## Baloch (Ethno) Nationalism from Tribal Resistance to Mass Movement

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#### **Abstract**

Balochistan is the largest 'federating unit' of Pakistan in term of landmass, richest in terms of minerals, but is the poorest amongst the other federating units. Since the inception of Pakistan, there has been continuous resistance and uprisings from the side of the Baloch nationalist leadership(s) against the federation regarding ill-treatment and unjust behavior off the central government. However, the current political situation in Balochistan is critical and problematic. Several insurgent groups divided into different factions, having the motive of separation from the federation, are emerging on the political scene and are being supported by local masses. Prior to 2000s, the nature of the Baloch nationalist movement was tribal centric. The nature of previous four insurgencies were owned by tribal leaderships due to their tribal related interests which lacked all-encompassing nationalist struggle for the Baloch. However, the nature of the current Baloch nationalist struggle is own by middle class and common masses. The main focus of the study is to understand the transformation of Baloch nationalism and national struggle from tribal leadership to the common masses while exploring nature, development and various dimensions of the Baloch struggle within the federation. This paper aims to conceptualize the nature and development of Baloch nationalism within the framework of nationalism studies, starting from colonial to 'post-colonial Baluchistan'. In case of the Baloch struggle primordial and modern approaches to nationalism can better explain Baloch nationalism because the roots of Baloch nationalism are primordial, and these are further intensified through modernization. Despite several political and economic concessions, including centralized policies of successive governments, the central government and military establishment failed to mainstream the hardcore Baloch nationalist leaders and the insurgent groups to work within the federal framework. Rather these created extreme nationalistic sentiments among the Baloch nationalist leadership as well as ordinary Baloch in Balochistan. The paper also explores whether Baloch nationalism and national struggle stem from modernization, marginalization, state oppression, and foreign projection or are deeply rooted in their immemorial past. The nature of this research is qualitative, and it thoroughly studies and analyzes multiple data sources on the Baloch national struggle and its relationship with the federation within the academic domain.

*Keywords:* Baloch (ethno)nationalism, transformation, sociopolitical consciousness, common masses, tribal leadership, nationalist struggle.

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#### Introduction

The present Baloch population is politically and geographically divided into three different, but adjacent political and geographical entities, Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. Pakistan controls the largest portion of the Baloch population, which lies on the western side of the country. Balochistan borders with Afghanistan on the northwest, on the West with Iran and Arabian Sea on the south. Geographically, Balochistan is attached to other three federating units. It borders Sindh on the East, with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in the North and with Punjab in the Northeast. It is the largest federating unit in terms of land, comprising almost 44% (347,190 sq. km) of the total land mass of the country, and very rich in terms of oil, gas, and other natural resources. Balochistan is an ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse province.

Being geo-strategically significant, rich in terms of resources and diversity, the region has remained the bone of contention among various powers such as the Arabs, the Persians, the Portages, the Afghans, the British and now 'Pakistan'. The Arabs used this geographical land for their conquests while the Persians and the Afghans being a great power used its power and being adject, acquired a major portion of the Baloch land with the help of the British. For the British, Balochistan has remained geostrategically significant. It invaded Balochistan to 'extend its empire and control warm water'. However, the Baloch tribal leadership had never submitted rather have stood in front of these powers in order to maintain their control (discussed in the below section).

After the subsequent partition of the British India into two distinct and independent states (Pakistan and India). The establishment of Pakistan has snapped the 'independent status of Kalat State' in 1948. Since then, the Baloch leadership has been in confrontation with the federation. The nature of this confrontation or resistance was limited short lived due to its nature and manifestation as compare with the present nature of the Baloch resistance. The nature of the previous four insurgencies was primarily tribal centric and having lack of mass support and orientation. The current Baloch struggle against the state of Pakistan is owned by common masses and having less tribal orientation.

The current situation in Balochistan is critical and problematic because now the tribal leadership is not the only stakeholder and mediator between the Baloch and the federation. The tribal leadership has lost its political essence in Balochistan. because several insurgent groups divided into different factions, having the motive of independent Balochistan, are emerging on the political scene and are being supported by local masses. They believe that the colonial policy of the British has been followed by the state policy makers by choosing their good ones (tribal chiefs or

influential provincial power elite) to control the land. These sardars are empowered through various means to deal with the local populous who challenge the writ of the state. However, the prevailing socio-economic and political circumstances in Balochistan show that the traditional British formula is now trailing its essence at societal level. In the current resistance, the tribal leaders are not the only stakeholders of socio-political affairs of Balochistan, but common masses also have a dominant role (Group, 2006 & Devasher, 2019). The hold of these Sardars is getting weakened in most of the Baloch areas because these projected leaders have never paid heed to respect socio-economic development of ordinary Baloch. The last two decades have witnessed a shift in Baloch national struggle. The participation of middle class and common Baloch has been on rise. They are raising serious questions with their status within the framework of Pakistani federation (Bansal, 2010).

A number of scholars have highlighted that the rise of Baloch (ethno)nationalism in Balochistan was witnessed when the British attacked on Balochistan in 1839 which came in the shape of resistance and continued to grow stronger until the partition of Indian subcontinent (Baloch, 1987). Unfortunately, Balochistan couldn't come out of the colonial domain as it was forcefully merged with newly established Muslim state of Pakistan in 1948 (Harrison, 1981). On the other hand, there are conflicting views with reference to merger issue that Khan of Kalat willingly joined the state of Pakistan (Awan, 1985). Since then, there have been persistent uprisings and resistance (1948, 1958, 1963, 1973-1977- 2005 till now) against the political subjugation, economic injustices and discriminatory policies of successive governments. Most of the Baloch areas now show a picture of battlefields between Baloch insurgents and Pakistani security forces. This has been going on for more than half a decade now. (Bansal, 2018).

The previous four periodic resistances with the state authorities were mainly led by the tribal chiefs along with their associates; however, the current uprising is being led by the middle class. Being the socioeconomic and political beneficiary of Balochistan, most of the political-cum-tribal leadership consider themselves as the champions to protect the socio-political and cultural identity of Baloch (Adam, 2013). The nature of all the previous insurgencies were primarily based on national-cumpersonal motives by those of the tribesmen. Although, the successive military operations and coercive use of force has also contributed to ongoing insurgency and existing sense of economic and political grievances within the tribal leadership and among the common masses in Balochistan (Shaikh, 2015).

Although, the central government has initiated giving several political and economic concessions to Baloch in the shape of National Finance Commission (NFC) award, Aghaz-e-Haqooq e Baluchistan Package (AHBP) and the long-lasting demand of maximum provincial autonomy through Eighteenth Amendment (18th) and several developmental schemes including the development of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), these concessions have done little to bring them into the mainstream politics. The hardline Baloch nationalists and insurgents have rejected the relaxations and promises (Ozair & Khan, 2017). Since Musharraf's regime, the increasing wave of militarization in the province has contributed very little to diminish the influence of the insurgents. Contrarily, the security situation has deteriorated (Hassan & Rid, 2020). The insurgents' maneuvers have transformed from the tribal areas to other parts of Balochistan such as Makuran which was a peaceful region comparatively in previous insurgencies. The last few years have been very critical. The state has been making attempts to persuade and mainstream the Baloch insurgents but to no avail.

This paper seeks to deals with the following questions: is Baloch nationalism a modern phenomenon? what is the nature and various dimensions of Baloch struggle? how did the Baloch struggle initially led by tribal leaders transform into a mass movement? The main focus of the study is the transformation of the current Baloch nationalism (nationalist struggle) from tribal leadership to common masses. A qualitative research approach has been adopted to address these questions.

## Theory and Practice: Conceptualizing Baloch Nationalism

Since the 1970s, the focus on nations, nationalism and national identity has gained much emphasis within many scholars and academicians. The works of Walker Connor, Ernest Gellner, Anthony D. Smith, Benedict Anderson, John Breuilly, Pierre L. Van Den Berghe, Eric Hobsbawm, Liah Greenfeld, Homi Baba, Dominique Schnapper, and John Hutchinson are some examples in this regard (Leoussi, 2006). Most of these scholars have attempted to explain and clarify the controversies regarding the concept of nation and nationalism; however, they could not develop a consensus in this regard. Because of the multiplicity of meanings, no one could put either nation or nationalism in a particular framework. Neither nation can ever be thoroughly identical or uniform nor it is developed by inanimate material and designed by engineers because of the heterogeneous nature of human association. Sometimes it is argued that nations are forms of imagined communities (Anderson, 2006). In this regard, there are two contrasting views with respect to Baloch as a nation; one is the orientalist notion which represents Baloch as a tribally formed

group of people who have commonalities with the Persians, Arabs, Kurds and Africans (Dashti, 2012). The claim was developed and propagated by colonial literature during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, there is another group of scholars who argue that the Baloch are not primarily a tribal group rather they are a nation as they possessed a defined territory including an ethnic bond, historical and immoral past, language, and uniformity in all spheres of life and attitude. Ethnicity, nation, and nationalism being very controversial concepts. The researcher tries to make sense of various theories in relation to ethnicity, nation, and nationalism.

Historically, it has been observed that individuals always associated themselves with groups to fulfill their basic needs. With the gradual development of human consciousness, their basic needs changed from socio-economic to political goals. To fulfill these goals, individuals have formed groups and comminutes. Ethnicity is a formative process where groups of individuals interact, merge, combine with others and sometimes disappear based on cultural superstructure, rules regulating marriages, a legal system of resolving conflicts, myths and so on (Ichijo & Uzelac, 2005). For Smith, ethnic entities are conceptualized as groups composed together by mindfulness of common descent, language, religion, historical traditions or territory, determined for some definite interests for their fellow members (Breseeg, 2004).

Ethnicity is the fundamental basis of a nation with extended elements of self-consciousness based on immemorial past, a public culture, myth and a legal standardization which the leaders seek to make their fellow conscious based on cultural and physical attributes. More significantly, with the introduction of modernity, the ethnic identity grounded on the immemorial historical past and shared cultural legacies as well as the territorial aspect laid down the basis of national identity transform into nation (s) as the primordialists argue (Smith, 1991).

The primordialists as mentioned above argue that nations are deemed to be something natural and historical entities, characterizing culture, race, religion and a particular language as the basis of nations. Perennialists, on the other hand, treat nations as a modern phenomenon. They further argue their roots are deeply entrenched in the immemorial historical past. The modernists argue that nations are the product of modernity as 'imagined communities', with the introduction of modern technologies and capitalist mode of production in shape of print and press as Anderson developed it in his book "Imagined Communities" (Smith, 1991 & Anderson, 2006). Nation is defined as an "imagined political community" since the members of a particular nation never personally meet or speak or hear or even know the members of their communion, yet

they believe to be the part of a combined community as a nation. This notion was dominant during the industrial revolution in Europe (Anderson, 2006).

Deutsch (1953) believes that communication plays a major role in the process of modernization in terms of the formation of nation. Small units of people are organized in a group through factors like language as a standardized code of communication. This group of people is organized to hold a political power which creates a nationality. This nation advances in the position of nationhood when it creates a sovereign state. Some cultural anthropologists, however, postulate a five-tiered hierarchy of such groups beginning with the family. Several families constitute a band, several of whom ultimately join to form a clan. Clans, in turn, unite to form a tribe, and tribes over time join together to form a nation (Pearson, 1974).

For Smith (1991) modern nation and nationalism have deep roots in the pre-modern socio-political settings. Both nation and nationalism are the product of modernity and emerged in the process of modernization with roots in their past. As discussed above, the primordialists conception of nations are persistent and immemorial, having common histories and politicized ethno-cultural communities and then claim political recognition on that basis. Nationalism emerges when an ethnicity takes in account of its fundamentals of history, common national sentiments and more importantly immemorial or primordial past to control its own state (Smith, 2003).

For modernists, as Anderson, viewed that nationalism must be based on a huge cultural setting or pattern rather than self-consciously upheld political ideologies. The cultural systems of communities gave rise to national consciousness with the rise of 'print capitalism' (Anderson, 2006). Print revolution and capitalism played a role in building the modern nation and development of nationalism in three ways. First of all, newspapers and books created a combined form of communication. Second, it established a sense of ancientness to nation by giving permanence to language. Lastly, it created a power in shape of centralized language that played a role in building imagined communities in the form of nations. This process continued slowly in Europe but spread to the rest of the world with emergence of different nations (Anderson, 1991).

Scholars within the domain of political science, make a claim that Nationalism is a collective feeling of a group of people who associate themselves either on ethnic or territorial grounds and believe that their interests can best be protected by controlling their own statehood (Breseeg, 1981).

The Baloch existed as a nation prior to the British colonialism in India. This notion has been developed by Dr Farooq Baloch (2022) that historically the Baloch have a defined political geography starting from the West bank of the Indus River from the east, Arabian sea from the south, Koh-e-Alburz to the West some parts of Afghanistan from the North till the rule of Mir Naseer Khan Norri (1749-1794). He has an organized and powerful political and administrative government. Under his rule all the divided Baloch tribal territories were unified and merged. "He was the first ruler of Balochistan who gave it the shape of a sovereign state and had organized military system. The geographical boundaries of the state were specified." (Jaffar & Raza, 2018).

However, due to tribal and inter-tribal clashes of the Baloch society, the British authorities exploited this character in order to weaken the Baloch authority by providing support and favor to the dominant tribal leaders to fight against each other. This policy of divide and rule was further accelerated after the British occupation on Balochistan in 1830s. As the British divided Balochistan under the Goldsmith boundary commission in 1871, Durand line in 1893, and 1928 with the help of the Persian and Afghan rulers. While keeping Kalat State divided and into various principalities (Laseela, Kharan, Makuran states).

After the partition of Indian sub-continent, the history of Baloch and Balochistan was distorted and manipulated both initially by the British and then by Pakistani scholars. They presented the Baloch as either based on a tribal society or an ethnic group, having different sociopolitical and cultural and linguistic groups. This notion has been rejected by Baloch writers and historians such as Farooq (2022), Marri (2022) in their interviews that the Baloch share common cultural attributes, language (s), history, geography and sense of belongingness among each other). Historically their national, ethnic or tribal bond was strong in pursuit of their goals and interests.

With the passage of time, the colonial powers (the British, Persian and Pakistan) not only divided them geographically, but also on ethnic lines. Since the inception of Pakistan, the Baloch as a nation was presented as an ethnic group within the federation. This conception of the Baloch from a nation into an ethnic group was further popularized and remained as a dominant elite discourse.

From the above-mentioned discourse, it is obvious that the Baloch are a nation, not an ethnic group; however, for this study I consider Baloch as both an ethnic group in their primordial character and a nation in their

historically exposition and present manifestation. Baloch as an ethnic group has six attributes, as stated by Smith; a collective distinctive name; a myth of common ancestry; shared historical memories; shared culture; an association with a specific homeland; and a sense of ethnic solidarity (Braseeg, 2004). These attributes have been there since under the leadership of Mir Naseer Khan Nouri during the 18<sup>th</sup> century till the fall of the Kalat state in 1948.

While for the purpose of this study nationalism has been taken as a group feeling based on either ethnicity or nation to protect their national and cultural identity or control of their own state. As far as the Baloch nationalism is concerned, it can be taken as both primordial and modern (as discussed in the previous section). The primordial conception of nationalism may be based ethnic-tribal Charteristics because it was viewed by most of the experts of Baloch nationalism that it was developed in a tribal setting until 1970s. Due to a weak nationalistic sentiment among the Baloch tribal leadership, this was propagated and presented the Baloch as an ethnic group by the power elite within the federation. considering it in this context, it can be viewed that the nature of the present Baloch (ethno)national movement is political. Their struggle omitted that traditional demand of the provincial autonomy, shares in resources, socioeconomic and demanded separation from the federation.

## The Baloch and Baluchistan: A Historical Context

The Baloch perceive the *Chakirian* period as their golden age. During this period, the Baloch were able to carve out a nation-state, taking the advantage of chaotic milieu of the seventeenth century where the Mughal Empire was collapsing in the east and the process of decay had begun for the Safavid Dynasty in the west (Dashti, 2012). The inter-tribal clashes between Mir Chakir Rind and Mir Ghuram Lashari (popularly known as the thirty years war of Rind and Lashar) have weakened his rule and the Baloch areas came under control of the Mughal Empire until the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The weakening power of the Mughal in Baloch areas provided an edge to the Baloch tribes to organize and reclaim their previous positions. For instance, Mir Ahmed made successive successions into the plains of Sibi and then followed by Mir Naseer Khan I (1749-1794). During this period, various Baloch tribal confederacies realized the development of nation-state for the Baloch. In Baloch society, the authority was permanently vested under the dominion of different tribal chiefs (Swidler, 1970).

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No doubt, the Baloch share common elements such as language, subjective political consciousness of oneness and a loose political and administrative structure that have always struggled against the foreign domination of various powers in different periods (1839, 1898, 1920s, 1948 till to date) (Talpur, 2020). Prior to the British arrival in Balochistan, it was an independent state under the Khanate of Kalat, however, it was occupied by the British in 1839, Iran in 1928 and Pakistan in 1948 (Breseeg 2004).

As mentioned above, the development of nationalism was the product of industrial revolution and modernization during the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early19<sup>th</sup> century Europe which then emerged as a worldwide movement during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Baloch scholars and the nationalists have realized the notion of nationalism as a means of unifying the people on the basis of European nationalism. The British occupation of Balochistan and its division into Iran and Afghanistan have created a sense of national consciousness on the basis of their shared socio-political and cultural settings to develop a greater national identity for themselves (Ahmed, 2020 & Breseeg, 2004).

## **Baloch Nationalism during the Colonial Era**

During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the British army invaded Balochistan and attempted to occupy the geostrategic lands and the Monora Port (present day Karachi port) and ordered tribal leaders to evacuate and surrender. However, the Kalmati and Hoath Tribal chiefs refused to surrender. Some historians stated, the Hoath tribal leader replied, "I am a Baloch and would prefer to be a martyr than to surrender" (Ejaz, 2017).

The 19<sup>th</sup> century and the great game are marked as bleak period in the Baloch history due to the Russian advancement in Central Asia and the British involvement in Balochistan. British advent and occupation followed amicable (Treaties) and forceful (Invasion) measures in Balochistan. British signed a treaty with Khan of Kalat on 28 March 1839. This treaty guaranteed safe-passage for British carriage at the region of

Balochistan, the British government's carriages would be protected at the route of Dadar, Bolan-Pass, Shal (Quetta) and Kuchlak, or from one frontier to another (Axmann, 2008). At the contrary, misunderstanding arose between Khan of Kalat and the British Government, there were rumors that Khan would deceive British and preparing an attack on British carriages on the route. Therefore, British attacked at Kalat city on 13 November 1839, Khan of Kalat (Mehrab Khan) died resisting British attack or invasion. When Mehrab Khan died, British signed two treaties (Treaty of 1841 and Treaty of 1854) with his son Naseer Khan. The treaty of 1854 was more important because it allowed British to station its troops at any part of the Balochistan, and according to the treaty, British enemies would be deemed as enemies by the Khan of Kalat (Braseeg, 2004). At the effect of the treaty, British introduced *Levy troops* in Baluchistan.

The fourth treaty was signed 08 December 1876, the treaty permitted British agents to remain in court of the Khan and they were empowered to influence any disputes between Khan and Sardars in the region of Balochistan. These treaties changed the dynamics of the political scenario in Balochistan, because British troops were stationed at some parts of the Balochistan, and British was influencing and controlling Khan Court via its agents. The 19<sup>th</sup> century, marked the British advent and influencing Khanate in Balochistan. The 20<sup>th</sup> century witnessed the emergence of Baloch political struggle based on nationalist tendencies. It is evident that Baloch self-consciousness, cultural and historical distinctiveness express Baloch nationalism in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran where they were oppressed, occupied or marginalized. As a consequence, throughout history, their socio-political, economic, cultural, and geographical positions modified in accordance with the prevailing circumstances (Baloch, 1987).

As mentioned by Noraiee, the emergence of nationalistic sentiment in Balochistan can be found in colonial literature which was developed by the British officers and agents (Noraiee 2020). No doubt, there is a lack of documented literature on Baloch history, politics and nationalism, but Balochi oral traditions and poetry present Baloch history, politics and nationalism. Balochi folklores and oral poetry clearly express the socio-political and cultural setting of Baloch. For instance, the 'watan' or mulk (country) is often assimilated in patriotic songs chanted at nationalist gatherings. Thus, the concept of nationalism, if not directly mentioned in the literature, gets reflected through such sentiments in oral poetry or songs (Baloch 2000).

The emergence of modern Baloch nationalism and nationalistic sentiments can be seen in the colonial political exercises in Balochistan during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Noraiee, 2020). The imperial divide of the Baloch

areas to Afghanistan, Iran, British Balochistan and later on Pakistan provoked a sense Baloch-ness and unity among the educated middle class of Kalat and British Balochistan (Khan., Faiz., & Rab 2022). In this period, Baloch nationalism revolved around the traditional and tribal chiefs; and the national movement was led by the dominant Baloch Sardars (Ahmad, 1973; Breseeg., 2002., & Harrison, 1981). This notion has been supported by some scholars that during the 1920s some of the influential Baloch tribal elites (sardars), educated from the British educational institutions, felt that the British was exploiting their land and resources. Abdul Aziz Kurd and Muhammad Sardar Khan Gishkauri who emerged as nationalist leaders, desired for an inclusive form of nationalism with a strong religious attachment (Noraiee 2020).

A sense of political cum tribal nationalism emerged among the weaker faction of the educated Baloch tribal leaders who organized various clandestine political programs such as Young Baloch', 'Anjumane-Itehad-e-Baloch Wa-Baluchistan' the Baloch League etc. These schemes later on were merged and established the Kalat State National Party (KSNP) which was considered as the first organized Baloch political party (Syed, 2007). The main purpose of this move was to put the Baloch nationalism on scientific grounds.

During this period, these educated young minds couldn't participate openly in political activities; however, various secret political organizations 'Young Baloch', 'Anjuman-e-Itehad-e-Baloch Wa-Baluchistan' the Baloch League, KSNP were formed in various. Their leaders were active in mobilizing and using the grievances of the Baloch (Baloch, 1987 & Bizenjo, 2009). The sole purpose of these organizations was to agitate and fight against the British colonialism on one hand, and the oppressive and hegemonic rule of the tribal leaders on the other (Dashti 2012). The Introduction of these political forums were to reform the political structure of Khanate of Kalat, reunification of the Baloch areas, and to struggle for an independent Balochistan (Janmahmad, 1989). These demands were against the will of British, Shamas Shah, the puppet Prime Minister of Kalat, and their coopted tribal chiefs (Khan et al. 2022). The formation of various political schemes marked a secular and non-tribal nationalist struggle in Baluchistan (Bizenjo, 2009).

Harrison (1981) writes that the notion of Baloch nationalism originated due to the atrocities of the Persians. These sufferings further created a sense of brethren and national feeling among the Baloch and Baloch nationalism as a whole (Harrison, 1981). Though the KSNP played the role of a mature political party during this period but could not accomplish the desired objectives (Independent Balochistan) due to the harsh and tight restrictions from the British administration and the

leadership of Kalat state. However, these political programs paved the way for the future endeavor of the Baloch national struggle (Tanner 2019). As obvious from the speech of Mir Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo in the House of Commons which helped in creating an independent Balochistan (shortlived); later was merged with the newly established state of Pakistan.

Baluchistan had a princely status during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Khanate of Kalat had never been a part of the British India that could be treated as part of Pakistan (Baloch 1987). "Treating Balochistan as a state of the erstwhile empire would be explicit violation of the treaty between the Kalat state and the British. The aforementioned treaty is that of 1876 between the Viceroy and Governor General, Lord Lytton, and the Khan of Kalat, Mir Khudadad Khab, which mentioned that the British government would respect the independence of Kalat as long as it would act in subordinate coordination" (Axmann 2008). After the British withdrawal, the independent status of the Khanate of Kalat would be revived under the 1876 agreement (Ahmed & Khan 2020). In this regard, the All-India Muslim League (AIML), leader Muhamad Ali Jinnah, proceeded and supported the case of the State of Kalat to stand independent in the eve of the British withdrawal.

"At a round table conference held in Delhi on 4 August 1947 attended by Lord Mountbatten, the Khan of Kalat, chief minister of Kalat and Jinnah, it was decided that 'Kalat State will be independent enjoying the same status as it originally held in 1838 having friendly relations with its neighbors" (Devasher 2019, p. 78; Kutty 2009). This, however, did not happen. After the establishment of the religious state (Pakistan), the leadership put extensive pressure on the ruler of Kalat, Mir Ahmed Khan to merge his state with the newly established state of Pakistan under the pretext of being a Muslims (Rathore, 2021). The lower house (Dar-ul-Awam) parliament of Kalat State anonymously voted against accession to Pakistan and proposed that both the states ought to be treated as two sovereign and independent states.

Mir Ghous Bakhsh Bazinjo made it clear in his speech in the lower house of the parliament. We can survive without Pakistan. We can remain without Pakistan. We can prosper outside Pakistan. But the question is what Pakistan would be without us ...? If Pakistan wants to treat us as a sovereign people, we are ready to extend the hand of friendship and cooperation. If Pakistan does not agree to do so, flying in the face of democratic principles, such an attitude will be totally unacceptable to us, and if we are forced to accept this fate then every Baloch son will sacrifice his life in defense of his national freedom" (Devasher, 2019, p. 80).

Another popular notion regarding merging Balochistan with Pakistan was due to the ideological engineering of being Muslims.

We are Muslims. But it is not necessary for us, due to our being Muslims, to merge ourselves into others and lose our freedom. If being Muslim is the only criterion for merging into Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan's Islamic Government should also merge into Pakistan. We are not ready to become part of Pakistan at all. We are threatened with death. They want us to sign the death certificate of 10.5 million Baloch people. We cannot commit such a heinous crime of insulting the Baloch nation and then merge it into a non-Baloch nation (Sheikh 2018:52).

Mir Ghous Bakhsh Bazinjo advocated for Baluchistan's independence, claiming Baluchistan's ability to develop without relying on Pakistan. He advocated for the recognition of Balochistan's sovereignty and stated his willingness to establish amicable relations. Rejecting a religious-based political entity, he said that Balochistan would not give up its independence. The address emphasized that merger as an attack on Balochistan's identity and autonomy.

This tragic event also brought about major changes in the Baloch polity. As a consequence, the Baloch have suffered in the hands of the British and the newly established religious state of Pakistan (Dashti 2012:320). The annexation of the Kalat State into Pakistan in 1948 created uncertainties among the Khan and his fellow associates. This move provoked Mir Agha Abdul Karim, the brother of Mir Ahmed Yar Khan (the head of Kalat State) along with his tribal men and revolted in Jhalawan against the Pakistani state to regain the actual status of the Kalat State (Breseeg 2004). The Baloch as a whole resisted against the forceful merger with Pakistan. Contrary to this notion, some scholars believe that it was not a forced merger, rather the Khan willingly joined the newly established religious state of Pakistan (Aslam, 2011). On the commands of the British. There were no options left for the Head of the Kalat state either to join Pakistan or India (Malik 2013). In this state of psychological confrontation, the Khan of Kalat preferred joining Pakistan because it was a Muslim country (Siddigi, 2012).

## The 'Post-Colonial Baloch Nationalist Struggle

The emergence of "post-colonial Baloch nationalism" was not primarily the result of modernization and industrialization, as industrialization had already taken place in Balochistan. Rather, it was based on cultural homogeneity and self-consciousness, as argued by (Gellner, 1983), rather the immemorial historical account is also significant. Historically, nationalistic sentiment among Baloch tribal leaders has always existed when a "high culture" (such as the British and now Pakistan) dominated or even replaced a "low culture" (Harrison 1981). Most post-colonial states, including Pakistan, have witnessed this

phenomenon. In Pakistan's case, religious or Islamic culture (as the "high culture") and nationalism have been used as the basis for national (Muslim) identity. Therefore, the emergence of post-colonial Baloch nationalism cannot be attributed to the merging of Balochistan with the newly established Muslim state (Pakistan) on the pretext of being a Muslim state, as advocated by religious nationalism (Sheikh, 2019.).

Baloch resisted on two grounds, politically (anonymously rejecting the accession proposal of Muhammad Ali Jinnah)<sup>‡</sup> and militarily (Agha Abdul Karim armed struggle 1948), believing that their centuries old cultural and national identity has snuffed. Even this notion is very much dominant in the subconscious of the Baloch which led periodic conflicts and resistance (1950s, 1960s, 1970s, and 2000s till date) with the state of Pakistan.

The emergence of Baloch nationalism in a tribal setting has influenced the post partitioned Baloch nationalism. Since the forceful merger of Kalat State, the Baloch nationalism and nationalist struggle has been dominated mainly by the influential tribal chiefs. For instance, the merger of Kalat state led to an armed resistance by the brother of the Khan of Kalat in 1948 to pressurize Pakistan for establishing the ex-princely status of his elder brother Mir Ahmed Yar Khan, the ruler of the Kalat (Bansal, 2008). This act of Abdul Karim was glorified as the first Baloch War of Liberation and National Self-determination against the state of Pakistan (Axmann, 2008). Even prince Karim travelled to Afghanistan for assistance against Pakistan. However, this resistance couldn't succeed in accomplishing its objectives and re-positioning of the Mir Ahmed Yar Khan due to lack of support from Afghanistan (Kutty, 2009). The Afghanistan leadership feared that the anticipated support to Baloch may lead to the demand of Greater Balochistan which was contrary to the Afghan interests (Ahmed, 2020).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>‡</sup> The member of Lower House, Mir Ghous Bakhsh (Baba-e- Balochistan) addressed the Dewan in these words,

<sup>&</sup>quot;We have a distinct civilization. We have a separate culture like that of Iran and Afghanistan. We are Muslim of our own sake, but it does not necessary that by virtue of being Muslim, we should lose our freedom and merge with others. If mere fact is that we are Muslim to require to join Pakistan, then Iran and Afghanistan should also amalgamate with Pakistan ... The British conquered Asia through the force of sword. They also subjugated our homeland, but we never accepted their authority. We resisted their cruel and oppressive rule... We initiated to talks on many matters to Pakistan, but Pakistan refused to have talks and wanted prostration before them ... We are ready to have friendship with that country but by no means ready to merge with Pakistan. How can we humiliate the Baloch nation and sign death warrant of fifteen million Asian Baloch?"

In 1952, the government of Pakistan established the Balochistan State Unions (BSU) and appointed Mir Ahmed Khan as the Khan (Khan et.al, 2021). However, BSU was amalgamated with the province of West Pakistan in 1955. The nominal status of Kalat State vanished from the political scene of the region when one-unit scheme was introduced in Pakistan in 1955. The centralized policies of the ruling elite, in the form of the One Unit scheme, aimed at assimilating Baloch cultural and national identity into West Pakistan under Punjabi domination (Ahmed, 1998; Baloch, 1980 & Devasher, 2019).

There was a rumor that Khan, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan, was working and planning to revive the status of Kalat State. However, the military leadership did not allow Khan to revive his rule over Kalat. In 1957, the Kalat state was attacked, and Khan was arrested on sedition charges. The status and esteem of the Khan was very high in traditional tribal structure in Baluchistan, Nawab Noroz Khan deemed it (attack on Kalat and putting Khan in jail) as an insult against Baloch. Which resulted in an armed struggle (1958-1960) led by a 90-year-old man, Babo Nawab Noroz Khan, to restore the status of the Kalat State, the armed struggle was not succeeded to revive Kalat State.

Similarly, state policies towards tribal leaders were ambiguous and lacked trust during the 1960s and 70s. For example, in the 1960s, General Ayub Khan replaced Akbar Bugti, Ataullah Mengal, and Nawab Khair Bakhsh from their hereditary titles (Sardars and Nawabs), which resulted in support for the Parraris (Kutty, 2009). A low insurgency (1962-1969) continued until the abolishment of the One Unit and the formation of Balochistan as a province. After the 1970 elections, the National Awami Party (NAP) and Jamiat Ulma Islam (JUI) coalition government was established in Balochistan (Kiran, 2016). However, the provincial government soon encountered two major challenges: the discriminatory attitude of the central government and the tribal-oriented elite, backed by the central government (Titus & Swidler, 2000). The Balochistan government demanded greater autonomy in provincial political and economic matters. Despite fulfilling the genuine demands of the government, the central government dismissed the NAP-JUI coalition government in 1973(Bansal, 2010), citing its alleged support for Baloch nationalists operating in Balochistan (Sheikh, 2018). The veteran leader of the NAP, Sardar Ataullah Mengal, argued that the federal government never regarded the people of Balochistan as equal citizens of the country, but instead treated them as lesser citizens. The Baloch middle class,

including tribal leaders, considered themselves to be subaltern in the federal setting (Ahmed, 2020). Such an attitude among state policymakers towards Balochistan generated a sense of mistrust, deprivation, and marginalization among the Baloch in general, and tribal leaders in particular. They firmly believed that there was no room for Baloch in the domain of federation where the ruling elite was Punjabi fascist (Harrison, 1981).

During these occasions, the underpinnings of Baloch nationalism were unclear and lacked a clear connotation due to the nature of Baloch society. Although nationalistic sentiments existed among the Baloch educated class, various schemes and programs, such as Ustman Gul' Chingari, Warna Waninda Gal, the Educated Youth Forum, and the Baloch Student Educational Organization (BSEO), were formed to bring political consciousness among the Baloch (Usman, 2016). These forums tried to mobilize the Baloch to establish a province (Balochistan) merging all the Baloch regions and to safeguard Baloch culture and identity within the Pakistani federation (Breseeg, 2004).

From the 1950s onwards, the Baloch nationalism and national movement took two forms: one believed in re-establishing Baloch identity and statehood through violent means, such as armed struggle. This group consisted mainly of tribal leaders and their supporters, who were the primary beneficiaries in Balochistan (Khan, 2014). They were in direct confrontation with the state. The other faction focused mainly on the constitutional makeup, consisting of the common masses and an educated middle class who were nurtured by British institutions. The latter faction was primarily an educated class that initiated a struggle to revive the cultural and literary aspects of Baloch society. The emphasis of this class was to develop literary works on language, literature, history, culture, and Baloch identity (Baloch, 1987). For example, among the literary works were Mahtak Balochi (The weekly Balochi), Ulus (people), Labzak Balochi, Quetta Academy, and so forth, which gave new spirit to the Balochi language (Noraiee, 2020). The ordinary and educated middle class formed various literary and educational forums to develop an interest among youngsters in their culture and identity, with education being the top priority (Slimbach, 1996).

A great deal of literature was produced on Baloch nationalism, as symbolized and depicted in the poetry and other literary works of Baloch writers such as Mir Gul Khan Naseer, Atta Shad, and Azad Jamaludini. They formed a movement called 'Latt Khana', which considered the

sardars associated with state authorities to be "oppressors" and "bloodsuckers" of ordinary Baloch and a threat to their freedom. Undoubtedly, these influential tribal leaders considered themselves champions of Baloch rights and freedoms (Jamaludini, 1985; Naseer, 2011).

From 1948 to the 1970s, Baloch nationalism was tribal-centric rather than being explicitly owned by the common masses. Most of their demands were related to the restoration of Kalat state, and if not, the creation of Balochistan as a province. However, there was a lack of clear motives and directions regarding the future course of Baloch and Balochistan. Similarly, Pakistani leadership tried to exploit existing differences among tribal leaders during the 1970s, which prevented the Baloch leadership from developing an exclusive national movement to form their own state. For instance, a popular debate among Baloch leadership, including the educated class, emerged regarding the Baloch national question among prominent nationalist leaders Mir Ghous Bakhsh, Nawab Khair Bakhsh (KB), and Attaullah Mengal (Kiran, 2016). Mir suggested the notion of pacifism while dealing with the Baloch problem. Mengal, on the other hand, advocated for a balanced approach, stating that armed struggle should be ended due to the crumbling resistance, and restated with much strength. Contrary to Mengal and Bezinjo, Khair Bakhsh advocated that the resistance should be continued and that it was the only solution to the Baloch national question (Janmahmad, 1989).

During the 1980s and 1990s, there was political fragmentation among Baloch political leaders, including the educated class. Their struggle for Baloch rights and freedom was fought on two fronts: one group believed in protecting Baloch rights within the constitutional framework, including prominent figures such as Ghous Bakhsh, Akhtar Mengal, Nawab Akbar, Dr. Abdul Hai, and Dr. Abdul Malik, who were active in mainstream politics. The other group was led by Fida Baloch and consisted of the educated class. Baloch formed the Baloch National Youth Movement (BYNM) with the aim of achieving complete freedom from slavery. This group was the brainchild of Nawab Khair Bakhsh and emerged as a force that directly challenged state authority through their circles and programs, mobilizing Baloch youth and students for the Baloch cause (Usman, 2016).

After his return from Afghanistan in the early nineties, Khair Bakhsh led a group of young, energetic, and committed leaders who worked to reorganize old nationalist colleagues, mobilize students, and

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create socio-political consciousness across Balochistan. Marri, one of the leaders in this movement, was clear in his stance that it was impossible to liberate Balochistan and defeat Pakistani fascism without armed struggle (Tareen, Asaap, 2007). He formed a political forum known as *Haq Tawar* (HT) to organize political and educational circles in various parts of Balochistan. He had close contact with hardline nationalists and became the leader of both the hardline nationalists and the youth (Sabir, 2011). During this period, KB's leadership categorically stated that Baloch nationalism and nationalist leaders should not avoid federal politics, which would not guarantee Baloch rights. Instead, he preferred a full-fledged armed struggle with modern strategies for Baloch nationalism and national struggle (Baloch, 2003).

The educated middle and lower middle class were politically conscious and educationally well-aware of the prevailing political scene in Pakistan, particularly in Balochistan. Since then, Baloch nationalism has been divided into two factions: one that believes struggling with the federation would better serve Baloch interests, and the other that believes armed struggle would guarantee the re-establishment of their own statehood and independence.

## Baloch (ethno) Nationalism from Tribalism to Common Masses (Mass Movement)

The Baloch nationalism can be categorized into two strands: nationalists and federalists. The nationalists believe in establishing their own state through coercive use of force, by means of armed struggle, which they view as the only way. They see the state as having directly caused the systematic submergence of Baloch cultural and national identity, as well as their exploitation and marginalization in the sociopolitical and economic spheres. The federalists, on the other hand, strive to get a just share in the distribution of resources and maximum provincial autonomy within the federation of Pakistan (Ahmed, 2020).

Similarly, Tilak (2019) further explains that Baloch nationalism emerged since the partition and accession with Pakistan, due to the unwillingness of the Khans. Since then, successive governments' policies have further strengthened Baloch nationalism. The Baloch nationalists realized that the federal government has deliberately neglected Balochistan and treated the Baloch as second-class citizens. Lack of political and bureaucratic representation, under-representation in the army, economic exploitation, and socio-economic deprivation have added

to their grievances. Thus, Baloch nationalism is the byproduct of these socio-political and economic inequalities (Devasher, 2019). Similarly, Baloch federalists and parliamentary nationalists, including tribal leadership, have propagated the same narrative in the mainstream either to secure a political position in the provincial spectrum or to remain in their good books. However, the current phase of Baloch nationalism has not emerged due to socio-economic underdevelopment caused by the state or led by the tribal leaders. Rather, it is led by the ordinary Baloch masses (Bansal, 2008). Although previous insurgencies were mainly led by tribal chiefs and their associates, it is evident that presently, Baloch nationalism is holistic, all-encompassing, and led by both influential tribal sardars and common masses (Ahmad, 2014).

"As Mahvish Ahmad has argued, the movement has transformed from one led by sardars, or tribal leaders, to one spearheaded and populated by a non-tribal cohort of middle-class Baloch. Nazar's leadership exemplifies the shift of the movement's epicenter from Balochistan's northeast – home to the Marris and Bugtis and known for its longstanding separatist sentiments – to the remittance-rich, urbanizing south, which is home to a burgeoning educated and professional class that has historically remained on the sidelines of the province's politics" (Ahmed, 2014).

His lower-middle-class background and politically conscious approach have brought a drastic shift not only in the nationalistic sentiments of the common Baloch but also during the national struggle. His commitment to the Baloch question encouraged the young and educated segment of the Baloch to greatly participate in the movement, whether they are from a tribal or common background (Talpur, 2020).

The centralist political parties, including the National Party (NP) of Dr. Malik and the Balochistan National Party Mengal (BNP) of Akhtar Mengal, have opposed the single agenda and demand of a sovereign Balochistan. In their election manifestos, they propagated provincial autonomy, socio-economic development, share in resources, release of mission persons, etc., as the core demands of the Baloch. Dr. Malik, being a bourgeoisie middle class and more inclined to the nationalist groups, would play a constructive role by negotiating with them and diffusing the insurgents' strength. Likewise, Akhtar Mengal played the card of his six points (an old mantra) to gain sympathy from the nationalists, insurgents, and the public (Hassan, 2019).

However, their stance has been rejected by the hardline nationalists, who term their rule as only benefiting the salaried class and extending the exploitative policies of the central government (Baloch, 2020). The demand of the Baloch nation is neither participation in the electoral process nor greater autonomy and maximum share in natural resources; it is, however, complete independence from Pakistan (Ahmad, 2014). The fifth phase of the Baloch resistance is primarily based on independence, rather than provincial autonomy or the right to self-determination, and is undertaken clandestinely through guerrilla warfare. There is strong support from ordinary Baloch, including former members of the Baloch Student Organizations (Barakzai, 2009 & Bansal, 2010).

# Is Baloch Nationalism Product of Modernization, Marginalization, Deprivation, State Oppression or Foreign Projection?

As discussed in detail in the previous section, the rise of Baloch nationalism was not directly linked with modernization; rather, it emerged in an unurbanized setup where modernization and industrialization were hardly seen in Balochistan (Ahmed, 2020). Nationalist sentiments were deeply rooted in the immemorial and historical past based on cultural homogeneity and territorial ground. No doubt, modernization, urbanization, marginalization, state oppression, and foreign factors contributed to the transformation of present-day Baloch national struggle. Another factor that contributed to the current phase of Baloch nationalism is the persistent socio-political, economic, and administrative marginalization from successive civil and military regimes (Sheikh, 2018).

Although the democratic government of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Nawaz Sharif announced economic packages and political schemes to ease the long-lasting economic neglect and political injustices to Baloch nationalists in the shape of Aghaz-e-Haqooq Baluchistan Package, 7th National Finance Commission (NFC) award, 18th constitutional amendment, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and other infrastructure developmental projects, these programs were blatantly rejected by the hardline nationalists (Bansal, 2010). The insurgents consider these schemes as nothing but appeasement of their self-styled political elite and tribal chiefs. As explicitly stated by Sardar Attaullah Mengal in a press conference, the Baloch are socio-politically conscious, and now they have reached a point of no return. Most of the hardline Baloch nationalists, including Dr. Allah Nazar (in various interviews and social media forums), termed these political schemes and

developmental projects as nothing but designs and means of expansion to sustain their influence in Baluchistan (Anon, 2021).

The state response, on the other hand, in terms of a centralized political and administrative set up, successive military operations, increasing militarization in the name of security (mostly in Baloch areas), abducting and extra-judicial killing of prominent Baloch political leaders, activists, and students (Samad, 2014), bans on political gatherings, and movements of students and so forth, have spillover effects to overcome their maneuvers. These have spurred further support for the Baloch insurgents (Ahmad, 2014).

Another popular (official) discourse or conspiracy prevalent regarding the Baloch national struggle is the foreign projection or support from the United States and India. These states are extending support to the insurgents to disintegrate Pakistan to have an influence in the region to expand their influence on Central Asian energy resources. The political elite of the center, as well as in the province, confidently state that a small number of 'miscreants' are funded by the enemies of Pakistan and are working under their footprints (Ahmad 2014; Bansal 2008; Devasher 2019).

The provincial government in Balochistan claims that around forty camps are being operated by the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) in Balochistan (Siddiqa, 2005). There have also been allegations of Indian agencies being involved in proxy conflicts on the Pak-Afghan borders. Similarly, Iran has been accused of providing clandestine support to the insurgent operation on the Pak-Iran border to disrupt the construction of the Gwadar Port. Since the development of Gwadar Port would reduce the geo-strategic importance of the Iranian Chabahar Port, which is being developed with the help of India (Saedi et al. 2005). However, there is no concrete proof to support these claims. As Pakistan's intelligence is considered to be one of the top agencies in the world, it is difficult to believe that a country's soil could be used for anti-state activities.

Moreover, the intelligence agencies in Islamabad and government circles in Quetta estimate the monthly expenses of Baloch Liberation Army (BLA)'s operations to be between 40 and 90 million rupees, respectively. This is a huge figure that seems incorrect. What about the other organizations? The structural organization and clear targets of the BLA, Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), and others indicate that their members are well-trained and equipped with modern weapons and have

support from foreign countries (Bansal, 2008). However, representatives of these organizations have denied these claims on many occasions through their social media accounts.

#### Conclusion

Pakistan has been facing continuous resistance from Balochistan since its inception. The notion of Baloch resistance and nationalism has been deeply ingrained in their ancient past, prior to colonial and post-colonial ups and downs. However, colonial and post-colonial oppressive and discriminatory policies have accelerated nationalistic sentiments among the Baloch political and tribal leaderships. In this regard, most scholars believe that Baloch nationalism emerged within a tribal setting. This can be true in the sense that, due to a lack of modernization and institutionalization in Balochistan during the early colonial period, the Baloch leadership could not develop an all-encompassing nationalistic approach.

During the 1920s, a group of mini-tribal leaders who had received education from British institutions became politically conscious and educationally aware of their socio-political rights and preserving their cultural and national identity brought about some modifications within the nationalistic feeling by mobilizing the masses. This mobilization greatly contributed to post-colonial Baloch nationalism and sparked a new spirit in the Baloch national movement.

As mentioned in the previous section, the previous four resistance and armed struggles of post-partition were primarily tribal-centric because nationalist notions revolved around preserving national cum tribal authority within Balochistan. This proved destructive with respect to the Baloch national cause. Similarly, the Pakistani ruling elite further extended support to "good tribal heads" in widening the existing gap of marginalization between the common Baloch and the provincial tribal elites. This unjust and exploitative policy of successive central governments and the provincial tribal elites created a sense of consciousness among the younger generation.

The educated group, under the leadership of Khair Bakhsh Marri, started awareness campaigns and educational circles to mobilize Baloch youth regarding the state's discriminatory attitudes and ways to rid themselves of it. This mobilization brought a drastic change in the nationalist sentiments of the Baloch educated middle and lower-middle class and transformed the Baloch nationalist and resistant movement from tribalism to common masses. Similarly, the increasing militarization,

abductions of members of political and education wings (as well as ordinary Baloch), extrajudicial killings, and many more also contributed to this transformation. The nature of the current phase of Baloch resistance is protective and multifaceted, and divided into different factions, with the motive of an independent Balochistan. This not only threatens developmental projects in the province but also poses a serious threat to the country's federal structure.

The persistent attacks on state machineries and paramilitary forces across Balochistan have compelled the ruling elite, both at the central and provincial levels, to further compliance with strict military actions. The state response, in this regard, seems quite oppressive and brutal in protecting its state-centered development projects and providing state-of-the-art security to the army and paramilitary forces in Balochistan. Now, the state and its central leadership must seriously realize and ponder the Baloch question so that it is not too late to deal with.

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