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From Khans to Rebels: A Historical Approach to Analysing the Balochistan Conflict

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BA Policy, Politics and Economics
May 2024

Abstract

This dissertation explores the history and socio-political dynamics of the Balochistan conflict in Pakistan, focusing on the recurrent uprisings and their implications for regional stability and national integrity. Through a detailed historical analysis, the study traces the origins and evolution of Baloch nationalism from the Khanate of Kalat to the present-day conflicts, highlighting the persistent themes of marginalisation, exploitation, repression, and autonomy. The research illustrates how these themes have been exacerbated by external geopolitical interests and internal tribal dynamics, leading to a cyclical pattern of conflict characterised by phases of uprising and repression. The dissertation employs a comprehensive review of historical documents, contemporary reports, and academic literature to construct a narrative that is rich in historical context and relevant to current events. By identifying and analysing the socio-political themes that have shaped the Balochistan conflict, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the complexities involved and suggests potential pathways for resolution. The findings advocate for a multi-faceted approach to address the underlying issues, emphasising political representation, economic redistribution, demilitarisation, and regional diplomacy. This research underscores the importance of addressing historical grievances to foster a peaceful and prosperous Balochistan, which could stabilise and strengthen Pakistan's position in the region.

Contents

Note on Transliteration

Before 1990, the English transliteration of the ethnonym "Baloch" was spelt a myriad of ways - "Baluch", "Baloch", "Belooch", and "Biloch" - the most common being "Baluch". In 1990, the provincial government of Pakistani Balochistan decreed that the official English spelling was "Baloch", which has become the accepted standard in Pakistan. I have opted for this spelling. All occurrences of the term in this dissertation, except when used as the name for an individual or organisation, in the title of a book, or in a direct quotation, have been standardised.

List of Abbreviations

AGG – Agent to the Governor-General

AIBB – Anjuman-e-Ittehad-e-Balochan-wa-Balochistan

AIML – All-India Muslim League

BLA – Balochistan Liberation Army

BLF – Balochistan Liberation Front

BNLF – Balochistan National Liberation Front

BRA – Baloch Republican Army

BRAS – Baloch Raaji Ajoi Sangar

BRI – Belt and Road Initiative

BSU – Balochistan States Union

CCP – Chief Commissioner's Province

CPEC – China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

EIC – East India Company

FC – Frontier Corps

HDI – Human Development Index

INC – Indian National Congress

ISK – Islamic State Khorasan

JUI – Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam

KSNP – Kalat State National Party

NAP – National Awami Party

NWFP – North-West Frontier Province

PPP – Pakistan People's Party

TTP – Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan

UBA – United Baloch Army

Introduction

"The Pakistani state claims that we are against it, but the truth is that it is the state that is against us."

— Mahrang Baloch, 2024

On the 26th April 2022, thirty-year-old postgraduate student and mother of two, Shari Baloch, detonated a bomb outside the University of Karachi's Confucius Institute, killing herself, three Chinese nationals and their Pakistani driver while injuring four others (Baloch & Notezai, 2022). Sadly, such incidents are nothing new to the people of Pakistan. In 2022 alone, there were 298 terror attacks in Pakistan, resulting in more terror-related deaths than Iraq and Syria combined (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2023, pp. 20-30). However, what is intriguing about this particular attack is the group behind it and what it tells us about the country's increasingly precarious security situation.

Given the legacy of the War on Terror, one would be forgiven for thinking the group responsible for the attack was of the Islamist variety, such as the notorious Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan (TTP) or the infamous Islamic State Khorasan (ISK). Surprisingly, it was neither. It was the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), a group wholly unknown to the Western public yet was the world's fourth most-deadliest terrorist group in 2022, ranking above both TTP and ISK (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2023, p. 12). But what exactly does the BLA want? To answer this question, we must first understand what Balochistan is and what it means to Pakistan.

Located on the south-eastern coast of the Iranian Plateau, Balochistan – like many other regions carved up by the old imperial powers – is a nation straddled between three countries: Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Most of the region is in Pakistan, where it stands out as the

country's largest province, making up 44% of Pakistan's land mass yet only a sparse 6% of its population (Government of Pakistan, 2022). However, far from being a forgotten backwater, Balochistan remains the centrepiece of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), itself the centrepiece of China's Belt and Road Initiative, thanks to its rich mineral wealth and strategic location on the Arabian Sea. Therefore, to Pakistan, Balochistan represents an opportunity to revolutionise a fledgling economy crippled by rising debt and endemic corruption. Without Balochistan, Pakistan is without a future.

For all its promise, why is Balochistan plagued by the BLA? The short answer is nationalism driven by inequality. Despite being a cash cow for foreign investors, Balochistan has forever remained Pakistan's most underdeveloped province, with a Human Development Index (HDI) of 0.473 compared to the national average of 0.570 (Pasha, et al., 2020, pp. 1-17). It is this blatant inequality that has continued to fuel the fires of separatism for the BLA, a group founded for the express purpose of freeing Balochistan from what they view as Pakistan's colonising grip.

On the 2nd February 2022, the BLA conducted a coordinated attack on two Pakistani military outposts in Panjgur and Noshki in what may have been 2022's deadliest terrorist attack (Al-Jazeera, 2022; Institute for Economics & Peace, 2023, p. 10). I say "may have been" as the BLA claims to have killed over 195 military personnel, while the Pakistani military maintains only a single soldier was killed in the attacks (Marino, 2022). Of course, without an independent investigation and with both sides having good reasons to inflate or deflate the death toll, it is hard to tell exactly how many were killed. What is certain, however, is that in the last two years, the BLA has risen to become Pakistan's biggest security threat. Bad news for a nuclear-armed country already known for its hostile borders with India and Afghanistan.

Balochistan's CPEC investments and abundant resources have the potential to make Pakistan a serious contender in international trade. Meanwhile, if left unaddressed, Balochistan's poor social development and violent nationalist movements run the risk of breaking the country apart. Simply put, Balochistan is Pakistan's make-or-break. Therefore, it is incumbent upon political scientists to familiarise themselves with the Balochistan conflict so that viable solutions may be devised to solve this flashpoint in global politics.

Most nationalism studies in the field of political science have a narrow focus on contemporary implications, overlooking the rich historical contexts critical for a comprehensive understanding of the complex and contingent origins of nationalist movements (Mylonas & Tudor, 2021). To remedy this shortcoming, this dissertation utilises a historical approach to analyse Baloch nationalism by retracing key moments in Balochistan's history to see which socio-political themes naturally arise from the historical narrative. By placing history at the forefront, this study hopes to give readers a deeper contextual understanding of the Balochistan conflict and the broader socio-political dynamics within Pakistan.

Chapters one to four focus on Balochistan's pre-Pakistani history, adding much-needed context to the later post-colonial conflicts. Chapter one traces the rise and fall of the Khanate of Kalat – the de-jure state of the Baloch nationalists – highlighting the dynamics of tribal leadership and external influences. Chapter two examines the strategic imposition of British control through four critical treaties, shaping Balochistan's political landscape under colonial rule. Chapter three describes the establishment and administration of the Balochistan Agency, illustrating the territorial dissection of the Khanate and British efforts to manipulate Baloch tribal structures. Chapter four details the emergence of Baloch nationalism within the broader Indian nationalist movement, highlighting key figures and ideological divisions.

Chapters five to nine focus on the five major Baloch uprisings in 1948, 1958, 1963, 1973 and 2005. Chapter five discusses the immediate post-partition conflict, catalysed by disputes over the Khanate's accession. Chapter six focuses on the outbreak of the second Baloch uprising, driven by centralisation policies like the One Unit Scheme. Chapter seven chronicles the organised guerrilla warfare of the 1960s, reflecting growing Marxist-Leninist influences and increased militarisation in response to state oppression. Chapter eight analyses the intense violence of the 1970s, triggered by political machinations and allegations of conspiracy, eliciting a widespread military crackdown. Finally, chapter nine describes the ongoing conflict ignited in 2005 due to unresolved grievances over political representation, economic exploitation, and military repression.

Chapter One: The Khanate of Kalat

Balochistan's position as a region divided is nothing new. For most of its history, Balochistan has served as the frontier of empires, a gateway for invaders moving in and out of India thanks to its geostrategic location between the Hindu Kush and Arabian Sea. In ancient times, Alexander the Great passed through Balochistan on his retreat from India, and the region soon found itself contested between the Seleucid and Mauryan Empires (Axmann, 2009, p. 18). A millennia later, Balochistan was under Muslim rule after the Rashidun Caliphate conquered the region from the Sassanians in the mid-seventh century, converting the Baloch to Islam. Control over the region then passed from one Turko-Iranian dynasty to the other until the Mongols reached the Makran coast during the early thirteenth century (Dashti, 2012, pp. 63-113).

After the Mongols came the Timurids, and from the early sixteenth century onwards, Balochistan bounced between the Safavids of Iran and the Mughals of India as they fought over the city of Kandahar (Dale, 2009; Hodgson, 1977; Streusand, 2011). However, this all began to change when, in 1666, a coalition of Baloch tribes conquered the town of Kalat and subsequently nominated Ahmad Khan I (r. 1666 – 1695 CE) as their leader (Dashti, 2012, pp. 153-154). In time, Ahmad Khan I and his descendants, the Ahmadzai, would transform this coalition of Baloch tribes into the first Baloch state, the Khanate of Kalat. Anthropologist Nina Swidler splits the history of the Khanate into three distinct periods: confederation, consolidation and crisis (Swidler, 1992; 2014).

The confederation period, from 1666 to 1740, was marked by the gradual transformation of military leaders and their followers into tribes headed by sardars, with each new tribe asserting a charter based on genealogies and grazing rights as well as allegiance to the Ahmadzai. The Khanate's continuing existence resulted from the acceptance and mutual

acknowledgement of these claims. However, despite the Ahmadzai dynasty's place at the centre of the confederacy, the khan-sardar relationship remained "fluid and fragile" (Swidler, 1992, p. 557). The sardars exercised considerable independence, often acting as power brokers in succession crises and appealing to authorities outside the Khanate for support in factional disputes. For instance, in 1736, sardar supporters of Muhabbat Khan (r. 1736 – 1749 CE) successfully petitioned the Afsharid emperor Nader Shah to have him reinstated as khan (Dashti, 2012, p. 169). Simply put, the early Khanate was "essentially a very porous confederacy" where "common interests constrained chronic factionalism to produce a minimal but crucial degree of solidarity" (Swidler, 1992, pp. 557-558).

Throughout the consolidation period, from 1740 to 1800, Nasir Khan I (r. 1749–1794 CE) introduced many new reforms to centralise power (Dashti, 2012, pp. 179-185). Most notably, he established new military contingents under his direct command and instituted an internal hierarchy among the sardars. This hierarchy was symbolised by the honours and gifts Nasir Khan I bestowed upon them. For instance, the prestigious Sardar-i-Sarawan and Sardar-i-Jhalawan would sit beside him in council, receiving all manner of rich gifts, from golden daggers to brocaded cloth (Baluchistan District Gazetteers, 1907, p. 112). The further down the hierarchy, the lower the quality of honours and gifts. Nasir Khan I also bestowed land grants on the most loyal sardars, who in turn distributed overlord rights among their primary sections. By following this programme of consolidation, Nasir Khan I "transformed the fluid hierarchy of the confederacy into an institutionalised ranking centred upon himself" (Swidler, 1992, p. 559).

Overall, Nasir Khan I's reign signified the golden age of the Khanate of Kalat. He established a relatively stable alliance with the Durrani Empire in 1757, guaranteeing the Khanate's independence (Dashti, 2012, p. 174). This allowed him to focus his attention on the southern borders, which he expanded to the Khanate's greatest territorial extent, stretching from the

Strait of Hormuz in the east to Dera Ismail Khan in the west (See Appendix I) (Baloch, 1987, p. 287). These borders generally correlate with what Baloch nationalists refer to as 'Greater Balochistan' (See Appendix II) and the modern geographical spread of the Baloch people (See Appendix III) (Breseeg, 2001, p. 172; Harrison, 1981). Furthermore, in 1784, he extended the Khanate's influence beyond its borders by granting the port of Gwadar to Sultan bin Ahmad, the future ruler of the Sultanate of Oman (Dashti, 2012, p. 187; Nicolini, 2002). The Khanate was now, in effect, a fully-fledged sovereign state.

During the crisis period, from 1800 to 1840, the Ahmadzai khans were reduced to figureheads, much like the Mughal emperor in Delhi; everyone pledged allegiance to them, yet their actual authority seldom extended beyond their private holdings. Without the personal authority of Nasir Khan I to hold the Khanate together, the Ahmadzai khans became increasingly dependent on their advisors to make up for their dwindling support among the sardars. These advisors usually came from non-Baloch, non-tribal backgrounds and "operated according to a political model premised on greater power and authority than the khans in fact possessed", thereby widening the gap in the already tenuous khan-sardar relationship (Dashti, 2012, pp. 204-206; Swidler, 2014, p. 561). As a result, the Khanate was thrown into rapid decline under the reigns of Mahmud Khan (r. 1794 – 1817 CE) and Mehrab Khan II (1817 – 1839 CE): the Durrani Empire occupied the region of Derajat, Karachi was possessed by the Baloch Talpur dynasty of Sindh, and virtually all the western Baloch tribes had ceased paying taxes to the khan (Breseeg, 2001, p. 123; Dashti, 2012, pp. 190-197).

The khans' tributary income significantly declined in the face of territorial loss, and trade flow began to slow due to the resulting instability. These changing political-economic conditions resulted in a high degree of tribal autonomy, with "each sardar being in some ways a petty khan, each exercising a monopoly on trade and taxation within his territory" (Swidler, 1992, p. 562). With greater tribal autonomy came greater responsibilities, and the sardars

soon found themselves “administering estates, negotiating disputes between tribesmen, shopkeepers, and peasants, and dispensing patronage” (Swidler, 1992, p. 563). To this day, the sardars still possess a considerable degree of influence and have played a significant role in the recurrent uprisings against the Pakistani state.

Despite their newfound autonomy, the sardars still nominally recognised the khan as their sovereign and “although sardari factions sometimes supported opposing candidates for the khanship, they never challenged the Ahmadzai right to the office” (Swidler, 1992, p. 563). Of course, this recognition didn’t mean everything was sunshine and rainbows. By the end of the crisis period, the Khanate was rife with internal disputes – several important sardars had been assassinated, and many of the tribes were in revolt – leaving the door open for British interference (Ahmed, et al., 2022; Dashti, 2012, pp. 190-197).

The Khanate of Kalat serves as the de-jure state of the Baloch nationalist narrative. Its history reveals a complex interplay of tribal dynamics and geopolitical interest, underscoring the challenges faced by a nascent state in maintaining sovereignty amidst powerful neighbours and domestic factionalism. The establishment, consolidation, and subsequent crisis of the Khanate elucidate how internal divisions and external influences have long shaped Balochistan’s political landscape, illustrating early forms of marginalisation, a recurring socio-political theme.

Chapter Two: The Four Treaties

In 1608, a small group of British traders known as the East India Company (EIC) landed at the port of Surat. Over the next two centuries, the EIC grew into the largest corporation the world had ever seen, ruling over large swathes of the Indian Subcontinent and fielding its own private army of Indian sepoys led by British officers (Dalrymple, 2006; 2019; Robins, 2012). By 1840, almost the entirety of South Asia was under British control, save for the north-western regions of Balochistan, Punjab and Afghanistan. These north-western regions soon found themselves embroiled in what would come to be popularly known as 'the Great Game': the nineteenth-century rivalry between Britain and Russia for influence over Central Asia (Hamm, 2013; Ingram, 1980).

British supremacy over Balochistan took place in stages through the signing of four key treaties between the Khanate of Kalat and the British government: the 1839 and 1841 Treaties of Kalat, the 1854 Treaty of Mastung, and the 1876 Treaty of Jacobabad (Heathcote, 2015, pp. 251-257). If the crisis period was the Khanate's death rattle, these four treaties were the nails in its coffin.

In fear of Russian expansion, the British launched the First Anglo-Afghan War in late 1838 to reinstall Shah Shuja Durrani upon the Afghan throne (Dalrymple, 2013). The logic was simple: British India would sleep much easier with a friendly state on its north-western frontier. As such, establishing safe passage through Balochistan, and more specifically, the Bolan Pass, became a critical strategic goal of the British, culminating in the first Treaty of Kalat on the 28th March 1839 (Dashti, 2012, pp. 198-204; Heathcote, 2015, pp. 43-44).

The treaty recognised the Ahmadzai as "the masters of their country" yet required them to pay homage to Shah Shuja Durrani, thereby making the Khanate a vassal of Afghanistan once again (Heathcote, 2015, pp. 251-252). Given that Shah Shuja Durrani owed his position to the

British Government, the Khanate was now effectively within the British sphere of influence. As part of this new arrangement, the Khanate was required to provide safe passage to the British in exchange for an annual subsidy of 150,000 rupees. Unfortunately, internal corruption and crumbling authority within the Khanate meant Mehrab Khan II was unable to stop Baloch raiders from attacking British convoys, prompting the British to unilaterally annul the treaty (Dashti, 2012, pp. 204-208; Heathcote, 2015, pp. 44-45).

On their return from Afghanistan, the British invaded Kalat on the 13th November, 1839, killing Mehrab Khan II in the ensuing chaos (Holdsworth, 1840, pp. 106-138). The British subsequently granted parts of Kachhi and Sarawan to Afghanistan, strengthening their new buffer state, and placed Shah Nawaz Khan (r. 1839 – 1840 CE) on the Khanate's throne, disgruntling many of the sardars who considered him to be illegitimate. This resulted in several uprisings across the Khanate, most notably in the Marri-Bugti tribal areas. On 25th July 1840, a coalition of sardars led by Nasir Khan II (r. 1840 – 1857 CE) liberated Kalat, recognising him as the new khan. Then, after three months of stalemate, the British once again captured Kalat on the 3rd November, forcing Nasir Khan II to enter into lengthy peace negotiations, resulting in the second Treaty of Kalat on the 6th October 1841 (Dashti, 2012, pp. 211-218; Heathcote, 2015, pp. 57-88).

Under the new treaty, the Ahmadzai were once again required to pay homage to Shah Shuja Durrani, while the former territories granted to Afghanistan were returned to the Khanate. In addition, the treaty established the position of a British advisor at the Ahmadzai court and forced the Khanate to hand over control of its foreign affairs. The British also reserved the right to station troops within the Khanate's territory as they saw fit, promising to defend it from external enemies (Heathcote, 2015, pp. 253-254).

Changing circumstances in 'the Great Game' forced the British to reconsider their stance on Balochistan. The Barakzai victory in the First Anglo-Afghan War in 1842 dashed British hopes of establishing a permanent buffer state in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the British annexation of Sindh in 1843 and Punjab in 1847 effectively made Balochistan the new frontier. If Afghanistan couldn't be their friendly buffer state, then it would have to be Balochistan. The British concluded the Treaty of Mastung with Nasir Khan II on the 14th May, 1854 (Heathcote, 2015, pp. 89-130).

The updated treaty slightly broke with tradition, formally recognising the Ahmadzai as independent rulers yet still reaffirming Britain's control over the Khanate's foreign affairs and the right to station British troops in its territory. To strengthen their new buffer state, the British set aside an annual subsidy of 50,000 rupees for the Ahmadzai khans (Heathcote, 2015, pp. 255-256). In effect, Balochistan was the new Afghanistan, an independent sovereign state on paper but a British client state in reality.

Following Nasir Khan II's death, Khudadad Khan (r. 1857 – 1893 CE) ascended to the throne on the 2nd June, 1857. Like his predecessors, his reign was fraught with tribal uprisings and civil wars, including a period of dispossession at the hands of Sher Dil Khan (Dashti, 2012, pp. 223-236). With the khan struggling to keep his sardars in check, the British realised they had to take a more active role in the Khanate's internal affairs to maintain their hold on the new buffer state. Enter Robert Graves Sandeman, a British officer who served during the Sepoy Mutiny (Tucker, 1921).

In 1866, Sandeman was appointed deputy commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan in British Punjab and began establishing relations with the local sardars, very quickly crushing a major uprising of Bugti, Marri and Khetran tribesmen (Breseeg, 2001, p. 128; Heathcote, 2015, p. 154). Over the next decade, he immersed himself in Baloch tribal politics, becoming the

leading British authority in Balochistan, earning the respect of both the Ahmadzai and the sardars (Zaib, et al., 2021). Sandeman's rise to prominence coincided with a shift in British policy from the non-interventionism of 'the Close Border System' to direct interaction with the Baloch tribes under 'the Forward Policy' (Baloch, et al., 2019). This shift led the British to sign the Treaty of Jacobabad with Khudadad Khan on the 8th December, 1876 (Heathcote, 2015, pp. 221-223).

The 1876 Treaty of Jacobabad was a watershed moment in Balochistan's history as it laid out the conditions for the next seventy years of British suzerainty and its subsequent transfer to Pakistan. Firstly, the treaty established the position of a permanent British Agent to arbitrate disputes between the Ahmadzai khans and the sardars. This was the first mention of the sardars in any of the treaties, illustrating their importance within Baloch society and Britain's increasing involvement in the internal dynamics of the Khanate. Secondly, the treaty once again reaffirmed Britain's control over the Khanate's foreign affairs and the right to station British troops in its territory with an added provision allowing for the construction of railway and telegraph lines. Lastly, the British doubled the annual subsidy to the Ahmadzai khans to 100,000 rupees, effectively placing them on their payroll (Baloch, et al., 2019; Heathcote, 2015, pp. 257-259). With the signing of this new treaty, the British had officially buried any chances of the Khanate reasserting complete independence.

The four treaties that defined British engagement with the Khanate of Kalat were instrumental in Balochistan's subsequent integration into British India, reflecting the region's changing geopolitical value and tribal dynamics. The validity of the four treaties later became a key contention of nationalist debates surrounding the Khanate's accession to Pakistan. Several socio-political themes arise from this period in the historical narrative, including marginalisation, exploitation, repression, and autonomy.

Chapter Three: The Balochistan Agency

With the Khanate firmly under their grip, the British established the Balochistan Agency (See Appendix IV) on 21st February 1877, bringing the region into the formal structure of the British Raj (See Appendix V) (Dashti, 2012, p. 241; Hunter, 1931b). Over the next thirty years, modern-day Balochistan began to take shape as the British followed a process of pacification spearheaded by Sandeman.

Analogically speaking, the Balochistan Agency was a microcosm of the larger British Raj. Administratively, the British Raj was headed by a Governor-General, while the Balochistan Agency was headed by an Agent to the Governor-General (AGG). The obvious choice for AGG was Sandeman, who instituted a new system of tribal pacification, which came to be known as 'the Sandeman System', consisting of four central tenets:

1. "Know the tribes and befriend them" (Tripodi, 2009, p. 780).

   Sandeman prioritised direct engagement with sardars, seeking their allegiance through diplomacy rather than military conquest. This involved granting titles and subsidies in exchange for the sardars' loyalty and cooperation in much the same way the Ahmadzai khans used to do (Zaib, et al., 2021, p. 81). By dealing with the sardars and khans separately, Sandeman had essentially fragmented the Khanate into disparate polities, a clear case of 'divide and rule'. In doing so, the British bypassed the Ahmadzai khans, effectively making the AGG the leading authority in Balochistan in much the same way the EIC had bypassed the authority of the Mughal emperor.

2. "Adhere to tribal custom wherever possible and work through tribal leaders, supporting selected chiefs if necessary" (Tripodi, 2009, p. 780).

Sandeman supported using jirgas for local governance and disputes, thereby adhering to the indigenous legal and social customs of the Baloch (Zaib, et al., 2021, p. 82). This approach not only reduced administrative burdens on the British but also appeased the Baloch tribes, arming the sardars with unlimited powers, so much so that "a tribesman could be arrested and imprisoned on the indication of the sardar for disobedience to him while a tribesman who had been put in prison for a serious offence could be released on the receipt of a letter" (Breseeg, 2001, pp. 126-127). Furthermore, Sandeman also coopted the jirga custom to his advantage by establishing a Shahi-Jirga of selected sardars and influential aristocrats loyal to the British and led by the AGG (Breseeg, 2001, p. 70). To this day, tribal jirgas still play an important role in Baloch society, yet they are generally viewed as a backward tradition by Baloch modernists.

3. "Bind the tribe to the government by way of tribal service, which must in return be paid for" (Tripodi, 2009, p. 780).

   A critical component of the Sandeman System was the recruitment of tribal levies. These were local forces raised from among the tribes, paid for and equipped by the British but led by their sardars. The levies served as a local militia to maintain order and protect British interests, thereby reducing the need for a significant regular British military presence on the premise that the locally recruited levies would be less antagonising to the Baloch population. The levies also provided a sense of prestige and autonomy to the sardars, further cementing their loyalty to the British (Zaib, et al., 2021, p. 82). Pakistan still applies this same concept today in the form of the Frontier Corps (FC), which locally recruits personnel from Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

4. “Although peaceful methods should always prevail, overwhelming force must be available for use if necessary” (Tripodi, 2009, p. 780).

   The British launched several punitive expeditions against unruly Baloch tribes during and after Sandeman’s tenure as AGG. In 1880, Marri tribesmen had made frequent raids on British convoys during the Second Anglo-Afghan War, eliciting a major campaign that quickly ended with the Marri sardar’s submission (Dashti, 2012, p. 252). Similarly, in 1896, the British violently crushed an uprising of religiously motivated fanatics, known as the Ghazis, who had attacked British infrastructure (Breseeg, 2001, p. 128). Two years later, the British once again used overwhelming force to crush another uprising in Makran (Dashti, 2012, pp. 259-260). These examples serve as a precursor to the ongoing violence between the Pakistani military and Baloch revolutionaries taking place today.

Territorially, the British Raj was divided into British India (territories ruled by the Governor-General) and the Princely States (territories ruled by Indian monarchs subject to British suzerainty). Similarly, the Balochistan Agency was divided into the Chief Commissioner’s Province (CCP), which was ruled by the AGG, and the Khanate of Kalat, which was ruled by the Ahmadzai khans who were, in effect, British pawns (Hunter, 1931a, p. 57). Like all colonial powers, the British utilised their influence over the region to engage in boundary-making to protect their strategic interests.

The making of Balochistan’s modern-day borders took place in stages, with the gradual annexation of territory via conquest and treaties. For example, Karachi, ruled by the Baloch Talpur dynasty since 1795, was invaded and occupied by the British in 1839 (Neill, 1846, pp. 17-25). Four years later, the British annexed the rest of Sindh along with the Baloch village of Khangarh – later renamed Jacobabad – incorporating them into the Bombay Presidency,

establishing the modern boundary between Sindh and Balochistan (Heathcote, 2015, p. 95). Similarly, Derajat, conquered by the Durrani Empire in 1795, was annexed by the Sikh Empire in 1819. When the British defeated the Sikh Empire in 1849, they incorporated Derajat into British Punjab, establishing the modern boundary between Punjab and Balochistan (The Balochistan Post, 2023).

In 1879, the British annexed Pishin, Sibi, Harnai, and Thal Chotiali from the Afghans during the Second Anglo-Afghan War, attaching the new territories to the CCP (Baxter, 1995, p. 20). They also occupied the Afghan tribal areas of Zhob, Loralai and Barkhan in 1890, incorporating them into the CCP (Breseeg, 2001, p. 126). Three years later, the Durand Line was established, marking the international boundary between modern-day Pakistan and Afghanistan and bisecting areas of 'Greater Balochistan' in southern Afghanistan (Nawaz, 2011, pp. 27-28). The modern Iran-Pakistan border was established in 1871 with the agreement of the Goldsmid line and was later finalised in 1905 after some minor adjustments (Brobst, 1997). It, too, bisected 'Greater Balochistan', separating the western Baloch principalities from the Khanate of Kalat.

Alongside these new external regional boundaries came the gradual internal erosion of Khanate territory. From its inception, the Marri-Bugti territories were detached from the Khanate and fell under the AGG's jurisdiction as semi-autonomous tribal areas (Hunter, 1931a, p. 57). Then over the next three decades, various other territories were leased from the Ahmadzai khans and incorporated into the CCP, including Quetta (1883), the Bolan Pass (1883), Chagai (1896), Noshki (1899) and Nasirabad (1903) (Dashti, 2012, p. 274; Heathcote, 2015, p. 235; The Balochistan Post, 2023). These new territorial boundaries would remain constant until independence, with the reunification of 'Greater Balochistan' becoming a central tenet of modern Baloch nationalism.

The establishment of the Balochistan Agency marked a significant transformation, embedding colonial administrative practices within Balochistan. The Sandeman System, while seemingly benevolent in its approach to Baloch tribal dynamics, effectively entrenched British authority and sowed the seeds of division that would later exacerbate regional disparities and nationalist sentiments. This history echoes the core socio-political themes of marginalisation, exploitation, repression and autonomy.

Chapter Four: The Rise of Baloch Nationalism

With the turn of the twentieth century came a renewed rigour for Indian independence. The Indian National Congress (INC) and All-India Muslim League (AIML) had emerged as the two most active parties petitioning Britain for the right to self-determination (Jalal, 1985; Sisson & Wolpert, 1988). In this whirlwind of anti-colonial fervour, Baloch nationalism would begin to take shape as a parallel movement alongside Indian nationalism.

Much like Indian nationalism, Baloch nationalism can be broadly divided into two streams: the revolutionary stream and the constitutional stream (Baloch, 1987, p. 147). The revolutionary stream favoured violent means of achieving independence, often seeking external assistance to help in their armed struggle. For instance, Misri Khan Baluch, who took part in the 1918 Marri-Khetran Uprising, headed the Baloch delegation at the Soviet Union's Congress of the Peoples of the East in September 1920 (Baloch, 1987, p. 148; Dashti, 2012, pp. 252-253). His counterparts within the Indian independence movement included the likes of Indian revolutionaries Bhagat Singh and Udham Singh (Anand, 2019; Nayyar, 2012).

On the other hand, the constitutional stream favoured gradual reform within existing political structures, often relying on elections and petitions to achieve their goals. This stream included leading figures such as Muhammad Ali Jinnah and Jawaharlal Nehru at the all-India level (Gopal, 1976; Jalal, 1985). While they led the AIML and INC, their Baloch equivalents, Yousaf Aziz Magsi and Abdul Aziz Kurd, founded the Anjuman-e-Ittehad-e-Balochan-wa-Balochistan (AIBB) in 1931 to politically mobilise the Baloch people (Breseeg, 2001, pp. 158-162; Dashti, 2012, pp. 291-293).

The AIBB had three fundamental demands: political reform within the Khanate of Kalat, the reunification of 'Greater Balochistan', and an end to British paramountcy (Baloch, 1987, p.

151; Breseeg, 2001, p. 172). These demands were shaped by the belief that no substantive socio-economic progress could be made without re-establishing the Khanate's political autonomy. Thus, the AIBB's early initiatives challenged policies that stifled political expression and maintained British hegemony, such as the jirga system. Instead, the AIBB advocated for creating an elected parliament within the Khanate to represent the will of the Baloch people (Breseeg, 2001, p. 164).

The first target of the AIBB was Mahmud Khan's (r. 1893 – 1931 CE) vizier Shams Shah, a pro-British non-Baloch Indian, who was, in effect, the de-facto ruler of the Khanate. Shams Shah favoured the khan's eldest son as the heir to the throne with the mindset that he'd be easily controlled and, therefore, more amiable to British interests. The AIBB, however, favoured the imprisoned Mohammad Azam Jan Khan (r. 1931 – 1933 CE), as he was thought to be a supporter of the Baloch nationalist movement (Breseeg, 2001, p. 165).

The AIBB organised a mass migration of the Magsi tribe into Sindh and Punjab to force Shams Shah to resign (Ali, 1993, p. 134). It proved successful in causing popular unrest in British India and inspired various Baloch, such as the Bugti and Mengal tribes, to revolt against their pro-British sardars. This followed the tradition of mass agitation established by Gandhi's non-cooperation movement a decade earlier (Low, 1966). The British rejected Shams Shah's proposal and accepted Mohammad Azam Jan Khan as the Khanate's ruler. Upon ascending to the throne, he removed Shams Shah as vizier, marking the AIBB's first major political victory (Breseeg, 2001, p. 166).

Unfortunately, Mohammad Azam Jan Khan soon proved to be a disappointment. His old age, the general precariousness of the khanship, and the structural power held by the sardars meant he could not deliver on his many promises to the AIBB (Dehwar, 1994, p. 244). In essence, becoming yet another pawn of the British. That said, his short rule did witness the

galvanisation of Baloch nationalism, leading the AIBB to formally call for the establishment of a "constitutional government in Balochistan which is purely Islamic and independent in all aspects" in September 1932 (Baloch, 1987, p. 153). This was eight years before the Lahore Resolution, where the AIML formally called for the creation of Pakistan (Jalal, 1985, pp. 50-60).

The AIBB's demand for an independent Balochistan was met with opposition from the wider Indian independence movement. The pro-AIML newspaper, *The Daily Zamindar*, opposed the idea, calling for a "united Muslim front against the Hindu bureaucracy" (Breseeg, 2001, p. 167). Of course, no such Hindu bureaucracy existed in Balochistan; instead, the Baloch were confronted by a principally Punjabi Muslim bureaucracy. Similarly, the AIBB was also met with severe resistance from the British and their appointed sardars. In 1934, Abdul Aziz Kurd was sentenced to three years imprisonment by the Shahi-Jirga for demanding the return of leased territories to the Khanate. His message to the AIBB at the time summarised the attitude of the Baloch nationalists towards Britain and India (Baloch, 1987, p. 154):

> *"Comrades! You must understand Britain's position in Baluchistan very well. Do not view it from the perspective of Indian politics. Keeping in view the significance of our country for all of Asia constitutes your political ideology under provisional exigencies in accordance with local conditions and national aspirations. The Baluch nation should not imitate Afghan, Indian or any foreign politics. You should impress on your minds the fact that Britain has neither conquered your country nor bought it from anyone. Therefore, you are not her slave, and she is not your master. In fact, Britain has set up temporary camp in your country with the status of a trader holding special concessions by virtue of friendly and equal treaties. Therefore, you must always be aware of your true status and political dignity."*

The AIBB eventually reorganised into the Kalat State National Party (KSNP) in 1937. Building on the work of the AIBB, the KSNP broadened its support base among all Baloch classes by developing a comprehensive nationalist programme (Breseeg, 2001, pp. 173-174). They successfully petitioned the sympathetic Ahmad Yar Khan (r. 1933 – 1979 CE) to abolish forced labour and various unjust taxes imposed by the pro-British sardars (Ali, 1993, p. 134). However, when the British failed to obtain the Jiwani port due to KSNP's opposition, they tasked their sardar allies with launching an armed attack on the KSNP's Mastung convention on the 7th July 1939 (Dashti, 2012, p. 296). Two weeks later, the Khanate's British-Indian-dominated administration banned the KSNP, exiling the Baloch activists to Quetta (Breseeg, 2001, p. 177).

As British India approached decolonisation following the Second World War, the question of Balochistan's status became crucial. Ahmad Yar Khan leveraged Balochistan's direct treaty relations with Britain to claim independence similar to Nepal, invoking the 1876 Treaty of Jacobabad, which committed Britain to respect the Khanate's independence (Baloch, 1987, p. 174; Heathcote, 2015, pp. 257-259). Interestingly, Jinnah, the soon-to-be-founder of Pakistan, wrote to the 1946 Cabinet Mission to India to defend the Khanate's claim to independence, stressing its historical recognition as a sovereign state. His petition was subsequently bolstered by Ibrahim Ismail Chundrigar, a future prime minister of Pakistan, who equated the Khanate's position with that of Afghanistan and Persia, emphasising its non-Indian status and strategic importance as a buffer state (Breseeg, 2001, pp. 179-180).

Various other alternatives were considered alongside complete independence. Becoming a British protectorate was rejected by the khan's foreign minister. Merging with Iran was rejected due to Iran's oppressive policies towards Baloch nationalists. Merging with Afghanistan was rejected due to fears over Soviet influence. Merging with India was rejected due to political and geographical impracticalities. Merging with Pakistan was rejected due to

public opinion favouring an independent Khanate. Thus, the preferred option was complete independence, with the possibility of friendly relations and sovereign equality with neighbouring Pakistan, without any formal merger (Baloch, 1987, pp. 180-183).

Meanwhile, developments elsewhere in the Balochistan Agency took a different course. The Marri and Bugti tribes demanded to join the Khanate. Similarly, the Baloch tribes of Derajat also demanded to be separated from Punjab and reattached to the Khanate. These demands were ignored by the British. Conversely, the Shahi-Jirga had voted to merge the CCP with Pakistan rather than return to the Khanate as stipulated in the lease agreements (Breseeg, 2001, p. 180).

With Indian independence on the horizon, a round table conference was held in Delhi to discuss the future of Balochistan, resulting in a communique on the 11th August, 1947, where Pakistan formally recognised the Khanate as an independent state different from other Indian states (Saiyid, 2006, p. 32). However, most Baloch historians fail to mention the communique also stated: "Pakistan shall be the legal, constitutional and political successor of the British" (Siddiqi, 2012, p. 59). Therefore, insinuating suzerainty over Balochistan had simply passed from Britain to Pakistan.

Regardless, on the 15th August 1947, the Khanate declared its formal independence and established a bicameral legislature consisting of the Dar-ul-Umara, composed of thirty-five Jhalawani and Sarawani Sardars, and the Dar-ul-Awam, composed of forty-seven elected and five nominated officials. The first general election in Balochistan's history took place shortly thereafter, with the KSNP winning thirty-two of the fifty-two seats in the Dar-ul-Awam (Breseeg, 2001, p. 183). As far as the Khanate was concerned, it had finally emerged as an independent constitutional monarchy. Unfortunately, it wouldn't remain independent for much longer.

The rise of Baloch nationalism reflects a complex tapestry of resistance against perceived injustices and external control, mirroring the wider Indian independent movement. The AIBB, in particular, can be credited with the first formal articulation of Baloch identity, laying the groundwork for future Baloch nationalists. The central socio-political theme of this period is the quest for autonomy amid tribal dynamics, state repression, and political marginalisation.

Chapter Five: The First Uprising

On the 14th and 15th August 1947, the twin states of Pakistan and India awoke to life and freedom in a whirlwind of violent frenzy. The chaos of Partition is well documented, having etched itself into the collective consciousness of South Asians both at home and abroad (Khan, 2007; Puri, 2022; White-Spunner, 2018). Over fourteen million refugees found themselves fleeing across the border in both directions, with two million killed in the ensuing turmoil (Kosinski & Elahi, 1985, p. 6; Talbot, 2009). While Balochistan was largely spared the gruesome scenes of rampant communal violence witnessed along the Radcliffe Line, its transition into independence was far from smooth.

Among the first orders of business for India and Pakistan was the matter of the princely states. By and large, most princely states had peacefully acceded to either country except in the cases of Jammu and Kashmir (acceded to India following an invasion by Pakistani tribal militias, resulting in the long-standing border dispute between the two nations), Hyderabad (declared independence, but was annexed by India), and Junagarh (acceded to Pakistan, but was annexed by India) (Copland, 1991). Suffice it to say, the Khanate of Kalat's accession was among the non-peaceful ones.

After declaring independence, Ahmad Yar Khan was welcomed as sovereign leader by the Baloch of Karachi during his visit to Pakistan in October 1947. However, despite the warm reception, he was not received by any top Pakistani officials, indicating a shift in Pakistani policy (Baloch, 1987, p. 183). Where before he had argued in favour of the Khanate's independence, Jinnah, following the advice of the British High Commission, began to press for the Khanate's integration into Pakistan (Saiyid, 2006, pp. 33-37). In response, the Dar-ul-Awam and Dar-ul-Umara unanimously rejected the merger, viewing it as contrary to the previous agreements (Breseeg, 2001, p. 184).

To pressure the khan into acquiescing, Pakistan persuaded the Khanate's feudatories of Las Bela, Kharan and Makran to accede separately. Doing so "reduced the size of [the Khanate] by more than one-half, cutting [it] off completely from the coast and leaving it largely isolated" (Zaidi, 2003, p. 229). After failing to mobilise support from the sardars, India or Afghanistan, and with Pakistani troops amassing on Kalat, Ahmad Yar Khan was left with no choice but to sign the Instrument of Accession on the 27th March 1948 (Breseeg, 2001, p. 185; Saiyid, 2006, pp. 43-44). To this day, the 27th March is commemorated as 'Black Day' by the Baloch diaspora (The Print, 2024).

The forced accession elicited anti-Pakistan rallies throughout Balochistan, eventually spawning the first major Baloch uprising under the leadership of Ahmad Yar Khan's brother, Agha Abdul Karim, on the 16th May (Baloch, 1987, p. 190). He was subsequently joined by various Baloch revolutionaries, including KSNP secretary Malik Saeed Dehwar and journalist Mohammed Hussain Unqa. Meanwhile, Baloch constitutionalists, such as the KSNP's Abdul Aziz Kurd and Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, refused to join the armed struggle due to its lack of resources and low likelihood of success (Breseeg, 2001, p. 188).

After some brief skirmishes with the Pakistani military, the Baloch Mujahideen crossed into Afghanistan and set up camp in the mountains near Sarlat Ghar (Breseeg, 2001, p. 188). Whilst there, they launched a propaganda campaign, instigating nationalist fervour among the Baloch and demanding the Muslims of Pakistan to engage in Jihad against its non-Islamic government (Baloch, 1987, p. 194). In addition, they also began appealing to the Soviets, Afghans and western Baloch sardars for support, all of which proved fruitless (Breseeg, 2001, pp. 189-190). In particular, the Afghans were reluctant to support the Baloch nationalists due to the Pashtunistan issue; an independent Balochistan ran contradictory to Afghanistan's irredentist claims on the region (Bezhan, 2014).

In July 1950, the Baloch Mujahideen were expelled from Afghanistan and subsequently defeated by the Pakistani military. All the key leaders, including Agha Abdul Karim, were fined and imprisoned, putting an end to the first Baloch uprising. Pakistan subsequently banned the KSNP, placing its members under surveillance (Titus & Swidler, 2000, p. 50). Just like the British over a century earlier, Pakistan had successfully secured its hold on Balochistan.

The first uprising in Balochistan directly resulted from political frustration following failed promises, highlighting the deep-seated mistrust between the Baloch population and the new Pakistani state, which continues to fuel Baloch nationalism to this day. The uprising underscores the enduring socio-political themes of marginalisation, repression and autonomy, reflecting broader challenges faced by minorities in other post-colonial nation-states.

Chapter Six: The Second Uprising

With Balochistan in their grasp, the Pakistani government went about restructuring Balochistan's administration. In 1952, Pakistan formed the Balochistan States Union (BSU) by remerging the Khanate with Las Bela, Kharan and Makran. This arrangement was simply a restoration of the status quo established by the British; the BSU was combined with the CCP to form the Balochistan province, with the Pakistani-appointed vizier as the de-facto ruler of the BSU. Naturally, Ahmad Yar Khan opposed the arrangement, suggesting that the BSU and CCP territories be under his authority while the Pashto-speaking territories be added to the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) (Siddiqi, 2012, pp. 61-62). However, before these changes could be made, Governor-General Malik Ghulam Muhammad abolished the Constituent Assembly of Pakistan in 1954.

The following year, the One Unit Scheme was promulgated, amalgamating the BSU and CCP into a single province alongside Sindh, West Punjab, and the NWFP, aptly named West Pakistan. The decision is generally considered to have been a strategic move by Punjabi politicians to solidify their control over the federal government (Jalal, 2014, p. 91). Although Ahmad Yar Khan initially agreed to the One Unit Scheme, Baloch nationalists vehemently objected on the grounds it curtailed Baloch autonomy, a sentiment shared by the other minority provinces as well. By 1957, various leftist political groups across Pakistan, including Agha Abdul Karim's Ustaman Gal, merged to form the National Awami Party (NAP) in opposition to the Punjabi-dominated centre and their One Unit Scheme (Titus & Swidler, 2000, p. 51). The same year, Ahmad Yar Khan, backed by forty-four Baloch sardars, also demanded the scheme's abolition and the re-establishment of the Khanate's original position as a princely state (Breseeg, 2001, pp. 224-225).

On the 6th October 1958, the Pakistani military moved into Kalat, accusing Ahmad Yar Khan of amassing a force of 80,000 tribesmen to revolt against the government; in reality, no such force existed (Siddiqi, 2012, p. 62). Ahmad Yar Khan was arrested along with around 300 Baloch leaders. The Pakistani government accused these leaders of conspiring with Afghanistan and planning a rebellion, charges the Baloch leaders denied, viewing them as a pretext for military action (Breseeg, 2001, p. 225). The following day, the constitution was abrogated, political parties were banned, and martial law was declared by President Iskandar Ali Mirza and General Muhammad Ayub Khan as a result of the increasing political turmoil across Pakistan (Jalal, 2014, pp. 96-97).

The harsh military crackdown in Balochistan precipitated a second major Baloch uprising. Nauroz Khan, the ninety-year-old sardar of the Zehri tribe, led a hastily assembled force of up to 1,000 tribesmen against the Pakistani military on the 10th October (Harrison, 1981, p. 28). Unlike the first uprising a decade earlier, this rebellion was more widespread. Soon, the entirety of Jhalawan was in revolt, with militias from various tribes joining Nauroz Khan in the hills of Balochistan. Pakistan responded by launching a bombing campaign against any Baloch villages suspected of harbouring fighters (Breseeg, 2001, p. 226).

With no end to the conflict in sight, both sides met to discuss a peace settlement in early 1960. According to Pakistani sources, the Baloch revolutionaries refused to lay down their arms. However, Baloch sources are adamant Nauroz Khan was deceived by the Pakistani military, whose representatives had sworn an oath on the Qur'an that he and his followers would be granted amnesty and the One Unit Scheme would be withdrawn if they surrendered (Harrison, 1981, p. 28) Whatever the truth, Nauroz Khan and his followers were arrested and charged with treason, thereby ending the second Baloch uprising. His son and five others were hanged in July 1960, while Nauroz Khan passed away in captivity four years later

(Siddiqi, 2012, p. 63). On the whole, Nauroz Khan's uprising served to invigorate Baloch nationalism, radicalising Baloch revolutionaries across the entire region.

The second uprising was sparked by the imposition of the One Unit Scheme by the Pakistani government, which was perceived as a direct threat to Baloch identity. This period in the historical demonstrates the socio-political themes of marginalisation, repression and autonomy, which have recurrently emerged in Balochistan's tumultuous relationship with Pakistan.

Chapter Seven: The Third Uprising

The fact that a small, rag-tag guerrilla force could go toe-to-toe with the well-equipped, numerically superior Pakistani military was a great source of concern. As a result, Pakistan began building new garrisons throughout Balochistan's interior. In the face of the state's increasing security presence, a group of Baloch revolutionary nationalists, inspired by Marxist-Leninist ideas and the success of leftist militias elsewhere in the world, began mapping plans for an organised guerrilla movement to defend Baloch interests (Harrison, 1981, p. 29).

In the early 1960s, Sher Mohammad Marri organised the Parrari movement to carry out hit-and-run operations against the Pakistani military. By July 1963, it had established over twenty-two base camps, spread from Jhalawan in the south to the Marri-Bugti tribal areas in the north, manned by 400 full-time volunteers and capable of calling upon hundreds of part-time reservists (Harrison, 1981, p. 30). The Parrari movement quickly gained momentum as Baloch tribes, particularly the Marri and Bugti, increasingly embraced nationalist ideals in response to increased state interference in tribal affairs, trumped-up charges against tribal sardars like Akbar Bugti and Ataullah Mengal, and the general repression of Baloch rights (Breseeg, 2001, pp. 228-229; Siddiqi, 2012, p. 64).

The Parraris were met with severe repression from Pakistan, which launched extensive military operations to quell the uprising. During one of the early reprisals, the Pakistani military bulldozed 13,000 acres of almond trees belonging to Sher Mohammad Marri, provoking a major battle in December 1964, in which 500 Parrari fighters raided a Pakistani military camp, resulting in heavy casualties on both sides (Hashmi, 2010). During the late 1960s, stories of atrocities committed by the Pakistani military, such as the use of napalm,

were in wide circulation, solidifying support for the Parrari movement among the Baloch masses (Harrison, 1981, p. 33).

Upon assuming office in 1969, General Yahya Khan negotiated a cease-fire with the Parraris by promising to scrap the One Unit Scheme and open free elections, ending the third Baloch uprising (Breseeg, 2001, p. 231). However, the Parraris, ever suspicious of Pakistan, continued to recruit full-time volunteers, who not only trained the reservists but also ran makeshift hospitals, schools and grain-marketing depots. Thus, the Parrari movement was more than just a guerrilla force and more or less functioned as an unchallenged parallel government in Marri territory (Harrison, 1981, p. 33). The Baloch revolutionaries were certain another face-off with the Pakistani military was bound to occur, and when it did, they would be ready.

The third uprising in Balochistan was marked by organised guerrilla warfare underpinned by Marxist-Leninist influences and a clearer articulation of Baloch grievances, reflecting the evolution of Baloch nationalism into structured resistance. Overall, the Parrari movement was driven by feelings of marginalisation, exploitation and repression. Its role as an unofficial parallel government working for the Baloch people serves as inspiration for modern Baloch revolutionary groups.

Chapter Eight: The Fourth Uprising

1970 was an important year for Pakistan. It saw the end of the One Unit Scheme, the establishment of a unified Balochistan province (See Appendix VI), and the country's first-ever general elections. In the Balochistan provincial assembly, the NAP formed a coalition government with the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), a political party linked to the Deobandi school, while the Pakistan People's Party (PPP), which had emerged victorious across the western provinces, failed to win a single seat (Baxter, 1971).

Despite their electoral success, the relationship between the provincial NAP-JUI government and the PPP's federal government was fraught with tension and mistrust. President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's apprehension towards the NAP's control of Balochistan was evident from the onset, as he hesitated to appoint the provincial governor and chief minister. The situation deteriorated rapidly with the alleged discovery of a plot, the 'London Plan', which Bhutto used as a pretext to accuse the NAP leaders of sedition and conspiracy against the state. This accusation was later acknowledged by Bhutto himself to have been overplayed by the national media, illustrating the manipulative tactics used to destabilise the provincial government (Siddiqi, 2012, p. 65).

In February 1973, the situation reached a boiling point when a large cache of arms was allegedly found in the Iraqi Military Attaché's residence in Islamabad, which the government claimed were intended for the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF). This Iraqi-supported Marxist-Leninist group recently played a significant role in the 1968 Iranian Baloch Revolt. The incident led to the dismissal of the NAP-JUI provincial government on 14th February 1973 and the appointment of Akbar Bugti as governor, triggering another Baloch uprising (Siddiqi, 2012, pp. 66-67).

Aside from the preparedness of the Baloch revolutionaries since the Parrari movement, another probable impetus for the uprising was the perceived weakness of the Pakistani military following its abysmal defeat in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War. During the war, East Pakistan became Bangladesh, and 93,000 Pakistani personnel were taken prisoner by India (Burke, 1973, p. 1037). Furthermore, the fourth Baloch uprising differed from those before as it was led by not one but two tribal sardars belonging to the Marri and Mengal tribes (Siddiqi, 2012, p. 68).

The first skirmishes between revolutionary and state forces occurred in April 1973 (Harrison, 1981, p. 36). On the 18th May, Marri tribesmen ambushed a group of Dir Scouts while Mengal tribesmen simultaneously attacked the Additional Deputy Commissioner of Kalat. In August, Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, Khair Bakhsh Marri and Ataullah Mengal were taken prisoner by Pakistan. The following year, Iran, which had been dealing with its own Baloch uprisings, began supplying Pakistan with Huey Cobra Helicopters, significantly tilting the balance of power in their favour. The turning point came in September 1974, when Pakistan launched Operation Chamalang, dealing a devastating blow to the Baloch revolutionaries (Siddiqi, 2012, p. 69). Overall, the fourth Baloch uprising witnessed over 178 major engagements and 167 lesser incidents in which at least 3,300 Pakistani personnel and 5,300 Baloch fighters, as well as hundreds of civilians, were killed, instilling "feelings of unprecedented resentment" (Harrison, 1978, p. 139).

Upon overthrowing Bhutto in 1977, General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq granted a general amnesty to the Baloch revolutionaries, releasing Bizenjo, Marri, and Mengal, who called off the uprising. Marri and Mengal subsequently went into exile while Bizenjo amended his political stance to conform with the status quo, thereby destroying the unity and momentum of the Baloch nationalist movement (Siddiqi, 2012, p. 70). Over the next twenty-eight years,

the Baloch nationalist movement was left in the doldrums save for a few fringe Baloch revolutionary groups, such as the BLF, which continued to operate in the shadows.

The fourth uprising represents a significant escalation in the cyclical conflict between the Pakistani military and Baloch revolutionaries, highlighting the profound impact of external Iranian support. The marked escalation in violence influenced nationalist narratives, reflecting the recurring socio-political themes of marginalisation, repression and autonomy amid increasing geopolitical interest.

Chapter Nine: The Fifth Uprising

On 22nd September 2004, Akbar Bugti presented a fifteen-point agenda to the federal government, including demands for greater control over Balochistan's resources, protections for the Baloch minority and a suspension of building Pakistani military bases in the region (Dawn, 2004). However, it wasn't until the attempted cover-up of a female doctor's rape by Pakistani military officers on the 2nd January 2005 that the Balochistan conflict reignited once more (Kristof, 2005a; 2005b). General Pervez Musharraf publicly defended the accused on national television, prompting the Bugti tribe to begin carrying out guerrilla attacks against the Pakistani military (Gall, 2006a; Grare, 2013).

It is important to remember the fifth Baloch uprising resulted from long-standing grievances accumulated over the last fifty-seven years of Pakistani rule; the incident on the 2nd January was merely the straw that broke the camel's back. Accordingly, the long-standing grievances are as follows (Gattani, 2021, pp. 3-9):

1. Political Marginalisation

   Only making up 6% of the total population, the numerical inferiority of the Baloch people has alienated them from Pakistan's state apparatus and institutions. In 2002, only four of Quetta's fourteen provincial government secretaries were Baloch. Similarly, only 50 of the 3,200 students and 30 of the 180 faculty members at the University of Balochistan were Baloch (Bansal, 2005, p. 258). This issue of Baloch underrepresentation is further aggravated by the "belief that the Baloch governments were not allowed to complete their terms by the Punjabi establishment" (Devasher, 2019, p. 106). In addition, the fact that only four of the 179 cabinet members during the first three decades of Pakistan's existence were Baloch and Zafarullah Khan Jamali, the only Baloch to ever serve as Prime Minister, was forced to resign after

nineteen months in office, demonstrates just how much the Baloch have been marginalised by Pakistan's political establishment (Bansal, 2008, p. 186; Masood & Waldman, 2004).

2. Socio-Economic Deprivation

Balochistan is home to over one trillion dollars of natural resources; despite being so mineral-rich, the region still has the lowest HDI in Pakistan (Baloch, 2015; Pasha, et al., 2020). The continued exploitation of Balochistan's resources at the expense of the Baloch people is "central to the separatist creed" (Harrison, 1978, p. 144). In the 1950s, the first gas field was discovered in Sui. In 2003, more than five decades later, 70% of Balochistan's population remained deprived of gas, 78% were deprived of electricity, and 62% had no access to safe drinking water (Wani, 2016, p. 818). The introduction of CPEC has only further complicated feelings of colonial exploitation as resources have not only begun to leave Balochistan but Pakistan, too. For instance, only 2% of revenue from the Saindak Copper-Gold Project is reserved for Balochistan; the Metallurgical Corporation of China receives 80%, while the Pakistani federal government gets the remaining 18% (Devasher, 2019, p. 132).

3. State-Military Repression

Aside from the contentious Kashmir border, Balochistan is the most militarised region in Pakistan, with four cantonments, three naval bases, four testing sites, two nuclear development sites, and fifty-nine paramilitary facilities (Devasher, 2019, pp. 112-113). According to a 2006 report, there were "35,000 FC, 12,000 coast guards, 1,150 levies, 6,000 Balochistan reserve police, 2,000 marines and four army brigades deployed in Balochistan" (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2006, p. 41). Furthermore, Pakistan's 'kill-and-dump' operations are a clear-cut case of state-

> sanctioned terror: “Thousands of Baloch have been forcefully disappeared, and hundreds have been brutally murdered and their bodies dumped on desolate mountains or deserted roads. Many of these corpses bore signs of torture, with limbs snapped, faces bruised, and flesh sliced or punctured with drills; some even had slogans like ‘Pakistan Zindabad (Long Live Pakistan)’ written on their backs” (Baloch, 2024).

Events over the next few years continued to add fuel to the fire. In 2006, Akbar Bugti was killed in a standoff against the Pakistani military, sparking riots across Balochistan and Karachi (Gall, 2006b). The situation escalated even further following the assassination of nationalist leaders Ghulam Mohammed Baloch, Lala Munir Baloch, and Sher Mohammed Baloch in April 2009 (Dawn, 2009). Overall, between 2006 and 2010, Pakistan’s military engagements resulted in more than 1,600 casualties, of which nearly half were civilians, across 1,850 incidents (Devasher, 2019, p. 249). Revolutionary activity gradually ramped up in response, reaching a peak of 96 attacks and 383 fatalities in 2015, an increase from 80 attacks and 300 fatalities the previous year (KC, 2020).

Trying a different tactic, Pakistan introduced an incentive-based disarmament and rehabilitation program to take the sting out of the uprising (Gattani, 2021, p. 9). From 2015 to 2017, nearly 2,000 Baloch fighters surrendered, including key BLA activists such as Abdul Rasool (Devasher, 2019, p. 255; The Nation, 2017). The scheme also coincided with a dramatic fall in Baloch revolutionary activity: from 2017 to 2019, there were only 38 violent events and 110 fatalities (KC, 2020). At first glance, it may seem as though the Pakistani initiative led to the uprising’s abatement. However, a deeper analysis of schisms among the Baloch revolutionaries paints a vastly different picture.

The first cracks among the Baloch revolutionaries can be traced back to 2007 with the killing of BLA leader Balach Marri. Despite lacking evidence, some BLA cadre began accusing Brahumdagh Bugti of culpability, causing fissures between the BLA and his Baloch Republican Army (BRA). In 2012, BLF commanders Salim Baloch and Allah Bakhsh Jago founded the Balochistan National Liberation Front (BNLF) in what was believed to be a BLA-backed move, causing rifts between the BLA and BLF leadership. In 2013, disagreements between the BLA's new leader, Hyrbyair Marri, and his younger brother, Mehran Marri, led to the creation of the United Baloch Army (UBA), which was accused of stealing money and weapons from the BLA. By the time Khair Bakhsh Marri passed away in 2014, the Baloch revolutionary groups were divided into two factions. The first faction consisted of the BLF, UBA and BRA, while the second included the BLA and BNLF (Nabeel, 2017). The subsequent infighting between the two factions prevented the Baloch revolutionaries from putting up a united front against the Pakistani military, causing the post-2015 decline in activity.

On the 10th November 2018, the two factions overcame their differences, forming an alliance known as the Baloch Raaji Ajoi Sangar (BRAS) (Nabeel, 2019). Since the formation of BRAS, Baloch revolutionary activity has been on the increase yet again, with an all-time high of 110 attacks in 2023 (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2024, p. 22). As of the time of writing, the uprising shows no signs of slowing down, especially considering the rise in mass support for the Baloch cause, exemplified by the recent March Against Baloch Genocide led by human rights activist Mahrang Baloch (Amnesty International, 2024; Azeem & Rehman, 2023; Zaman, 2023). Furthermore, the recent cross-border missile exchanges between Iran and Pakistan in January 2024 showcase the potential for this latest chapter in the Balochistan conflict to become an international affair (Al-Jazeera, 2024; BBC, 2024; Farmer, 2024).

The fifth uprising is driven by a nationalist narrative entrenched with the deep-seated socio-political themes of marginalisation, exploitation, repression and autonomy. Ultimately, the ongoing crisis represents the culmination of over a century of struggle for self-determination in the face of changing tribal dynamics, geopolitical interest and cyclical conflict.

Conclusion

The long-standing conflict in Balochistan, characterised by repeated uprisings and continuous discontent, presents a significant challenge to Pakistan's stability and integrity. This dissertation has retraced Balochistan's history from the Khanate of Kalat to the ongoing fifth uprising, revealing critical socio-political themes that offer a deeper understanding of the conflict's origins and persistence. Addressing these enduring themes is not merely a matter of restoring peace; it is crucial for achieving lasting reconciliation and self-actualisation for the Baloch people, thereby making Pakistan rather than breaking it.

Several recurring socio-political themes have emerged in retracing the history of the Balochistan conflict. These themes are crucial for understanding the complexities of the conflict and the broader implications for regional stability. Broadly speaking, seven core socio-political themes can be gleaned from the historical narrative:

1. Marginalisation

   Throughout its history, Balochistan has faced significant political and economic marginalisation. Despite its large geographical size and resource wealth, the Baloch people have been consistently underrepresented in Pakistan's political framework, contributing to feelings of alienation and disenfranchisement among the Baloch population, a reflection of the enduring impact of colonial legacies on regional politics and the persistent struggles of indigenous populations against external domination.

2. Exploitation

   Balochistan is rich in natural resources, including gas, minerals, and potentially lucrative trade routes due to its strategic location on the Arabian Sea. Historically, the

extraction of these resources has rarely benefited the local Baloch population. Instead, revenues have predominantly been extracted by the federal government and foreign corporations, as typified by CPEC, leaving the region underdeveloped and its people impoverished.

3. Repression

   The response of the Pakistani state to Baloch nationalism and insurgency has often been heavy-handed, involving significant military presence and actions that have been perceived as repressive. Reports of extrajudicial killings, enforced disappearances, and 'kill-and-dump' operations have exacerbated tensions, leading to cycles of violence and the further radicalisation of the Baloch population.

4. Autonomy

   The struggle for greater autonomy and self-determination has been a constant theme in the history of Balochistan. From the Khanate of Kalat's attempts to preserve its sovereignty during the British colonial period to the various uprisings against the Pakistani state, the desire for political self-determination and control over local affairs and resources has been a powerful driving force behind Baloch nationalism.

5. Tribal Dynamics

   The tribal structure in Balochistan has played a significant role in the region's politics. Tribal loyalties have influenced the outcomes of political and military struggles. Leadership among the sardars and khans has been pivotal, with figures often embodying the aspirations or grievances of their people but also sometimes contributing to internal divisions and conflicts.

6. Geopolitical Interest

Balochistan's strategic location has made it a focal point of international geopolitical interests. Throughout history, external powers have influenced its political landscape, from British colonial strategies to contemporary concerns involving China, Iran, and Afghanistan. These external influences often complicate internal dynamics, dictating the course of conflicts.

7. Cyclical Conflict

   The history of Balochistan is marked by recurring cycles of uprising and repression. Each phase of conflict seems to follow a pattern where grievances lead to conflict, which is met with repression, leading to temporary quiescence before grievances accumulate again, resulting in renewed conflict. This cyclical pattern underscores the persistent underlying issues that have thus far failed to have been adequately addressed.

Like any flashpoint in global politics, addressing the Balochistan conflict requires a multi-faceted approach considering the deep-rooted socio-political themes identified from its historical narrative. With this in mind, here are four potential solutions to the ongoing conflict:

1. Political Representation

   Enhancing the political representation of the Baloch people within the broader framework of Pakistan's government is crucial. This can be achieved through fair electoral processes, proportional representation in national institutions, and meaningful inclusion in decision-making processes. Efforts should be made to ensure that Baloch leaders and representatives are genuinely reflective of their communities' aspirations and have a real voice in Islamabad.

2. Economic Redistribution

Given the resource wealth of Balochistan, developing a more equitable model for resource distribution is essential. The federal government could work with Baloch representatives to create a transparent and fair revenue-sharing model that benefits the local population. Additionally, investments in community-focused infrastructure, education, healthcare, and business projects could help stimulate economic growth and reduce feelings of exploitation.

3. Demilitarisation

   Reducing the military footprint in Balochistan could help ease tensions. The focus should shift from a military to a civilian-led security approach involving local stakeholders. Community policing models, where security forces are representative and accountable to the populations they serve, could help rebuild trust.

4. Regional Diplomacy

   Given the external geopolitical interests in Balochistan, involving regional powers in a supportive manner could be beneficial. Diplomatic engagement with neighbouring countries like Iran and Afghanistan and managing the influence of larger powers like China in regional development projects could help stabilise the region.

These solutions require sustained commitment and a genuine willingness from Pakistan to address the historical injustices and contemporary issues facing Balochistan. While challenging, these steps could pave the way toward a more peaceful and prosperous Balochistan, which benefits Pakistan and ensures global peace.

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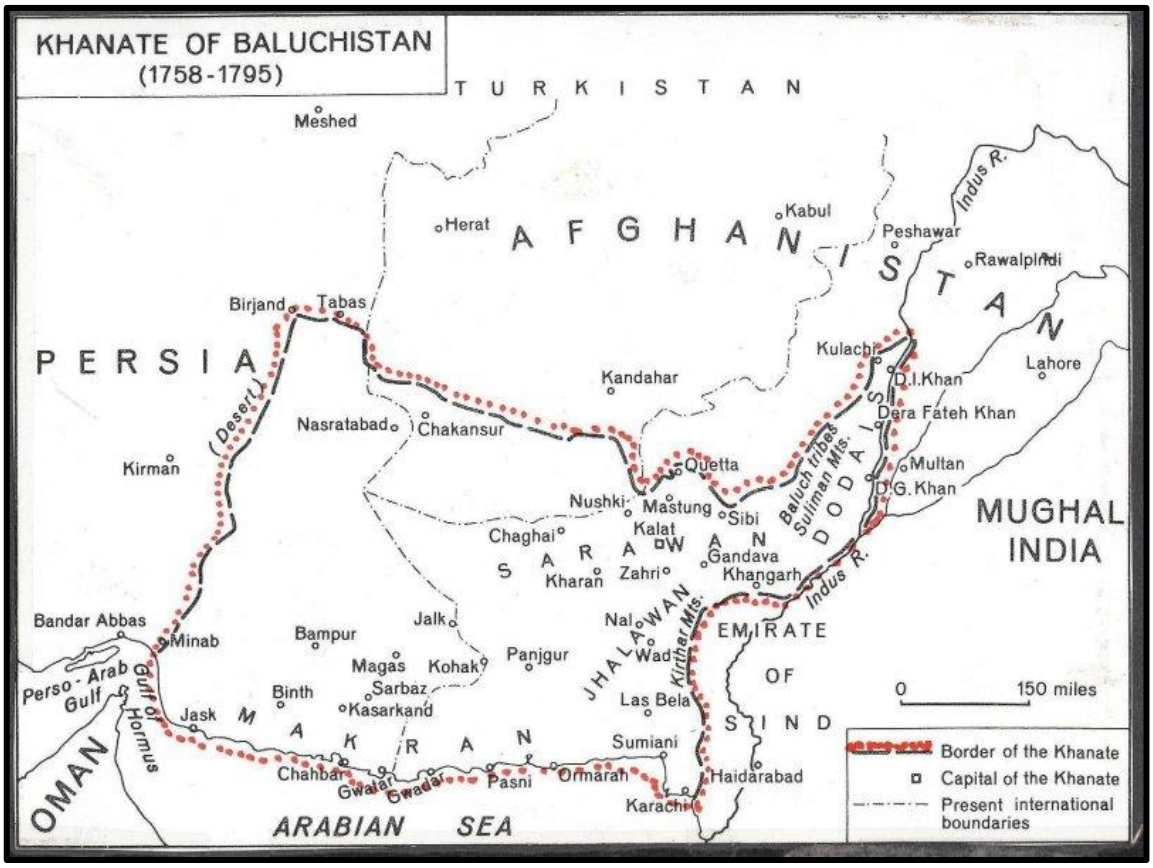
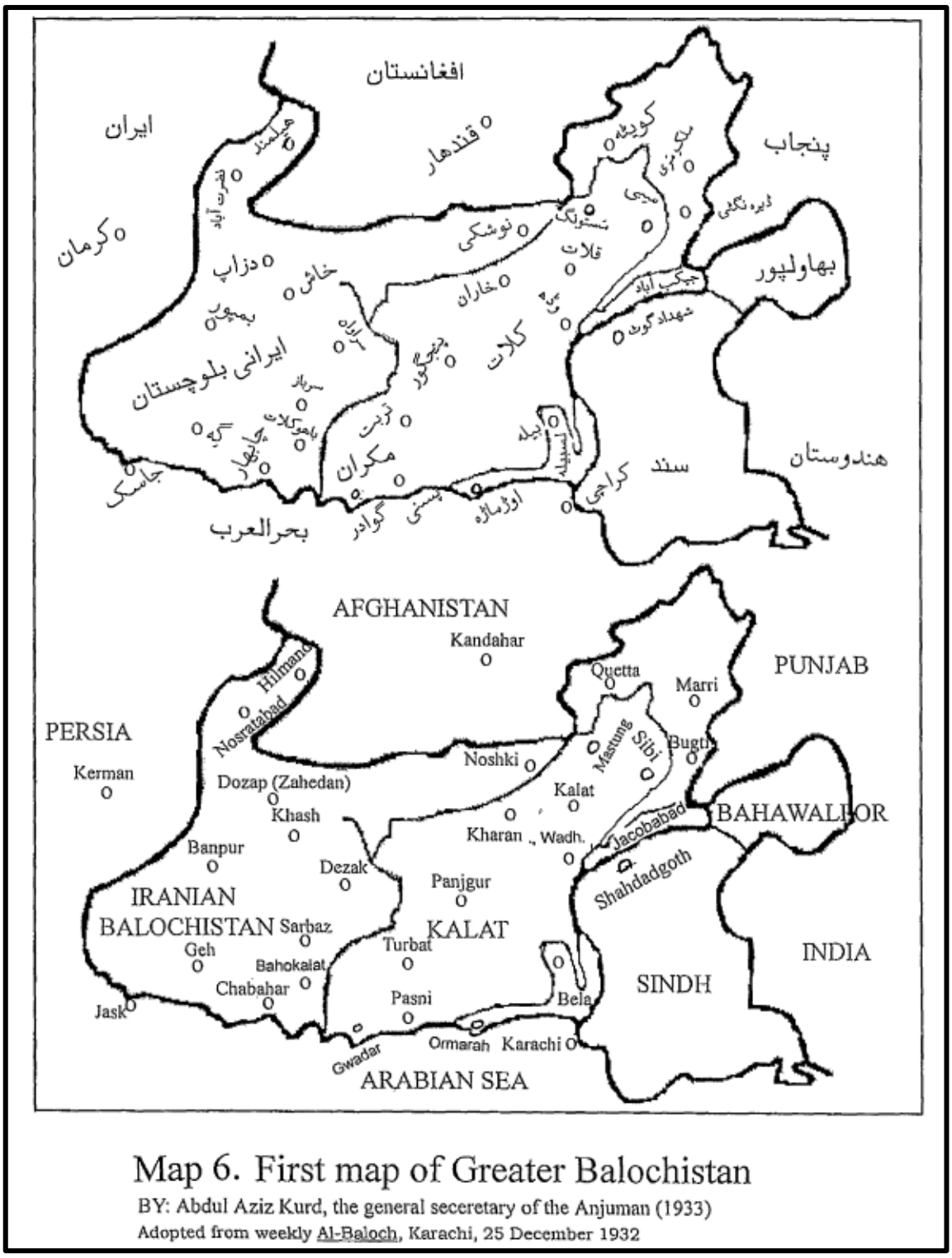
Appendices

Appendix I – Map of the Khanate of Kalat (Baloch, 1987, p. 287)



Appendix II – Maps of 'Greater Balochistan' (Breseeg, 2001, p. 172)

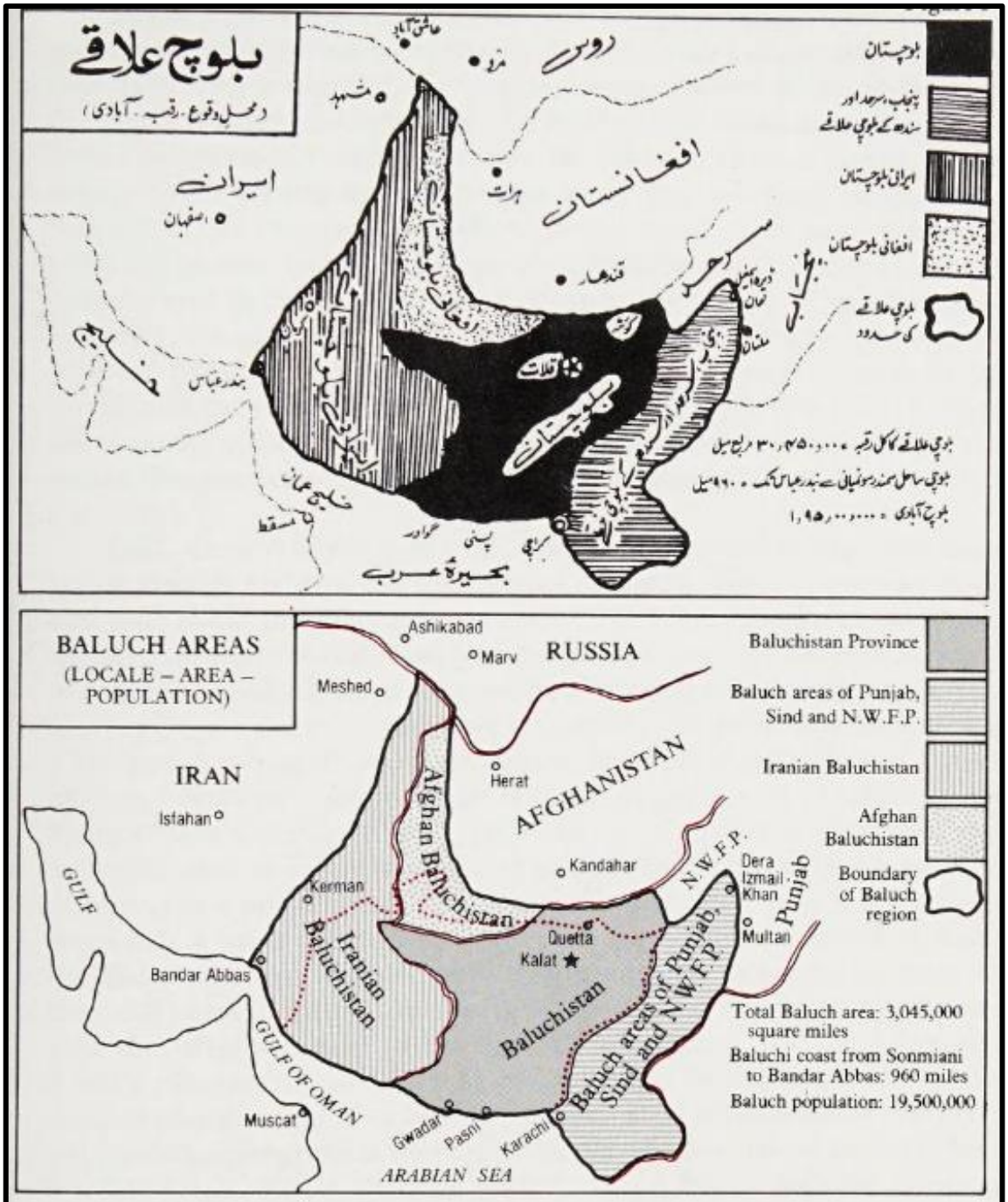
(Harrison, 1981)



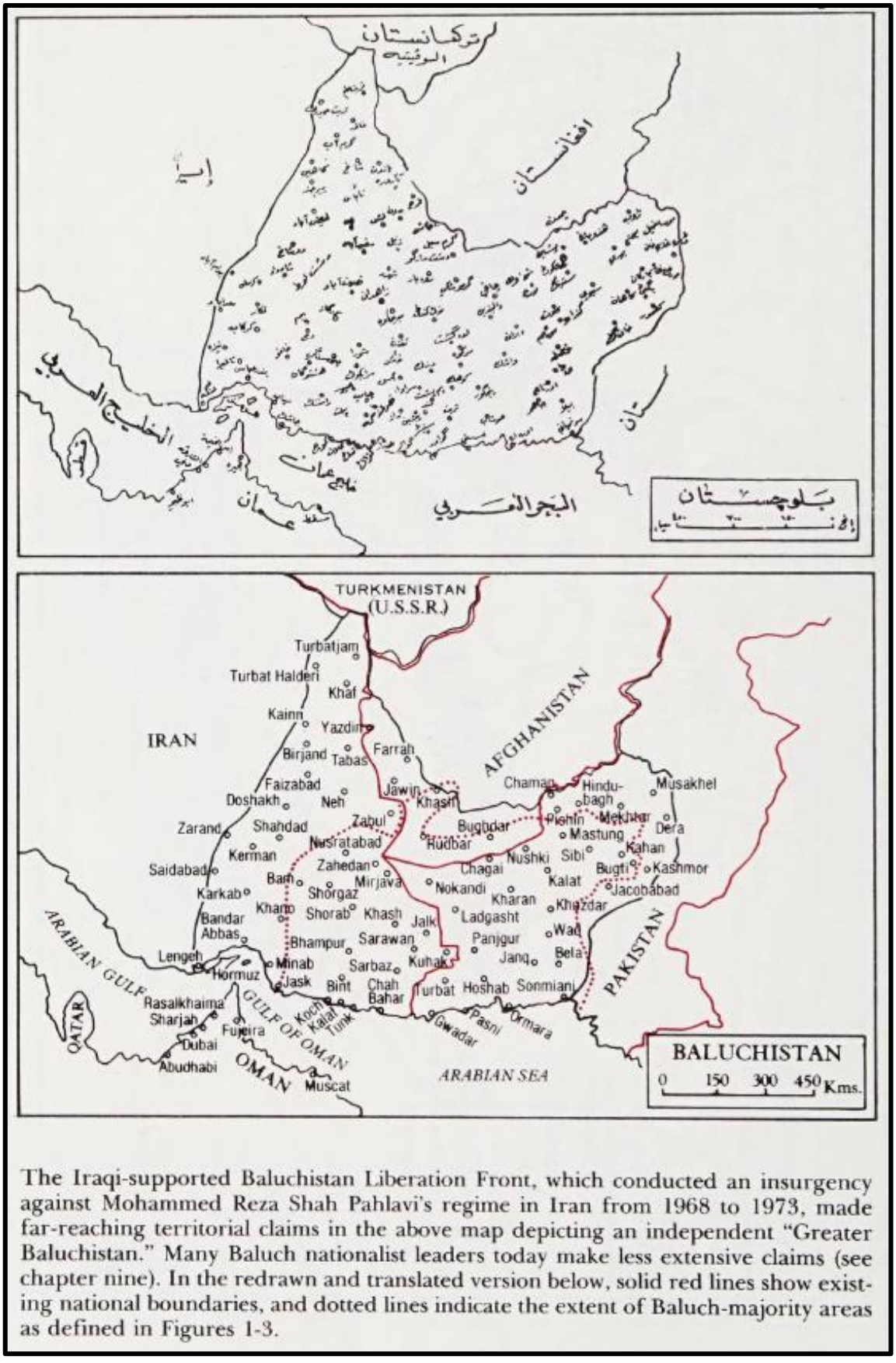
Map 6. First map of Greater Balochistan

BY: Abdul Aziz Kurd, the general secretary of the Anjuman (1933)

Adopted from weekly Al-Baloch, Karachi, 25 December 1932

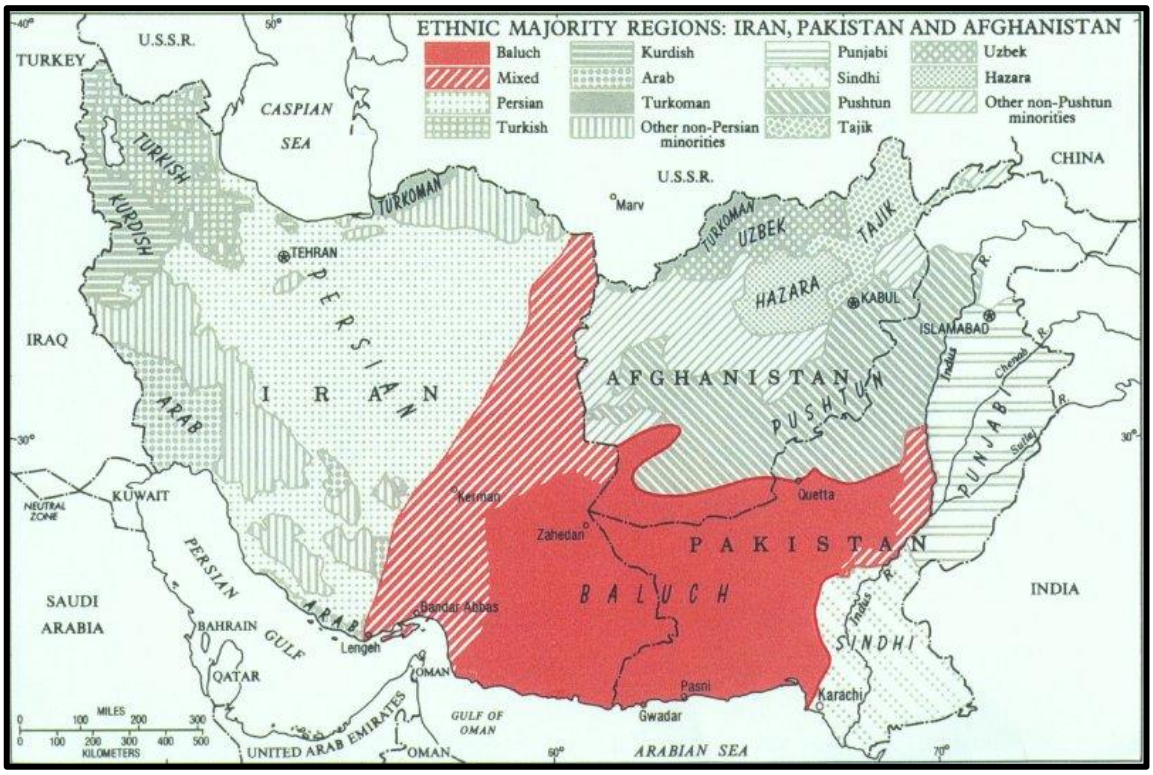


While not openly advocating an independent "Greater Baluchistan," the late Khan of Kalat, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan Baluch, ruler of a Baluch principality that existed for four centuries before the creation of Pakistan, depicted "Baluch Areas" on the cover of a book published in 1970 (see footnote 10, chapter 3). These areas, the Khan wrote, were encompassed by the eighteenth-century domain of Kalat and its tributaries. Two years later, when he was appointed governor of Pakistani Baluchistan, his book was banned. The redrawn and translated version (below) shows existing national boundaries in solid red lines. Dotted lines indicate the extent of Baluch-majority areas as defined in Figures 1-3.

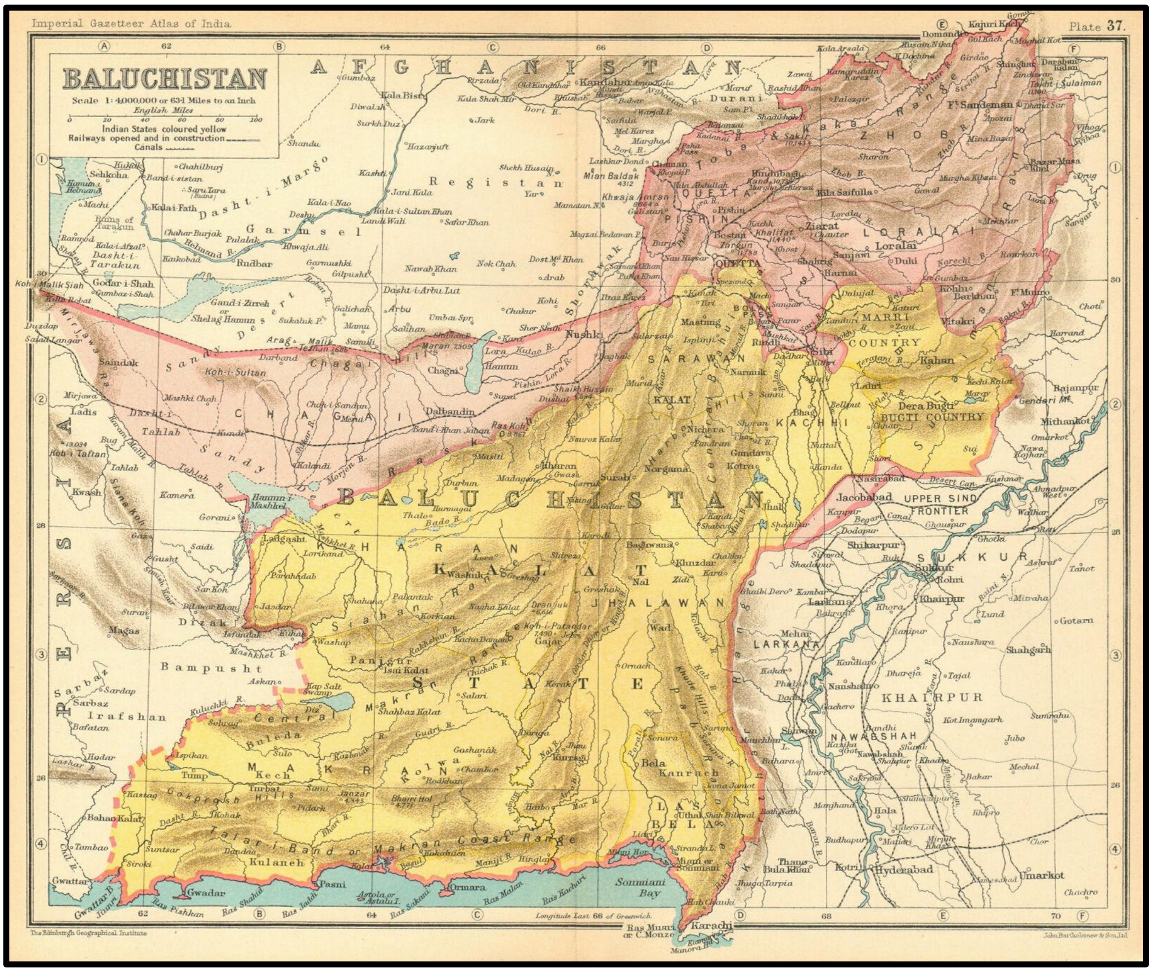


The Iraqi-supported Baluchistan Liberation Front, which conducted an insurgency against Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi's regime in Iran from 1968 to 1973, made far-reaching territorial claims in the above map depicting an independent "Greater Baluchistan." Many Baluch nationalist leaders today make less extensive claims (see chapter nine). In the redrawn and translated version below, solid red lines show existing national boundaries, and dotted lines indicate the extent of Baluch-majority areas as defined in Figures 1-3.

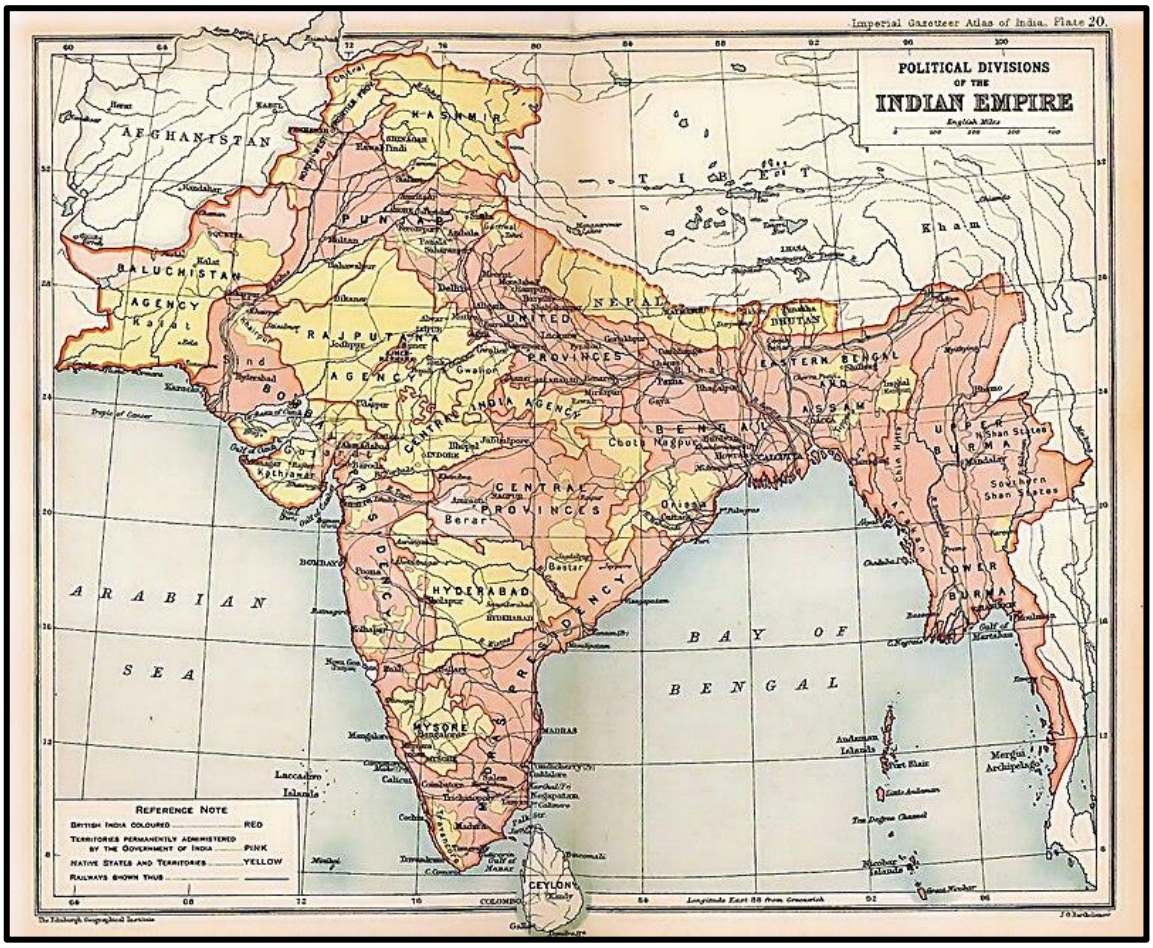
Appendix III – Map of Baloch Majority Regions (Harrison, 1981)



Appendix IV – Map of British Balochistan (Hunter, 1931b, p. 37)



Appendix V – Map of the British Raj (Hunter, 1931b, p. 20)



Appendix VI – Map of Pakistani Balochistan (Magazine PK, 2004)