoran. Even the word ‘Baloch’ is corrupted form of *Melukkhka, Meluccha or Mleccha*, which was the designation of Makkoran in-between the period of third and second millennia B.C. The Baloch, according to this theory are thus, “…considered to be the descendent of the Med, a nomadic people of the Median Empire (900-500 BC) and the Jatt. It appears that the Med are the early Aryan tribes who came to the region. The Jatt are presumed to be a people of Dravidian origin who migrated to Makkoran from the east before the Med” (Breseeg, 2004:116-19). Where as the second theory states, the Baloch migrated into the area some 2000 years ago. Largely relying on the linguistic basis, it argues that Baloch were living the southern shores of Caspian Sea at the time of Christ, from where they seem to have migrated into Kerman and Makkoran. However, it would be naïve to say that the aforesaid theories are entirely antithetical. Instead, both may be interpreted to reach at a conclusion. For instance, the native theory believes that Baloch are native may be right someway. Because, it may be possible a group of people who are native to the land lived in the area for the centuries speaking a dialect, is related to the modern Brahaui language. It is the arrival of an Iranian-origin people from the region around Caspian Sea in the 5th or 6th centuries AD that may have caused the abandoning of original population’s tongue here and thereby, substituted with the language of the new arrivals (Breseeg, 2004:116-19). Apart, the history of the region, where Baloch reside as we all know is marked by the invasions and political designs of outsider empire-builders. Hence, it also reinforces the aforesaid argument that Baloch people, including their language as well as their economic positions may have changed according to the circumstances (Breseeg, 2004:54). Coupled with it, there are also schools of thoughts linking the Baloch “with the Semitic Chaldean rulers of Babylon, another with the early Arabs, still others with Aryan tribes originally from Asia Minor” (Harrison, 1981:10-11, also see Baluch, 1958:1-25).

Notwithstanding the differences of opinions among the scholars regarding the origin of Baloch, there is wide consensus on their connection with *Allepo* region in Syria. It is worth mentioning here that the aforesaid information is also based on the oldest and widely believed ballad among the major Baloch tribes, the *Daptar Sha’ar* (Chronicle of Genealogies). According to it:
The Baluch and the Kurds were kindred branches of a tribe that migrated eastward from Aleppo, in what is now Syria, shortly before the time of Christ in search of fresh pasturelands and water sources. The Kurds headed towards Iraq, Turkey, and northwest Persia, where the Baluch moved into the coastal areas along the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, later migrating into what are now Iranian Baluchistan and Pakistani Baluchistan between the sixth and fourteenth centuries (Harrison, 1981:10).

This consensus is based largely on the linguistic evidence as Baloch language originated from the lost language related with the Parthian or Medean Civilization that flourished in the Caspian and adjacent areas before the Christen era (Breseeg, 2004:118). Nonetheless, the western historians refuse to accept the argument that Baloch have migrated from the Allepo. Instead, they allege that it is nothing more than myth with no verifiable evidence. Conversely, they describe this move as a politically motivated claim that was made in order to keep the Baloch people integrated, where Allepo has been used as a unifying symbol of common identity in historical memories shared by all Baloch (Harrison, 1981:10). It is to be noted here that various Islamic people in the region often link themselves with Arabs and, proudly display Arab genealogy, probably because of religious prestige attached to the Arab decent among these people (Breseeg, 2004:115).

The formidable geography and harsh climate of Balochistan had left indelible marks on their social set-up, including on their political psychology. This inturn has led to the surfacing of a unique people, whose tribal structure, traditions and customs reflect the harsh atmosphere in which they live. It is because of this barren and infertile environment, the people of Balochistan have “…historically been nomadic, although in recent years many tribes have abandoned their nomadic ways and settled permanently” (Dune, 2006:14). In case of food and costume, they are very simple and, so simple are their demands. Obedience, hospitality, tenacity, bravery and endurance constitute the supreme virtues of Baloch people. Blood kinship like primitive societies serves as the bases of social organisation among the Baloch people, where the chieftains are used to be the martial, administrative, including the judicial head of the tribe. Social ties among the members of one tribe are thus, very strong, where everyone is sincere to each fellow tribesman (Baluch, 1958:169). What is more, the ‘Sardari System’ was their traditional form of government, a centauries old system where tribesmen pledge their adherence to the tribal chiefs (Sardars), in
the hope to get social justice and upholding the ‘integrity of the tribe’. Besides, there was council of elders (Jirga) within a tribe, which traditionally elected the Sardars besides performing other duties. As things are, there are four levels of Jirgas within the Balochistan. The first is the local Jirgas, which look after the smaller issues like small crimes, disputes, etc. The district Jirgas was at the second number that has slightly broader scope of dealing with serious crimes like major theft and murder. The third one was the Joint Jirgas, primarily meant to investigate the intra-tribal disputes, including seeing tribal enmity. On the top of the tribal hierarchy, there was a Shahi Jirga, comprising the Sardars of respective tribes and, which was endowed to discuss the utmost issues or decisions like the accession of Baloch homeland into the newly created state of Pakistan in 1947 (Dunne, 2006: 15-16).

Above all, the Baloch people are very much entrenched with their tribal values and honour. They are fiercely proud of their own identity, culture, oral traditions and believe in the ‘purity of race’. This inturn has fostered the ethnic pride and self confidence among the Baloch. There are numerous instances reinforcing their adherence to the tribal values. For example, “…no Baloch woman would ever dishonour by working as prostitute, even if she was destitute” (Titus, 1998:664-65). Likewise, Baloch seldom give their daughters to the non-Baloch, though they on the Punjab-Sind borders take wives freely from the Jatt and Rajputs. Not surprisingly, there have been several cases when an elder son failed to become chief of a tribe because he had a non-Baloch mother (Baloch, 1987:77-78). Apart, Baloch have their own ‘national code of honour’ (Baluchmayar), where each Baloch is bound to honour their code above all else. It is this code which not only differentiates them from their neighbours but also provides them a sense of distinct national identity, which has imparted them a sense of unity and protection through out the history from the outside encroachments. Some nationalist scholars even call Baluchmayar (national code of honour) as Baluchiat (Balochness). Indeed, Baluchmayar has been based on the following key fundamental principles of Ber or Hun (revenge), Bahut (refuge), and Mehmani (Hospitality) etc. Inayatullah Baloch has skilfully elaborated the Baluchmayar as:

The most important part of the Baloch unwritten constitution is known as the Baluchmayar (national code of honour), which guides the Baluch national life. In many ways, the Baluchmayar influences the life of individuals and determines the future of Baluch society. These traditions are completely
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different from the traditions of the Muslims of the Indian subcontinent and from those of the Persians of Iran. The Baluch traditions are known by each person from his youth. It is essential …to know the role of Baluch national code of honour in the Baluch national movement and how it is opposed to and contradicts state laws of Iran and Pakistan (Baloch, 1987:80).

In religions matters, the Baloch people differ from those of Punjab and Sind, and from the Muslims of India, including from the other nations in the Middle East. It is because of their rich cultural traditions, which regard the religion as the individual’s private affair. It is therefore, they are neither fundamentalist nor allow blending of the religion with politics. There is plethora of examples reinforcing their secular character. For instance, in the late 19th century when the British asked both Baloch and Pashtuns that as to how their civilian cases should be decided. The former answered to decide through ‘Rawaj’ (Baloch customary law) and the latter replied to decide through ‘Sharia’ (Islamic law). Likewise, the secular image of Baloch people has also been seen in 1947, when the Indian-subcontinent witnessed blood-curdling Hindu-Muslim riots at several places, but nothing went wrong in Balochistan where Hindu minorities remained untouched and lived in peace (Baloch, 1987: 71-72). Meaning thereby that religion plays relatively a marginal role in Baloch society with only exception of Iranian Balochistan, where the influence of religious leaders has increased with the coming of Islamic Revolution in Iran. Infact, ‘Sunnism’ in Iranian Balochistan (Western Balochistan) flourished as it had taken on the political significance, including as a rallying point against the ruling Persians whose overwhelming majority follows ‘Shiism’. Besides, it is also believed that before succumbing to Islam, the majority of Baloch were ‘Mazdaki’ and ‘Zoroastrians’. While today, the overwhelming majority of the Baloch belong to the Sunni branch of Islam of the Hanafite rite. Though the remnants of some Zoroastrian traditions are still evident among the few Baloch tribes but there is nothing known that how this conversion of Baloch to Sunni Islam occurred. Apart, there are also two non-Hanafite communities among the Baloch. The first is ‘Bameri’, a Shiite community that reside around Dalgan west of Bampur (Iranian Balochistan). The other is ‘Zigri’ (Zikri), relatively a large community with its centre in Makkoran that extended into southwestern Jhalawan and Las Bela, including the substantial number of Zikris may also be found in Iranian Balochistan. Notwithstanding, the Baloch in Pakistan do not
see any threat from the Shiites and this in turn, had helped in the surfacing of secular forces. On the other hand, some scholars even argue that ‘forms of worships’ are so diverse in Balochistan that do not allow any leader or a movement to employ a single religion as a unifying factor, hence secular character emerged. There are also smaller minorities of Hindus, Khojas (Ismailis), and Sikhs in the province of Balochistan (Breseeg, 2004:73-77).

As already discussed, Balochistan is a mountainous province having rich deposits of natural wealth. Nonetheless, it receives a very low rainfall and even, there are certain areas which get no rain fall at all for years in succession. Overall, it is the driest province of Pakistan and, agriculture is being pursued in small areas where the facilities of irrigation are available. Indeed, they depend upon the natural means of irrigation like province’s mountain springs, rivers, and stored underground water, including through nallah (Channel), which they dug out from a river (Baluch, 1975: 21-22). It is therefore, pastoral nomadism has predominantly remained an important subsistence strategy of Baloch social mode complemented by the patches of settled agriculture, where the severe weather and scarcity of fertile land beside other factors played key role in the flourishing of pastoralism. It is these patches around which tribal life as well as the social organisation of the province evolved that still continue (Khan, 2003:282). Not only this, full time nomadic pastoralism continues to play an important role of linking scattered populations and making use of otherwise infertile land, besides serving as a political strategy. For instance, weaker or marginalized groups through using nomads as a political-military strategy either escape or sought to avoid the domination by the settled groups or sometimes nomads can themselves be a decisive political force in the society. Above all, nomadism, according to Spooner is “…still thought of as the genuine Baluch life, which embodies the authentic Baluch virtues of honesty, loyalty, faith, hospitality, asylum for refugees, and so on” (Titus, 1998:670).

Moreover, Baloch society is extremely conservative and beset with both horizontal and vertical cleavages. Even the nomadic and the more settled agricultural communities are segmented into many tribes, classes, and subclasses. According to an estimate, the Baloch population may be divided into 17 groups besides some 400 sub-groupings. Indeed, the Baloch people may be classified into two major groups. The first is ‘Eastern’ or ‘Sulaiman Baloch’ and the second is ‘Westren’ or ‘Mekran Baloch’. Though the former group is the larger amongst the two, but are numerically dominant in only one (Sibis District) of Balochistan’s 26 districts. The Sulaiman Baloch include the Bugtis,
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Buledis, Buzdars, Dombkis, Kaheris, Khetrans, Magasis Marris, Mugheris, Rinds and Umranis tribes, While on the other hand, the Mekran has traditionally been viewed as the ‘original nucleus’ of the Baloch people. The Buledi, Dashti, Gichki, Kandai, Rais, Rakhshani, Rind, Sangu and Sanjrani are the prominent tribes falling in this group. However, it is the Bugti and Marri tribes, which dominate the modern Baloch politics, though the Rind tribe occupies the top position in the social hierarchy of the Baloch tribes. So far as the Brahui population is concerned, they are mainly concentrated in the central mountain region i.e. south of Quetta, the capital of Balochistan. Even within the Brahui population, there are three subdivisions. The first is the Brahui nucleus, which includes the tribes of Achmadzai, Gurguari, Iltzai, Kalandari, Kamrani, Mirwari, Rodeny and Sumalari. The other two divisions are the Jhalawan Brahui and the Sarawan Brahui. Nonetheless, it is the Jhalawan and Mengels (Mengals) tribes, which have emerged as the powerful players in the Baloch politics, though Acmdzai, a tribe of the Khan of Kalat stands at the top of the social hierarchy among the Brahui (Dunne, 2006:15-16). At the same time, it is important to note that linguistically, Brahui is the second significant group following the Baloch in the province. Though certain scholars, including the Pakistan state classify the Brahui as a separate ethnic group as a part of the larger strategy to weaken the Baloch nationalism, but this has been challenged by the Baloch nationalists, including by the recent linguistic and anthropological studies. For instance, in the words of Carina Jahani, a linguist at the Uppsala University, Sweden:

Ethnic affiliation is not as quickly changed as language; there is no necessary correspondence between regarding oneself as Baloch and using the Balochi language. Balochi gives way to the Indian languages in the east and Persian in the west, and some groups in those areas no longer speak Balochi though they maintain their Balochi identity. ‘Brahui tribes, in central Balochistan’ … (therefore) ‘belongs to this category which is bilingual in Brahui and Balochi (Breseeg, 2004: 127).

Similarly, Nina Swidler, an anthropologist (who studied Brahui extensively) does not agree to believe Brahui as a separate ethic group to that of Baloch. Swidler instead contends that there are many things in common among the two in terms of culture, traditions, political organisation except the language. While there are several instances reinforcing the close affinity between the Baloch and Brahui. For example, majority of Brahui population consider Balochi as their second language after Brahui. Even in case of the royal family of Kalat and Bizenjo-Sardar family, including the Bizenjos of Makkoran speak and consider Balochi as their first language. What is
more, many of the founders and members of Baloch national movement like Mir Abdul Aziz Khurd, Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo and Agha Abdul Karim were of Brahui origin (Breseeg, 2004:128-129).

All against the high sounding promises made by the successive governments, Balochistan is the most backward and poorest province of Pakistan in terms of socio-economic indicators such as literacy, medical facilities, road construction, per capita income, power supply and especially, in the development of a labour intensive industry based on indigenous raw materials and manual skills (Scholz, 2002:3). Indeed, the economic grievances of the Baloch people are dated from the colonial times, because Britishers thought that “economically and politically weakened Balochistan would lend itself to be used more easily” and, they therefore neglected the economic development of Balochistan. It may be evident from the following fact that they developed industries and agriculture in Sind, Punjab and NWFP, but excluded Balochistan from the list of developmental programmes. Some scholars however even argue that “it was not merely a case of negligence, but what might be called purposeful sidetracking, even suppression”, where they seem to be right, because Balochistan for them was more important for ‘military and geopolitical purposes’ rather than economically. With the forceful annexation of Balochistan into Pakistan, the situation did not change much thereafter. Since the early 1950s, the Pashtuns took the control of economic activities in the province, previously controlled by the Sindhi Hindus. This was followed by the large scale influx of Punjabis, especially military and civil bureaucrats into the province, who were given lands, for example, in the Pat Feeder area near Kalat under Ayub Khan. Not only this, majority of the entrepreneurial class in the province was of non- Baloch, except for a few sectors like marble quarrying and ship breaking. In short, the Pakistan state instead of rectifying the structural faults in the system continued the colonial policy of neglecting that kept the Baloch people on the whole extremely deprived (Breseeg, 2004:97). Whatever development taken place in Balochistan by the central government is lopsided in many terms. For example, the critical areas such as water development programme remained untouched, where as the areas like roads construction for military purposes, including the establishment of cantonments have been given abnormal attention. It is because of these reasons; much of the bitterness and hatred once reserved for the colonial rulers was now squarely intended against Islamabad (Breseeg, 2004:102-103).
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Nonetheless, the region is based on the geological belt, which is known for its world-class mineral deposits. Hence, Balochistan has huge reserves of natural gas, valuable mineral deposits like chromium, copper, gold, silver, lead, zinc, iron, coal and above all, uranium, including untapped fisheries off their coasts. The province has also a potential transit zone for a proposed pipeline transporting natural gas from Iran and Turkmenistan to India. There is also speculation that Balochistan may hold large reserves of petroleum (Grare, 2006:4). Currently, it is however, the province’s natural gas that has special significance in Pakistan’s energy profiles. It is simply because, natural gas in Pakistan’s total energy consumption accounts for about 50 percent and as such, has emerged as a principal energy source. Indeed, Pakistan’s economy is one of the world’s most natural gas dependent. Secondly, it is estimated in 2006 that there are 28 trillion cubic feet (tcf) proven reserves of natural gas in Pakistan, out of which as much as 19 trillion tcf (68 percent) are located only in Balochistan. The third is that though Balochistan accounts for 36 to 45 percent of Pakistan’s natural gas production, but consumes only a modest 17 percent of it. Of particular note, the largest share of the province’s contribution to the nation’s natural gas production comes from the long-operating Sui gas fields in the Bugti tribal area, located among the parts most seriously afflicted by Baloch militancy (Wirsing, 2008:6-7). On the whole, Pakistan is saving two billion dollars worth of foreign exchange yearly due to the natural gas being extracted from Balochistan. This is also true in case of coal production from the province. According to Pakistan Energy Book 2005, 1.5 million tons of coal was mined from Balochistan in 2004, which is 40 percent of Pakistan production. Not only this, world’s largest copper-gold deposits lie here in Baloch region. Take the case of Saindak project, where Chinese government has invested over $350m, is the fifth largest copper-gold project of the world. Similarly, an Australian company, Tethyan has anticipated spending $ 1 billion for developing the Reko Deg Copper mines, which is being counted among the world’s top deposits. The famous Baloch saying: “…a Baloch child may be born without socks on his feet, but when he grows up, every step he takes is on silver and gold” may suit here to conclude about the natural wealth in Balochistan (Baloch, 2008: 37-38).

In spite of being a resource-rich region, Balochistan is one of the least developed provinces of Pakistan with high rates of poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, including high infant and mortality rate. As such, Balochistan lags behind other provinces in economic development. Take the case of average household incomes, which are the lowest in
Balochistan throughout the country. While there are little industrial activities in the province and the employment opportunities outside agriculture, including mining are also limited (ADB Report on Balochistan, 2005:1). As a result, the percentage of people living below the poverty line in Balochistan stands at 48 per cent, the highest in the country (Foreign Policy Centre Report, 2006:47). The other social and physical indices of the province are amply clear from the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Balochistan</th>
<th>Pakistan</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy Rate (Female)</td>
<td>26.6% (15%)</td>
<td>47% (33%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary School Enrolment (Female Participation)</td>
<td>49% (21%)</td>
<td>68.3% (49.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Sanitation</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant Mortality Rate (Per ‘000’ LB)</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village Electrification</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Safe Drinking Water</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
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The extent of relative deprivation in Balochistan is also appalling. According to the Social Policy and Development Centre (SPDC), the percentage of districts that have been classified as ‘high deprivation’ are 92 percent in Balochistan, 62 percent NWFP, 50 percent in Sindh and only 29 percent in the Punjab. Similarly, the percentage of population living in high degree of deprivation stands at 88 percent in Balochistan followed by 51 percent in NWFP, 49 percent in Sindh and 25 percent in Punjab (Baloch, 2008:37). Of particular note, when this perception (relative deprivation) is strong enough in the society may work as a catalyst to ethnic protest and conflict. In Balochistan, this is exemplified by the situation in Gwadar, where influx of non-Baloch, especially the Punjabis have pushed the locals aside in every field, is seen by the Baloch people as further instances of Punjabis getting rich while the majority of Baloch are in appalling poverty (Dune, 2006:51). Moreover, take the case of important positions in the mega projects like Gwadar or in gas industry, where well paid managers and technicians are often taken from outside the province. Indeed, they see the locals with suspicion and usually employ them in low end jobs as day
labourers. The obvious remedy here is to enable the locals by imparting them technical skills, for which the central government never seemed to be ready (Wirsing, 2008:8). As such, the Baloch feel totally exploited, not only politically but also from jobs and socio-economic benefits of Baloch wealth. It is against this background, they vehemently disregard the lopsided development taking place in the province. They allege that it is confined to specific areas, the large benefits of which, including the exploitation of natural resources such as gas, coal, iron-core etc. are going to already privileged class, most of whom are non-Baloch. It is evident from the fact that more than Rs.65b as profit from the Sui Gas Fields is going to the centre where as the province receives only Rs.5b (Public Opinion Trends, 2005:631). The formula of distribution of royalties regarding Balochistan structurally favours the centre. In case of Pakistan, the royalty on natural gas paid by the central government to provinces is based on wellhead production costs, where Balochistan suffers as its gas was discovered much earlier as compared to gas fields in Punjab and Sindh. The price of gas at that time was dismally low, as such, royalty on Baloch gas was fixed accordingly at a very low rate as compared to Punjab and Sindh. Consequently, Balochistan gets royalty from sale of its natural gas as per past fiscal arrangements between the province and the centre, which is only about one-fifth of the royalty payments that the other two gas-producing provinces receive at present. Thus, a fiscal circumstance that has the ironic effect of turning Balochistan (the country’s poorest province but leading supplier of gas) into an important subsidizer of the richer provinces (Wirsing, 2008:8-9). Not only this, Balochistan has also been disadvantaged in getting central financial assistance. Because, revenues in Pakistan are distributed among the provinces in accord with strict per capita population criterion. But, Balochistan with just 5 percent of the country’s population gets a very small share of the pie, as compared to the other provinces, especially the Punjab (Wirsing, 2008:25). This indifference to the province has been highlighted by the Baloch nationalists, who maintain that historically very little of the huge earnings of the central government in natural gas revenues was ever returned to the province in the form of development expenditures.

In addition, the Punjabi dominated centre is exploring the Sui-gas since 1953 against the wishes of local Baloch people on the one hand and fulfilling more than 50 percent of Pakistan, mainly Punjab’s domestic and industrial needs on the other. Not only this, gas was supplied to both Multan and Rawalpindi in Punjab, in 1964; but
Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, had to wait until 1986, when government decided to establish a military garrison in the provincial capital and thereby, it was decided to extend gas pipeline up to there. Likewise, the gas was supplied to Dera Bugti only because the government decided to open a paramilitary camp there in the mid 1990s. The worst is, Balochistan receives no more than 12.4 percent of the royalties due it for supplying gas (Grare, 2006:5). As a matter of fact, even today, after six decades of independence, there are only 3.4 percent gas consumers in Balochistan and, villages located around the Sui gas fields are still without the gas. Whereas the Punjab has alone 64 percent gas consumers, which produces only 4.75 percent of gas (Baloch, 2008: 38). So much so the central government has given access to the foreign companies for the further exploration of natural resources and building mega projects where huge benefits are going to outside the province. For instance, in the Saindak copper and gold mining project, 74 percent of profit goes to Chinese investors, 25 percent to the centre and a meagre 1 percent to the Balochistan (Public Opinion Trend, 2005:631). Even more significant is the fact that whatsoever the little amount goes to the province, very small percentage is being spent. For instance, in 2003 to 2004, only 25 percent of annual development plan funds in the province were actually utilized (Public opinion Trends, 2005:592). In short, successive central governments have treated Balochistan as a peripheral area, whose policies have almost never been designed to give serious attention towards the genuine grievances of its people. Conversely, the centre had relied upon the military means, as opposed to negotiations and political solutions, when dealing with the lingering Baloch problem that further widened the fears of the Baloch people (Khan, 2007:126).

Undeniably, Balochistan has suffered long years of neglect. To reverse this discredit, efforts were made since 1970, when Balochistan got the status of fourth province in Pakistan, for accelerating the economic development. In the first phase that culminated in 1977 had the short term planning, emphasis was to develop the resources of the province besides building infrastructure, because Balochistan did not have the physical and institutional infrastructure for governance at that time. The second phase based on long term planning was culminated in October 1999. During these two phases and even until now, an overall development scene in Balochistan has remained disturbing one. The economic growth is almost stagnated, primarily due to limited investment and capital accumulation (Fazl-e-Haidar, 2005:2). Coupled with it, the lack of a coordinated economic policy and a viable strategy for economic
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development, including rampant corruption, dependence on federal allocations and grants, low sub-soil water reserves, rising religious militancy, crime and smuggling, and poor female participation in public and private sectors, are among the other factors retarding the poor economic growth. Moreover, the province has seen no significant investment in productive streams (such as minerals, agribusiness, and fisheries) and human resource development. The province is reeling under heavy debt. It is estimated that more than Rs.47 billion is pending against the province, which is not a healthy sign. The drought situation has further compounded the problem and, even today the state of affairs did not change (ADB Report on Balochistan, 2005:1-2, also see Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan, 2005:65-66). The cumulative effect of such situation has led to the widespread unemployment in the province among other negatives indices igniting unrest among the Baloch people. For instance, it has been revealed by a 2007 study on demographic transition, education and youth employment that young people in Balochistan were twice as likely to be without a job as their Punjab counterparts (Crisis Group Asia Report, 2007:10). Not only this, the human development index prepared by the UNDP for the year 2003 further depicts a dismal picture, where Balochistan in almost all the human development indices lies at the bottom of the table (Foreign Policy Centre Paper, 2006:47). Besides, the years of military operations and discriminatory policies and poor governance of the successive regimes has resulted in extreme underdevelopment of the province. The situation has been further aggravated with the onslaught of modernisation, globalization and Pakistan’s steadily rising population, including the massive forces of change unleashed by economic development in Pakistan. Since the vast majority of the Baloch people are among the poorest, least educated, and least urbanized of country’s population; and they are too easily passed over or pushed aside in the highly competitive social and economic environments now taking place in Pakistan, thus is threatening to leave Baloch far behind as compared to the other provinces (Wirsing, 2008:27).

The Baloch nationalists/political parties have demonstrated many a times against the control and misuse of their resources by the outsiders. Since the government announced that gas deposits being exploited at present shall be depleted by 2012, leading to the need to drill deeper and undertake fresh exploration has further fuelled the already existing anxieties of the Baloch people. Therefore, they are very sceptical and fear that they will be dispossessed, by the central government, of
their land and resources. They argue that government has already decided to construct military garrisons in three most sensitive areas of the province. These include Sui, with its gas producing installations; Gwadar, with its deep-sea port and Kohlu, the capital of Marri tribe, to which most of the hardliners belong. Nonetheless, the Baloch people are now determined to check further exploration and development in the province without their consent (Grare, 2006:5). They further allege that it is entirely in the hands of central government to decide, what development activity is to be undertaken in the province, which foreign company or local investors are to be associated with, and what share in the revenues is to be allocated to the province. Take the case of the Saindak copper project that reinforces the exclusion of the provincial government, including the Baloch people, where the largest benefits are going to the Chinese, who have 74 percent share in the said project followed by the federal government with 25 percent, and the province has only one percent share. Jamil Bugti, the son of the late Nawab Bugti has rightly summed up the status of provincial government as:

…the chief minister of Balochistan is nothing more than a clerk as everything is controlled from Islamabad. He has to run to Islamabad every month to get the salaries for his employees in the secretariat. So he is given a cheque for month’s salaries and sent home and the next month he is back again with palms outstretched….Balochistan’s provincial government is practically a subsidiary of the centre, which works at its behest and follows its instructions. There is no provincial purview of the political and economic decisions, which are taken in Islamabad. This has led to economic backwardness of Balochistan and the lack of job opportunities for the Baloch (Foreign Policy Centre Paper, 2006:53).

Similarly, Dr. Abdul Hayee Baloch, leader of the National Party has reinforced the overriding position of the central government, while saying that “the provincial government is the tool of the federal establishment… (and), all our decisions are made for us by Islamabad” (Crisis Group Asia Report, 2006:13). So much so, the provincial legislature’s sessions can not be convened without the consent of the central government, the Baloch people allege. It may be evident in the recent experiences, where Islamabad has literally cancelled the sessions of the provincial government as a part of the larger strategy to prevent the opposition from discussing the directions and impact of the ongoing conflict in the province (Crisis Group Asia Report, 2006:13). While basing their judgement on historical realities and the
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arbitrary attitude of the central government vis-à-vis development in Balochistan, they further argue that the primary beneficiaries of the ongoing mega projects in the province are the outsiders, and they fear that the government may use the pretext of backwardness of the people to justify appointments in these projects. The implementation of big projects like the Gwadar Port, the coastal highway linking Karachi with Gwadar and beyond, including the Miranai Dam and the Saindak Copper Project have reflected similar trends of encouraging the influx of non-Baloch into the province, which would marginalize the Baloch people, rather igniting the provincial economy (Public Opinion Trends, 2005:631). Following facts substantiate the same, as out of 600 hundred persons employed to construct the first phase of the Gwadar project, there were only 100 Baloch, essentially daily-wagers (Grare, 2006:6). Indeed, the Baloch in and around the Gwadar have apprehensions, influx of population will make them minority in their own homeland, similar to what has happened in Sindh. The population of Sindhis at the time of independence of Pakistan was 0.5 million, it has now reached to more than 14 million people, majority of them are non-Sindhis, which has made Sindhis a minority in their capital city (Crisis Group Asia Report, 2006:15). Moreover, the Baloch people fear that unbridled foreign investment and development projects will enlarge the scope of foreign influence, threatening the social fabric of the society (Grare, 2006:6). The following expression of Ataullah Mengal reinforce the apprehensions of the Baloch people in this regard which are as:

If there are jobs in Gwadar, people would flock there, Pakistanis and foreigners alike. With time, they would get the right to vote. The problem is that one Karachi in Gwadar is sufficient to turn the whole population of Balochistan into minority. Gwadar will end up sending more members to the Parliament than the rest of Balochistan; we would loose our identity, our language, everything… (Foreign Policy Centre Paper, 2006:55).

It is further estimated that if everything goes well with the central government’s plans to carry forward the entire Gwadar project, will increase the population of Gwadar and its surroundings from seventy thousand to almost two million, majority of them would be Punjabis and Sindhis (Grare, 2006:6). On the other hand, there is only one intermediate college in the Gwadar that has even not been updated since last 15 years. Though former President Musharraf had announced
to establish a degree college, including a technical institute, but nothing has come out in this regard yet (Report of the Parliament Committee on Balochistan, 2005:13). What is more, the other amenities like access to safe drinking water or health facilities are also appalling in and around Gwadar and, no adequate steps had been taken so far to improve them. An obvious remedy for the shortage of the technical skilled locals is to train and recruit the locals in the project besides linking the port with the rest of Balochistan, for which the central government never seemed serious, Baloch nationalists allege (Grare, 2006:6 & also see Andley, 2006:5).

They further argue that if Islamabad really believes that development is a pressing need of the time, should develop the vast potentials in all sectors instead of concentrating on the few of strategic significance. For example, building the infrastructure such as the construction of seaports, airports and the specific roads are not designed to benefit the local Baloch people. It is meant more for easy access and rapid deployment of the forces to control them and to aggrandize their resources during the emergency time. Take the case of the construction of Sibi-Rakhani road that is not a part of the programme for Balochistan’s development. Instead, a part of the larger strategy is to link the Punjab through the shortest route (Kohlu) in order to open up the oil-gas rich area to benefit the Punjab (Marri:2005:1). Similarly, the Gwadar is being connected to Karachi, but not through Turbat, Panjgur and Khuzdar to Quetta, leaving the rest of the province aside epitomize the intention of the central government vis-à-vis the province of Balochistan (Foreign Policy Centre Paper, 2006: 54). It is therefore, the developmental projects in the province, intended for greater opportunities, are solely serving the interests of the non-Balochis, including state institutions. Where as the Baloch people are intentionally being kept backward, which further exposes the hidden agenda of why their homeland was annexed by Pakistan, the Baloch people allege (Andley, 2006:5).

The Baloch people further spell out that they were never against the mega developmental projects being implemented in the province. What agitate them are the nature and the modalities of the development, including the question of ownership of these projects, where the writ of central government speaks loud, alleges Abdul Hakim Baloch, a former Chief Secretary of Balochistan. They further allege that land around Gwadar and the coastal highway, which belongs to the province, is being usurped by the central government, including the military and civil bureaucracies and, by land mafia in collaboration with the Mekrani underworld and its members, who are
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in government and the legislative bodies. This has inturn led to the colossal loss to the provincial exchequer, amounting to perhaps trillions of rupees. Even, state agencies like the navy, the coast guard, military and paramilitary forces are not behind in swallowing large tracts of land in the province (Foreign Policy Centre Paper, 2006:54). According to a Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) official, every army general has a plot in Gwadar further reinforces the aforesaid allegations. This is being done all against the fact that more than 80 percent of the locals rely on fishing for a livelihood in this area and, with the construction of Gwadar port; their prime fishing grounds located along the East Bay have already been lost and, has evacuated thousand of the locals. There is also fear looming large over the locals that if the Gwadar’s master plan, which was prepared without the local consultations got implemented, will also make them homeless, because area falling within 15-20 kms of the port will be incorporated in the main project (Crisis Group Asia Report, 2006:15). The Baloch people hence, insist that all the mega projects must be linked with the local ownership and benefits, besides cancelling all illegal allotments in Gwadar district and, specifically to halt work on Gwadar port until a detailed feasibility on the socio-economic and administrative implications was done, including the disbanding all military and paramilitary checkpoints in the province (Baloch: 2007:6-7 & also see Crisis Group Asia Report, 2006:15). This project has upset the Balochs to the maximum. The Pakistani establishment has claimed that it will be “another Karachi”. But this has in place of assuaging the local sentiments incited them because though the Gwadar is being connected to Karachi, it is not connected to Quetta through Turbat, Panigur and Khuzdar. Thus the rest of the province would be deprived of the benefits from the development of this port (Bansal, 2005:259). Moreover, the Baloch nationalists have vociferously sought to give the leasing rights of exploration and exploitation to the provinces through amendments in the constitution, besides giving preference to the requirements of the province, where the well head is situated. Similarly, they also want that the agreement of exploration in any province must be signed between the company and the concerned province. The other things demanded by the Baloch were the increase in the royalty, which is far lower than that of other provinces. (Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan, 2005: 10). Above all, the undisputed demand by the Baloch nationalist is the demand of maximum constitutional reforms needed to ensure the provincial autonomy (Baloch, 2007: 7). Even the recent conflict erupted in the province is direct outcome of the refusal by
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Musharraf regime to negotiate the demands for provincial autonomy. It is therefore, the Baloch politicians emphasize that “since Pakistan is a multicultural, multi-regional state, it should be run as a federation. The powers of the federation should be decided by the federating units and federal government should be subservient to parliament”. The Baloch nationalists further accuse the central government that, though they have made their level best to have friendly relations with Islamabad, but they have backed us against the wall (Crisis Group Asia Report, 2006:6-7). All this has contributed to the alienation of the Baloch people, who are resisting the government and its agencies from carrying out the projects in the province and, to deter investors until their demands are met. It is this systematic exclusion of the Baloch people from the developmental activities that force us to be violent vis-à-vis the central government, the Baloch Nationalists allege, that “we are determined we will not let the government implement any plan that goes against our interest, not any longer… (and), the choice for the people here is either to die or to take up the gun”. The periodic attacks on the pipelines and other governmental installations in the province may be attributed in this regard (Crisis Group Asia Report, 2006:16).

THE SEARCH FOR POLITICAL IDENTITY AND COLONIAL DIVISIONS OF BALOCHISTAN

The Baloch nationalists have convincing claims regarding the origin and development of their ethno-national identity that started emerging over the time, especially during the 17th and 18th centuries. They often argue that they have been a ‘self-differentiating’ and ‘self-defining’ ethno-cultural category throughout history, despite the fact that they did not have the required sense of social or political solidarity to assert themselves as a nation – as it is understood in present day world – for the most part of their history (Foreign Policy Centre Paper, 2006: 9,12). In fact, the Baloch society was highly fragmented prior to the colonial rule, where the concept of state did not figure very prominently. Whatever the small centres of power or influence existed were based on the internal organization of local tribes. Of particular note, though the various invading armies like Persian, Afghan, Sindhi and Sikhs passed through Balochistan, but all avoided permanent control of the tribes (Khan, 2003:282). However, with the passage of time, political circumstances changed and Baloch nationalists came to realize the significance of having the institution like state.
It is commonly believed that Mir Jalal Han is first, who started the traditional era of Baloch. The Baloch oral history, including the historian Dr. Inayatullah Baloch beside the other sources speak out that Mir Jalal Han along with forty-four Bolaks (tribes) were forced to migrate from Kerman and Sistan into Makkoran by early Turkish raids or by the Persians in the 12th century. It is in Makkoran, Mir Jalal Han founded a large tribal union with its capital at Bampur. Subsequently, the Baloch under Mir Jalal Han reorganised their military organisations by dividing the forty-four Bolaks into five military divisions. It is these divisions that later on became the basis of the five major tribes, namely Rind, Lashari, Korai, Hout and Jatoi, according Dr. Baloch. However, there is considerable confusion surrounding the whole reign of Mir Jalal Han, as there are no historical records to be banked upon in this regard, except the Baloch traditions and the wrings of Baloch nationalist authors, who consider Mir Jalal Han as the ‘founding father of the Baloch nation’ (Breseeg, 2004:138-139).

At the beginning of the 13th century, the Baloch polity and their economic system was damaged by the invasions of Mughals over Balochistan. However, the Baloch ethnic stock somehow escaped from the onslaught of Mughal attacks and, they established the Sultanate of Makkoran, with Kech as its capital possibly in late 13th century. The outside encroachment however provided the internal cohesiveness among the Baloch people. Subsequently, they established one of the largest Baloch tribal confederacies under Mir Chakar Rind in 1485, referred by historians as the “Rind- Lashari Union”, stretching from Kirman in the west to the Indus River Valley in the east, thus for the first time uniting all Baloch areas in 15th century. Not only this, Mir Chakar Rind also advanced into Punjab after consolidating his position on the home turf, including the transfer of confederacy’s capital from Kech, Makkoran to Sivi (Sibi), in eastern Balochistan and, annexed Multan and southern parts of Punjab in the early 16th century. Moreover, it is during his reign, the Balochi language and culture were diffused over a vast area and, most of the Balochi ballads (Baloch historical accounts) had also their origin in this period. As a matter of fact, Mir Chakar had an army of 40,000 men, where as Babur subjugated India with an army of only 12,000 soldiers. Nonetheless, the inter-tribal rivalry dealt a fatal blow to the Baloch confederacy, as major differences emerged between the two powerful factions of the confederacy, the Rind and the Lashari that culminated into the civil war, that continued for 30 years and led to the disintegration of the Balochis, who then migrated towards Sindh and Punjab and ultimately, the kingdom of Mir Chakar was
ruined (Breseeg, 2004:139-147). Above all, Mir Chakar Khan was the first nation-builder, as cited in Baloch historical accounts, who made serious efforts for providing the scattered Baloch tribes a ‘common identity’ and for unifying the Baloch politically, besides personifying the Baloch martial virtues all around (Harrison, 1981:12). Thus, in nationalist accounts Mir Chakar Khan is being projected as “a pillar of strength for the Baloch race and author of Baloch code of honour and Balochi traditions” (Breseeg, 2004:145). Mir Khuda Baksh Bijarani Marri Baloch has skilfully assessed his role in the following lines:

To this day Mir Chakar is regarded as one of the greatest heroes of the Baloches. He is the centre of Baloch love-lore and war ballads. A natural leader of men, it was him who nearly for two decades remained the sole leader of all the Baloches. He captured by strength of arm the Kalat highlands as well as lower Balochistan, and settled the Baloches there. Again thanks to him and his arms, the Baloches later on ruled not only in Balochistan but also in the Punjab and Sind as well. Had it not been for Mir Chakar, there would have been no Kalat state, nor Talpur rulers of Sind; nor could the Punjab Baloches have found it easy to secure Jagirs and settle down there…. (Hence) Like all great men, Mir Chakar was a man with resolute determination (Baloch, 1974:181).

After Mir Chakar’s death, the Baloch people had to fight with the powerful Mughals (based in Delhi) and as such, could not restore even small modicum of political unity until 1666 A.D, when Mir Ahmed Khan of Ahmedzai tribe established the ‘Khanate of Balochistan’ or the second important Baloch confederacy that continued to rule up to the 1850s (Foreign Policy Centre Paper, 2006: 10), which later became famous, as the Khanate of Kalat or Kalat State, because of its capital city, Kalat. As a matter of fact, the Kalat Confederacy based in the Kalat highlands southwest of Mir Chakar’s former capital, Sibi was the first Baloch state encompassing all the Baloch regions such as Makkoran, Western Balochistan, Derajat, Sistan and Lasbela. Not surprisingly, all of these regions were visibly under the central government’s authority that in turn, provided the Baloch, a concept of unity and patriotism besides an unwritten constitution (Rawaj or Dastur), that later on, became a “holly” document (Breseeg, 2004:148-149). During the initial years of Ahmedzai rule, Mir Ahmad Khan pursued a policy of friendship with the Mughals, became his military ally against Shia Iran, and also had a free hand to deal with the Barozai Afghans, the petty chief of Sibi. So far as his administrative set up was concerned, he
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propped up the Sardari System, where the sardars pledged their loyalty to the Baloch Khan at Kalat and defended Khan’s Khanate or kingdom against the external aggression besides providing the Khan with material and moral help during his campaigns. On the whole, it was well federating system operating through tribal loyalty and a system of patronage (Foreign Policy Centre Paper, 2006: 11).

The next high-point of Baloch unity is supposed to have been reached under Mir Abdullah Khan, fourth Khan of Kalat, who extended the border of Khanate in the southwest to Bandar Abbas (now in Iran), in the east to Derajat, and in the northwest near Kandahar (now in Afghanistan) to Kachhi and Las Bela (Baloch I, 1987: 103). Not only this, he gave due attention to the foreign policy and, even exchanged ambassadors with Iran, Afghanistan and Sultanate-Imamate of Oman as well as with Ottoman Turkey. In case of Mughals of India, he foiled their repeated attempts to subdue the Balochis and, subsequent decline and fall of Mughal Empire further strengthened peripheral feudatories like the Khan of Kalat (Foreign Policy Centre Paper, 2006: 11). Moreover, he was the first ruler, who presented himself as despotic chief through the system of land-tenure, which later had final shape to it by his son, Mir Nasir Khan the Great (Baloch I, 1987: 103). Notwithstanding, he was forced to pay tribute to the Iranian monarchs in order to prevent their possible attacks in the far-flung western border areas of his domain. But, he did little in integrating the areas under his military control into a unified state. This task was however left to the sixth Khan of Kalat, Nasir Khan, who laid down the foundation of the military and civil institutions of the Khanate, besides bringing the major Baloch tribes under one political umbrella and ruled for more than half a century, beginning in 1741. He was the most powerful Khan among all the rulers of the Khanate. It is believed that he had established a unified Baloch army of some 25,000 men and 1000 camels, an impressive force by 18th century (of Southwest Asian standard). Administratively, Nasir Khan built up a centralized bureaucratic system covering all of Balochistan, as never before. In a bid to place a well organized administration, he appointed a number of administrators with specific portfolios that include a Wazir (prime-minister), who was endowed with the responsibility to supervise all internal administrations and foreign affairs matters, and a Vakil, meant for collecting revenues from crown lands, besides tribute from loosely affiliated the principalities or chiefdoms (Harrison, 1981:16). Nasir Khan had also the legislative councils, to whom he had described as a “Baluch Parliament”, consisting of a lower chamber that was chosen by the tribes and
an upper chamber consisting of tribal elders. Moreover, Khanate under Nasir Khan had its own currency and flag that was partly red on the top with a green lower portion (Baloch I, 1987: 120).

The Kalat State under Nasir Khan had many structural weaknesses, though he followed skilful internal policy of strengthening the powers and figure of the ‘Khan’ without obliterating traditional political mechanisms of a society that was still eminently tribal and pastoral in nature. For example, it lacked an organic bureaucracy, which could incorporate different tribes into the system. Actually, these tribes were just fighting force of the state to be awarded with land grants depending upon their loyalties and contribution to the Khan. Therefore, despite some semblance of political unity, there existed a plethora of contradictions between the Khan and these tribes. Above all, it was the charismatic personality of Nasir Khan rather than the institutionalised structure that enabled the system to be functional and, when Nasir Khan died, his system came crumbling down (Khan, 2003:283 & also see Breseeg, 2004:152). Coupled with it, being situated at the tri-junction of Persia, Afghanistan and the Indian-subcontinent, the state of Kalat was invariably venerable to the influence of the more powerful kingdoms in the surrounding that spoiled its aspirations of being independent. For example, for several years of his reign, Nasir Khan paid tribute to the powerful Persian emperor Nadir Shah, who had subjugated areas of adjacent Afghanistan also. In return, Nadir Shah helped Nasir Khan in winning the Kalat throne, in the face of rival claims. When Nadir Shah was assassinated in 1747, Ahmad Shah Durrani stepped into the resulting vacuum in Afghanistan and established his new kingdom there. Subsequently, Durrani also demanded allegiance of Nasir Khan, who obliged him for 11 years, i.e. 1747 until 1758. All this indicates that the ‘outsiders’ have historically held influence over the Kalat state. Thereafter, the Kalat confederacy enjoyed a greater degree of autonomy for the first time in history until the arrival of the British, though it remained a military ally of Afghanistan. Unfortunately, the successors of Nasir Khan proved to be incapable of keeping Balochis together (Centre Paper, 2006: 12 & also see Harrison, 1981:17). Of particular note, when Mahmud Khan assumed the throne, he was only 7 years old and his entire administration was run by his prime minister, Akkund Fateh Muhammad. It is during this time onward, the Kalat state started dismembering. Derajat, the vassal province was occupied by Afghans, where as several chiefs in Makran and western Balochistan became independent and, they refused to pay taxes
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(Baloch I, 1987: 124). In other words, “Naseer had been hardly a year in his grave before the whole achievements of his life were in destruction of oblivion” (Baluch, 1958:88) and, this further opened the doors of Balochistan to outsider interference in political as well as military affairs, and finally British suzerainty over Balochistan was established in the following years.

Actually, the British interests in Balochistan grew during 1860s and 1870s, especially when they perceived that the Russians might extend their territory southward. It is against this background, the British devised numerous strategies to establish an unhindered control over the Indian frontier besides engaging in the Great Game with Russia that pushed Balochistan into the vortex of power politics (Foreign Policy Centre Paper, 2006: 12). As a part of the strategy, Afghanistan was viewed by the British as a buffer state in order to defend the Indian Empire from Russia. This inturn enhanced the strategic significance of Balochistan, because the supply routes to Afghanistan could not be safeguarded without securing Balochistan (Harrison, 1981:16). As a matter of fact, the British required the safe passage from Sindh to Afghanistan via Balochistan. Though the Khan agreed to provide the safe passage to the British but failed to control anti-British tribes, who attacked and harassed the army units with sniper fire and hit and run raids. This provided an excuse to the British to invade the Kalat declaring these attacks as breach of the treaty and, when Mir Mehrab Khan, then Khan of the Kalat refused to surrender, he was killed along with four hundred of his men and his state dismembered. This ended the first and so far as the last political organisation covering whole of Balochistan, including the regions that now constitute the part of Iran and Afghanistan (Khan, 2003: 283 & Breseeg, 2004:152).

Needless to add, the British interests in the Balochistan were of military and geo-political in nature and as such, were directed more at securing the British India’s borders rather than serving the Baloch people (Scholz, 2002: 93). Even, the Baloch nationalists were known to this fact very well. Take the case of Ghaus Bux Bizenjo who argued in 1978 interview:

…the Baluch failed to sustain their nationhood primarily because they happened to live in an area of vital military importance to the British. It was historical accident, he (Bizenjo) explained that gave the Afghans the opportunity for independent statehood denied to the Baluch. Just as it served the interests of the British to foster a unified Afghanistan as a buffer state, so it was necessary, conversely, for Britain to
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divide the Baluch in order to make the frontiers of the Raj contiguous with Afghanistan and to assure unimpeded military dominance in the frontier region (Harrison, 1981:19).

The following facts further reinforce the aforesaid generalisations. For example, the British did not use Balochistan for economic exploitation as they did in case of India. Nor they tried to develop the seaports of Balochistan for export facilities as against the fact that Balochistan has a very long coastline. Instead, they introduced a new socio-political system known as the ‘Sandeman System’ or ‘Sardari Nizam by the treaty of 1876. As a result of which, the Khan of Kalat was forced to accept the status as a British protectorate. This was also made mandatory for the Khan to consult the British before negotiating with any other government. Even inside Balochistan, the British got the right as final arbitrator of the internal disputes between the Khan and his chiefs, which was earlier the profound privilege of the Khan of Kalat. Not only this, the feudal powers of the Khan in the context of the tribal provinces and in the leased areas were also reduced and, thus Khanate was made a loose federation, a ghost of its former self (Baloch I, 1987:200). Meanwhile, the British obtained the formal treaty rights to station troops inside the Kalat and also made the Khan responsible for checking any outrages near or against the British territory, including the safe passage to the merchants in turn for handsome subsidies and guarantees of tribal autonomy (Khan, 2003: 283). Above and beyond, the treaty of 1876 gave birth to the new political forces in the Baloch society. For instance, the British provided the undue weightage to the new feudal elite i.e. Sardars, where as the position of powerful feudal overload i.e. the Khan largely diminished. What is more, the tribal chiefs under the new arrangement were allowed to devise their own methods to handle their routine local affairs, except on certain issues of strategic significance for which they were required to consult the British officials. The British even abolished the old republican tradition of the Baloch settling their disputes through an elected Majlis or Jirga and established a new Jirga System, (called Sardari and SHAHI Jirga), consisting of hereditary chiefs with immense powers over the Baloch people. But in no ways, the new Jirga System was an independent body. Instead, it was working under the tutelage of the colonial administration and responsible to the British Chief Commissioner. Beside, the tribal chiefs were also given the responsibility to maintain law and order situation in the respective regions (Baloch I, 1987:200 & also see Khan, 2003: 283-284).
Meanwhile, the United Balochistan was viewed as a threat to the British interests in such a mercurial situation. A plan was therefore, embarked upon to demarcate the boundaries of the territory (under British control) with Iran in the early 1870’s and later with Afghanistan between 1893 and 1905. Thus, Goldsmid Line assigned one fourth territory to Iran from the far west in a bid to woo the Iranians away from the Russians and in the north; a small strip was handed over to Afghanistan under Durand Line with akin intend. Even inside the British India, the Baloch area was divided into centrally administered territory designated as British Balochistan and remaining area was further divided into a truncated remnant of the Kalat State and three puppet principalities. Of particular note, the British did not pay any attention to the factors like geography, culture, history and the will of the people while reordering the boundaries of Balochistan. Even, the Khan was not consulted in this regard. Nonetheless, Baloch tribes in the 19th century and in the beginning of 20th century voiced against this unnatural and unjust partition of their homeland by revolting against the British and Persian rule. In 1933, Mir Abdul Aziz Khurd, the prominent national leader of Balochistan showed his displeasure towards the division of Balochistan by publishing the map of Greater Balochistan (Baloch I, 1987: 31-32 & Khan, 2003: 283). Nevertheless, special status of Balochistan continued to exist despite frequent administrative changes in other parts of India during the first and second decades of 20th century. Hence, no constitutional reforms were extended to Balochistan in the 20th century, when colonial intervention increased and the powers of Khanate Shahi Jirga (council of tribal chiefs) were abrogated in 1930s (Khan, 2005:113).

Of particular note, it had not been easy for the outsiders invariably to establish control over the Balochistan and, the British like their predecessors (the Mughals and Sikhs) also caught in entanglements while in dealing with frontier tribes The region’s cultural ecology as discussed earlier in detail, including the tradition of plundering among the Baloch that had long made an important contribution to the subsistence of the Baloch tribes’ inhabiting the mountains (given the marginal productivity of the region and more importantly, the passing of an important trade routes through it) were few among others factors making the direct control by outsiders problematic (Titus, 1998:660). However, it was the farsightedness of Sir Robert Sandeman, a British administrator of late 19th century, who followed a unique version of the ‘Forward Policy’ that many argued was responsible for British authority taking root more
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kindly and rapidly than in any other province of British India (Dunne, 2006:21). For instance, in the words of his chronicler: “Sandeman …was not a man of ordinary nature. He was created by God, it would appear, for putting in order the disturbed country of Baluchistan, and as soon as the country was settled God called him to Himself” (Baluch, MSK: 1958:74). Actually, the secret of Sandeman’s success was his understanding that the colonial interests in this economically unattractive region are purely strategic and “…to achieve this end, the position of the traditional tribal leaders needed to be supported and preserved, for they, once they had been brought under British influence and control, constituted the best guarantors for peace and order in the tribes” (Scholz, 2002:95). Sandeman also kept alive the old inter-and intra-tribal feuds, besides the peaceful measures to achieve certain goals without engaging themselves militarily or the same may be used, if necessary--as an instrument to exert British influence in Balochistan. Thus, his policy of peaceful penetration was based on knowledge, sympathy and the general assumption that impoverished hillmen may abandon their predatory habits in favour of peaceful one provided they get chance to improve. Though this assumption proved to be somewhat naïve later on, but Sandeman succeeded in pacifying much of Balochistan by giving employment to tribesmen, building roads, levies (local police) and other public works projects. On the whole, Sandeman’s tactics of extending British influence in Balochistan stressed the following three fundamental notions: the active and passive demonstration of British military might; strengthening of native authorities by increasing their involvement in local administration and in the responsibility for pacifying the land; and by making the naïve authorities politically and economically dependent on the colonial masters (Dunne, 2006:21 & Scholz, 2002:95).

In the end it can be concluded that Balochis have a long history as a community. Though Balochis are tribally organised at the local level but as they have throughout remained the victims of the outside intervention, be it the British or Pakistan state, they have learnt to be united against external intruders. Balochis have a political history, whereby they have had their own rule/rulers. Meanwhile, it is also found that the Baloch people have remained deprived of their socio-economic and political rights, both under colonial as well as post-colonial states. They have largely remained underdeveloped. Interestingly, none of the political masters at the centre ever tried to redress the genuine grievances of these people. Rather they used the region and its people for their selfish interests. For example, the Britishers
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manipulated the areas now constituting Balochistan for the military and strategic purposes. This exploitation instead of disappearing in the new state of Pakistan further increased to the new heights. Islamabad not only continued to rob the natural wealth of the province but also did not allow the Baloch people to manifest their grievances.
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