

Constructing Baloch militancy in Pakistan

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The near-decade-long spate of violence in Balochistan is among the foremost political challenges facing the state and government of Pakistan. While the conflict has serious security implications for bordering Iran and Afghanistan, policy circles have failed to accurately construct the conflict. In the surveyed literature, the Balochistan conflict is mostly referred to as a secessionist insurgency, an internal mass uprising against a constituted government or state, or both, underpinned by the desire for politico-territorial or social change through the use of organized violence. This conceptualization is subjective at best: systemically, the Balochistan conflict is neither an insurgency nor any other form of civil war. The features underlying Baloch militancy warrant a new classification and compatible theory explaining its dynamics.

This paper attempts to explore the empirical nature of Baloch conflict by examining the profile of violence for 21 Baloch-dominated districts, including the provincial capital, Quetta. Our analytical framework comprises the magnitude and character of violence, the writ of the state, and political and popular support.

The first variable, i.e., magnitude and character of violence, records the scale of violence in a geographical context by quantifying certain indicators. The writ of state and civil administration is measured by ascertaining the number as well as progress of development projects, penetration of NGOs in society, number of criminal cases resolved, number of tribal disputes resolved, and type and number of intensity pattern(s). These patterns are classified into six categories; i) rampant (most intense and active); ii) grave (high and persistent incidence of violence); iii) heightened (medium but persistent incidence of violence); iv) episodic (intermittent violence); v) simmering (flash point); and vi) dormant. The third variable, political and popular support, has four indicators: registered voter turnout in the general elections 2008; orientation of political parties; mass mobilization, and national day celebrations. It provides evidence of politico-popular support for the militancy.

Political sociology and conflict summary

Balochistan was raised to the status of province in 1970 by amalgamating the pre-independence Balochistan Administration (British Balochistan) and Balochistan States Union (BSU). The other three states of BSU had joined Pakistan earlier: Mir Ahmad Yar Khan, the ruler of Kalat who had declared its independence on 15 August, signed an instrument of accession later with Pakistan on 30 March 1948, after 225 days of de facto independence.¹ The Baloch nationalists observe 27 March² to mark its annexation to Pakistan and 15 August is "glorified as the first Baloch war of liberation and national self-determination against the oppressive state of Pakistan."³ Pakistan's national days, i.e.,

23 March and 14 August⁴ coincide with the declaration of independence and accession of Kalat.

The province is multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic: its population comprises 44% Pakhtoon, 23% Baloch, 25 Brahvis and 8% mixed nationalities including settlers. About 132 tribes live here, bifurcated into numerous sub-entities.⁵ Both the Pakhtoos and Baloch are straddled across the Pak-Iran-Afghan borders. Politically, they are categorized as a national minority in Pakistan.⁶ Nearly 1 million Afghans also reside in areas adjoining the Pak-Afghan border. Ethnically, the province can be divided into two anthropological regions, with the Pakhtoos concentrated in the eight districts of the northwest. The major territorial chunk (20 districts) is retained by the Baloch and Brahvi-speaking groups with scattered populations of settlers and Pakhtoos. In terms of population, after Quetta, which is the largest city (approx 800,000) of the province, the remaining districts can be classified into five groups i.e., i) large (up to or around 400,000 residents), such as Jaffarabad, Khuzdar and Kech (also called Turbat); ii) medium (around 300,000), such as Lasbela, Chaghai and Bolan; iii) average (between 200,000 and 300,000), such as Naseerabad, Punjgur and Kalat; iv) and small (100,000-200,000), including Awaran, Barkhan, Dera Bugti, Gwadar, Jhal Magsi, Kharan, Mastung, Naushki, Sibi and Washuk.

Since the British Raj, administratively Balochistan continues to be divided into 'A' and 'B' areas. The 'A' areas mostly consist of major urban centers regulated by the police, whereas 'B' areas are under the control of levies comprising local tribesmen. About 90% of Balochistan comprises 'B' areas. The province is important not only because of its rich natural resources but also due to its strategic location, affording it the potential of serving as a trade and energy corridor between West and Central Asia as well as China. Gwadar port reflects this potential. It holds almost 20 percent of the country's mineral and energy resources and has a vast coastline. In terms of socioeconomic indicators, the ethnic Baloch are the least developed and least privileged of all Pakistan's ethnic groups (Table 1),⁷ especially the Baloch and Brahvi population vis-à-vis the Pakhtoos who thrive on multiple businesses and transborder trade.

Table 1: Socioeconomic indicators of Balochistan

Variable	Balochistan	National
Population	9.06	177.10
Cultivated/ cultivable land (million acres)	5.73/17.15	40/200
*Literacy rate	28 (39M/16 F)	57
^Unemployment	0.6 Million	3.05 Million
Registered Medical Personnel (Hakeem/Tabib)	8	797
Homoeopathic Practitioners	52	3626
Doctor-population ratio	1/2958	1/1374
Maternal mortality rate	600/100,000	363/100,000
Under 5 morality rate	158/1000	114/1000
Neonatal mortality rate	72/1000	54/1000
Number of engineers	106	7441

* Three districts surveyed as having lowest participation rate of School Going Children in 1998 census are Jhal Magshi (3.04 %), Kohlu (4.68 %), Dera Bugti (7.25 %). ^ 2009-10

Source: Socioeconomic Indicators of Pakistan 2011- 6th Edition statistic Division; Pakistan & Research; Pakistan Economic Survey 2010-11, Advocacy Fund 2011 and Government of Balochistan March 2012.

The tensions with the central government are not new to Balochistan. The Baloch have long demanded a restructured federal-provincial relationship that would transfer powers from the central government to the provinces. Baloch nationalists' demands for greater political rights, autonomy and control over their natural resources, have led to four insurgencies—1948, 1958-59, 1962-63 and 1973-77, inspired and led by different Baloch leaders. The latter occurred under the political umbrella of the National Awami Party comprising both Baloch as well as Pakhtoon members. Rashid observes that a fifth wave of militancy is now underway, and that the insurgents are now demanding independence.⁸ The Sweden-based Uppsala Conflict Data Project (UCDP) maintains that these demands vary among groups.⁹

In the 1970s India and Afghanistan were seen to be supporting Baloch nationalists: the two states had long-standing disputes with Pakistan. This situation has now changed. Afghanistan is occupied by NATO and Allied forces and increasingly threatened by the resurgence of the Taliban,¹⁰ implying non-interference by both the countries. Besides, an overt declaration to establish an independent Balochistan has often been opposed by Balochis on the grounds that they are not reaping the benefits from the revenues that are generated through the exploitation of the province's natural resources by the Pakistani government.¹¹

1977 onward, Balochistan generally remained calm barring violent cross-border reprisals by Soviet forces for supporting the Afghan jihad. After General Musharraf came to power in 1999, Baloch nationalists were drawn together due to his 'troubling sardars (tribal elder) notion'.¹² Tahir (2008) says that 'the most influential Baloch leaders—Akbar Khan Bugti, Khair Bakhsh Marri and Ataullah Khan Mengal—have had a variety of reasons to be suspicious of the government's involvement in the area, which they viewed as an attempt to de-seat them from tribal chieftainship such as state support to rival factions within the tribe and the deployment of military forces into the region'.¹³ Efforts by the military regime to convert tribal administrative systems overseen by traditional levies into regular districts was viewed as the colonialization of the province, which was later reversed by the elected provincial government in February 2009. The launch of mega-projects during 2004 without local ownership—despite the Balochistan provincial assembly's unanimous resolutions against unpopular federal development plans—further worsened the sense of alienation.¹⁴

The death of Nawab Bugti in 2006 in a military action sparked a violent response and protest rallies in Balochistan and parts of Sindh¹⁵ and was censured by almost all the mainstream political and anti-military forces. Baloch nationalists held a grand jirga (tribal elders' meeting) attended by more than 380 leaders, including 85 tribal chiefs, belying Musharraf's claim that he enjoyed the support of all but three tribal chiefs.¹⁶ In a subsequent development, Balach Marri, the son of Khair Bakhsh Marri, was killed in an attack on 21 November 2007. The cause and location of Balach's death are still unknown, but his death incited another wave of violence in Balochistan.¹⁷ This backdrop led the four main political parties from Balochistan to boycott the 2008 polls.¹⁸ The current provincial polity is thus viewed as unrepresentative of nationalist content. Meanwhile, the Baloch political parties have been further factionalized—a process that started in

1974 reflecting the 'mess of contradictions' plaguing Baloch politics.¹⁹ The discovery of the dead bodies of Baloch National Movement (BNM) President Ghulam Mohammad Baloch and Lala Munir, and Sher Mohammad Baloch of Balochistan Republican Party (BRP) near Kech on 4 April 2009 added fuel to the fire.

The federal government proposed a reform package (Aghaz-e-Haqiqat Balochistan) on 24 November 2009 to settle one of the most troublesome constitutional issues i.e., the redefining of the jurisdictional boundaries of the federal and provincial governments including the devolution of jurisdiction over the concurrent list.²⁰ It was dismissed by nationalists and separatists who insisted on being granted independence.²¹ The 18th Constitutional amendment in 2010 further devolved administrative and fiscal powers to the provinces but without any effect on the ground situation in Balochistan.

Militant structures, leadership and strategy

Reliable information on nearly a dozen of the armed groups is difficult to corroborate. Nevertheless, the contours of the groups involved in the militancy can be established to some extent.²² Among these, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) is the most well known. Other main resistance organizations are the Baloch Republican Army (BRA), the Baloch People's Liberation Front (BLF), Lashkar-e-Balochistan (LB) and Balochistan Liberation United Front (BLUF), an affiliate of the BLA. Each came into being in the aftermath of a major political event, e.g., the BLA appeared in its present incarnation soon after the arrest of Khair Bakhsh Marri in January 2000, who was accused of having a hand in the murder of a Balochistan High Court judge. Some reports suggest BLA was set up by Baloch tribesmen in exile in Afghanistan some time during the 1980s.²³ Similarly, BRA came into existence following Dr. Shazia Khalid's rape case in January 2005, and Bugti's death in August 2006; it is believed to be controlled by his grandson, Brahamdagh Khan Bugti.²⁴

The history of the onset of contemporary militancy is recorded from the same period. BLUF, a militant organization without any notified hierarchy of leadership that emerged after the kidnapping of UNHCR chief John Solecki, is thought to be 'more sophisticated', considerably more hard-line' and appears more aggressive and violent than BLF and BLA.²⁵ The BLF, LB, Baloch Youth Army (BYA) and Balochistan Musalla Defah Tanzeem (BMDT), are relatively small outfits without declared leadership who have also claimed responsibility for various militant acts. Each is active in a certain area with resident operatives in Quetta.

Besides these, two other organizations, the Baloch Difah Army (BDA) and Sipah-e-Shuda-e-Balochistan (SSB), are alleged to be agency-sponsored. Some regard BMDT as an 'anti-Baloch-nationalist' group: little is known about it, but it is suspected to have been launched by the security establishment. This is denied by the army and some moderate Baloch leaders question whether the Tanzeem is also sponsored by the radicals.²⁶ Anjuman-i-Ittehad-i-Marri (AIM) is linked to Khair Bakhsh Marri; the nature of its activities are, however, not known. The Balochistan Student Organization (BSO-Azad) is also part of the militant collective. Out of all the groups, BLA, BLF, BRA, BLUF, LB and BSO Azad have been proscribed. The four principal ideologues associated with

the current militancy are Harbiar Murri, Brahamdagh Bugti supported by his brother-in-law Mehran Baloch, Allah Nazar and Javed Mengal. The former three are based in Western Europe.

A recent entrant to the militant structures is the Tehreek-e-Nefaz-e-Aman Balochistan (TNAB: "movement for the restoration of peace in Balochistan"),²⁷ which is said to be the armed wing of the Muthahida Mahaz Balochistan (United Front Balochistan)—a political party headed by Siraj Raisani, the brother of former provincial Chief Minister (CM) Aslam Raisani,²⁸ and was allegedly established by state agencies. The nexus between BLA, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and Iran-based "Jundullah's" "Soldiers of God" is reported to complement each other in fields of logistics.²⁹ The assassination attempt on the CM of Balochistan presents an intersection of militant and sectarian agendas. The LeJ claimed that it had attacked the CM for giving protection to Shiite mourners during Muharram, whereas BLUF stated that it had carried out the attack as a warning to him for speaking out against Baloch armed groups.³⁰ Jaish-ul-Islam, which appeared on the sectarian front following the Mastung bombing on 30 December 2012, is the local variant of LeJ.³¹ The Pakhtoon population of the province has generally maintained indifference toward militancy by the Baloch.

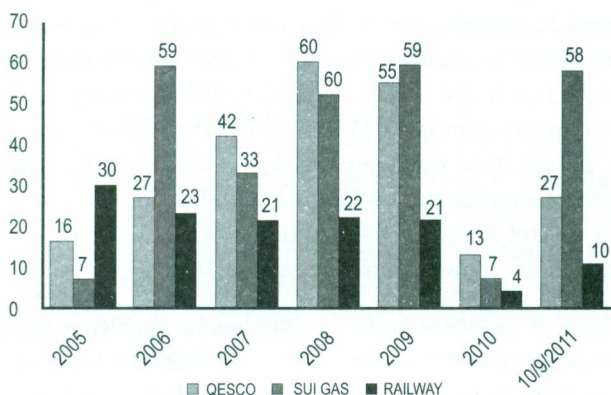
The target killings that started in 2003 were initially sectarian. They gradually encompassed law enforcement agencies (LEAs) and non-Baloch settlers. In an interview with a private TV channel in Pakistan on 15 April 2009, Brahamdagh urged the Baloch people to kill any non-Balochi residing in Balochistan, whether civilian or military personnel, to prove themselves as Balochis.³² Nearly 650 citizens lost their lives between 2007 and September 2011,³³ the majority being unarmed Punjabis or of Punjabi lineage, most of who are fourth- or fifth-generation inhabitants of Balochistan. This tally rose to more than 2,300 at the end of December 2011.³⁴ Simultaneously, following a more or less a regular pattern, young Baloch persons, known for their nationalist views and activism, began to go missing and their bullet-riddled corpses bearing torture marks would be found after a few days, dumped in some isolated area.³⁵

In 2006, under the military regime, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) cited numerous instances of intimidation, arbitrary arrests, torture, disappearances and extrajudicial killings by security forces and intelligence agencies. These practices have gradually worsened.³⁶ Kalat alone registered 67 dead bodies during 2011.³⁷ 'A' areas have seen two thirds more violence compared to 'B' areas,³⁸ which has been declared 'sensitive', involving 13 major and minor Baloch cities, by the Home Department of the Balochistan government. From highly sensitive through medium and less sensitive locations, these include Quetta and Khuzdar; Dera Bugti, Gawadar, Jaffarabad, Kech, Mastung, and Naseerabad; and Bolan, Kalat, Kharan, Naushki, and Panjgur, respectively. Some of these locations were historically the scene of feuds between prominent tribes such as the Rind-Raisani (1983), Luni-Marri (1980) and Bugti-Mazari (January 2002) feuds. In 2008, the provincial government set up a committee to resolve inter/intra tribal conflicts and disputes.

Sustained battles by militants beyond traditional peripheries are rare. Their primary

strategy relies on small-scale unconventional warfare (the target killing of settlers, ambush of convoys, IED attacks) combined with selective military engagement. In urban terrain, they employ sympathetic militant organizations to secure intelligence and harness explosive devices. Infrastructural warfare is another key dimension of violence against selected targets of national importance such as electricity supply lines, grid stations, gas fields, and railway tracks (see Figure 1). Dera Bugti, Kech, Panjgur, Jaffarabad and Naseerabad are common sites for such attacks.

Figure 1: Attacks on QESCO, Sui Gas and Railway Installations: 2005-2011



Source: Home Department, Government of Balochistan.

Referred to as part of Golden Crescent, the 'province is an important centre for the trafficking of arms and drugs that generates substantial income capable of financing the supply of arms and ammunition to local armed groups. In particular, large number of Baloch workers in the Gulf is recognized as an important source financing these groups³⁹ while 'young Baloch separatists living in Kabul, Kandahar, London, Brussels and Geneva' are now considered instrumental in setting the agenda for violence in Balochistan.⁴⁰ The government and public at large look at the Balochistan issue as a foreign-sponsored attempt to destabilize the state. Christian Fair from the Rand Corporation argues that Indian officials "are pumping money into Baluchistan."⁴¹ Former Interior Minister Rehman Malik has repeatedly stated: "We are not leveling mere allegations against India but have solid evidence of Indian involvement in Balochistan. The weapons recovered from various areas were Indian-made" and that "Afghanistan's soil was also being used for the destabilization of Balochistan".⁴² According to UCDP there have also been claims that UK and US intelligence have helped the Baloch groups to counter China's growing presence in the area.⁴³ The US Council on Foreign Relations likewise affirms that some 'experts' believe there is Indian involvement behind the insurgency,⁴⁴ which is echoed by Lieven, who argues that that 'this is with the covert support of Indian intelligence'.⁴⁵ Despite these claims, the government has not presented any evidence so far to prove its stand before the public.

Characterization of existing conflict

State, civil society and intelligentsia's perspectives

At least a dozen terms are used to describe the Balochistan situation. The civil

bureaucracy and polity refer to it generically as the Balochistan “issue, problem, public disorder or unrest”⁴⁶ and the perpetrators of violence are called ‘miscreants’. Mutedly, some government functionaries consider it low-level insurgency. Most writers and think-tanks term it an insurgency: armed conflict, separatist insurgency or nationalist insurgency.⁴⁷ For LEAs, it is terrorism, militancy, etc.⁴⁸ Some call it an ‘insurgency-like situation’.⁴⁹ The armed nationalists call themselves freedom fighters and identify their movement as a liberation war, freedom struggle, armed resistance, or independence war.⁵⁰ Civil society organizations view it from the prism of human rights.

Lieven’s description of the conflict situation departs from others. He notes that the revolt has not been substantial in military terms (which would also mean that Indian aid to the insurgents must so far be quite low). What is happening is a “low-level ethnic cleansing” (emphasis added)—the district of Kalat was a typical example.⁵¹ It is worthwhile also to note the different interpretations of the notion of military operations. The Pakistan Army doctrinally defines a “military operation” as one in which tanks, helicopters, and weaponry are employed to accomplish a goal, whereas the Baloch equate extra-judicial killings, [forced] disappearances, and even the checking at checkpoints with “operation.”⁵² From the latter’s perspective, the number of military operations runs into hundreds. In essence, widespread confusion prevails across the board on a pragmatic identification of conflict, leave alone foreign observers who view it from remote locations. The absence of a coherent response to Balochistan is thus no surprise.

The research projects’ construction

Global research projects construct political violence differently. Their theoretical and empirical approaches underpin a variety of considerations in defining and classifying armed conflicts.⁵³ Structuring it as an armed insurgency during the 1970s, UCDP employs two contexts to formalize the current situation in Balochistan i.e., intrastate and one-sided organized violence (BLA versus civilians).⁵⁴ With a total of 1,188 fatalities since 2004, it has been grouped as ‘minor armed conflict’ (insurgency) with territory or autonomy as the principal incompatibility.⁵⁵ Correlates of War does not include the Balochistan situation of the 1970s in its latest intrastate version 4.1, which it classifies as ‘civil war over local issues’ by Baloch separatists’.⁵⁶

The Centre for Systemic Peace (CSP) describes Balochistan’s case as ‘ethnic violence’, recording 1,500 fatalities since 2005 and refers to it as a ‘rebellion’.⁵⁷ It is instructive to note that the Balochistan insurgency of the early 1970s has been classified by this project as ‘ethnic war’ (Baloch separatism) resulting in 12,000 deaths. The 2011 list of violent conflicts in Asia by the Hamburg Consortium Causes of War (AKUF) classifies Balochistan as ‘armed conflict’ of secessionist nature where rebel groups are fighting for the independence of Balochistan.⁵⁸ The South Asian Terrorism Portal (SATP) provides substantial statistical details in its Balochistan Assessment 2012, mainly on fatalities, but it does not delineate the identity of the conflict, instead using qualitative expressions such as ‘state oppression’, ‘sectarianism’ and ‘terrorist violence’ to characterize the prevailing conditions.⁵⁹ SATP’s description of the conflict is practically unmethodical and is styled in interpretative paradigm rather than empiricism. Whether or not the

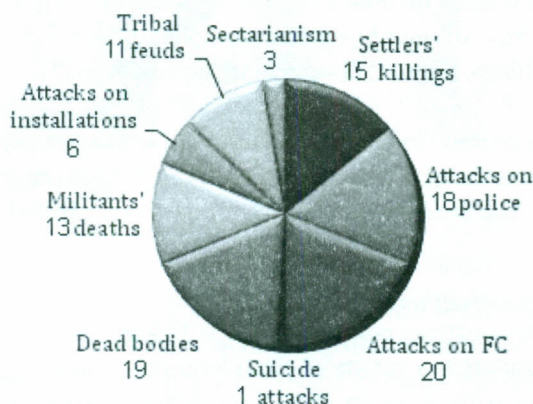
assessments of these projects are structurally tenable is determined next.

Analytical examination of conflict situation

Magnitude and character of violence

Disparate and, in some cases, overlapping competing interests by ethno-nationalists and religious, criminal, feudal and extrajudicial forces has made the security landscape of Balochistan murky. Numerous violent contexts arise in proximity simultaneously—sectarianism, tribal, conventional and organized. Apolitical in nature, sectarianism is confined to three districts, most notably in Quetta and Mastung; conventional crime is prevalent all over and violent tribal feuds are reported in 11 districts. Organized violence, which is non-feudal and non-conventional, and is observed across the entire breadth of the Baloch districts, is the principal form of conflict (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Incidence of organized violence



Source: Author's compilation.

Settlers' killings are common in 11 Baloch districts with the most common occurrences in Quetta, Mustung, Naushki, Lasbela and Kech. Bolan, Barkhan Jaffarabad, Naseerabad, Awaran, Gwadar and Kharan have witnessed sporadic targeting while Kalat, Khuzdar and Chaghi were dormant during 2011 as a result of settlers' migration.⁶⁰ These districts reported active violence during 2010.

Attacks on the police and FC (Frontier Corps)⁶¹ are observed in 10 districts with Quetta and Dera Bugti experiencing the most intense assaults against both entities while Naseerabad, Kalat, Mastung, Gwadar, Lasbela and Kech have experienced such attacks consistently against the FC. Jaffarabad, Bolan and Kohlu are on the lower side while Sibi, Barkhan Awaran Washuk were subjected to violence sporadically. In particular, the FC has suffered the most in Dera Bugti and Kech.

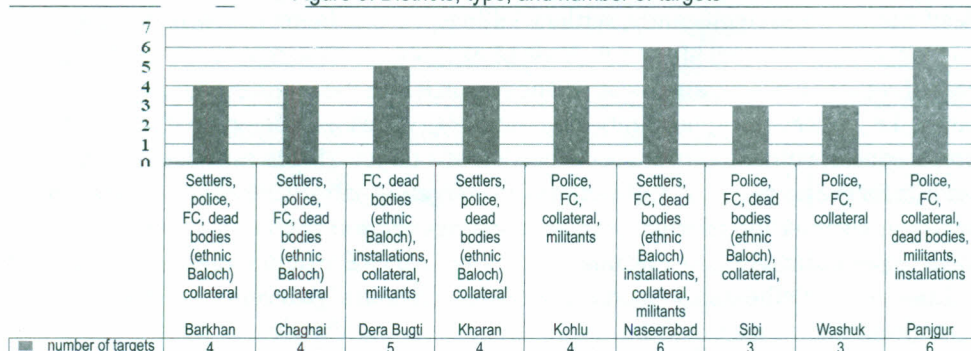
Among the attacks on vital installations, the Dera Bugti Sui gas supply infrastructure has continually been a target of unrelenting destruction. PTCL (Pakistan Telecommunication Corporation Limited) installations and government buildings in Panjgur and Kech are targeted at somewhat consistent intervals. PTCL installations and

government buildings in Khuzdar, and electric towers/railway tracks near Jaffarabad and Naseerabad are targeted sporadically. Unidentified dead bodies have been found in 19 districts⁶² whereas militants' deaths have been documented in 13 districts.⁶³ Quetta has both in common.

Tribal feuds are widespread in Baloch areas, most notably in Bolan (formerly Kacchi), Dera Bugti, Naseerabad with Quetta, Kohlu and Jhal Magsi experiencing simmering currents.⁶⁴ In March 2010, a total of 54 inter- and intra-tribal feuds had been recorded in Baloch districts.⁶⁵ At present, the Kalpars and Bugtis, who have fought over gas royalties in the past, have tense relations. In 2006, the clashes became violent, involving automatic weaponry and causing several deaths.⁶⁶ Other than tribal feuds, which have been a historical part of Baloch culture and the sectarianism that is relatively new phenomenon in Balochistan (but not an exception elsewhere in Pakistan), the character of violence in terms of spread and selection of targets points to three distinct symptoms.

First, geographically, in addition to the provincial capital i.e., Quetta, all large, medium, sizeable, small and smaller Baloch districts are caught in a spate of violent currents with the exception of Jhal Magsi. Second, the nature of violence points to the existence of a violent struggle among competing forces. Third, the target selection reveals the involvement of state as well as non-state actors. For example, the attacks against the FC and vital installations characterize indifference towards state symbols whereas the attacks on the police seem to indicate a rejection of local political authority. The killing of non-Baloch settlers, especially Punjabis, injects an element of ethnic contestation; and suicide attacks against pro-government ethnic Baloch, albeit exceptional, reveals hatred towards such elements. Militants' deaths indicate major encounters between security forces and (Baloch) opponents as well as principal zones of operation. The dead bodies of abducted Baloch political activists and youth signify extrajudicial killings allegedly by state organs, or state/provincial government-sponsored armed groups. The data on 10 Baloch districts (Naseerabad, Awaran, Kharan, Kohlu, Dera Bugti, Chaghi, Sibi, Wasukh, Barkhan and Pangur) empirically validates these assertions (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Districts, type, and number of targets



Source: Author's compilation.

Table 2 shows that a total of 2,078 incidents took place from January 2009 to February

2012 in Baloch areas.⁶⁷ There have been 451 (21.70%) incidents against government structures i.e., police, FC, vital installations. Encounters with militants and the recovery of dead bodies totaled 734, which accounts for 35.32% of the total incidents. Some 257 incidents took place related to settlers' killings (12.37%) while those involving collateral damage (i.e., the killing of alleged pro-government suspects and other unarmed civilians) numbered the highest—571, constituting 27.48% of the total incidents. There are no reports of jailbreak from anywhere or of mass/mob attacks on police stations, government buildings, military installations, or open confrontations between law enforcement agencies and citizenry. The number of fatalities recorded during the above period was 1,812.⁶⁸ Law enforcement agencies (police, FC, constabulary) suffered 297 deaths or 29.35% of the total human loss. Militants' deaths and dead bodies numbered 482 or 26.23% while settlers' killings were 227 or 12.53%. The number of civilians killed was 566—the highest percentage, 31.24%.

Table 2: Number and type of incidents and fatalities

Category	Incidents		Fatalities	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Settlers' killings	257	12.37	227	12.53
Attacks on police	169	8.13	161	8.89
Attacks on FC	181	8.71	133	7.34
Suicide attack	1	0.05	16	0.88
Sectarianism	63	3.03	224	12.36
Collateral/levies	571	27.48	566	31.24
Dead bodies	384	18.48	384	21.19
Militants' deaths	350	6.84	98	5.4
Attack on installations	101	4.86	3	0.17
Total	2078	-	1812	-

Source: Author's compilation

A comparative review of the number of incidents vis-à-vis fatalities reveals that the intensity of targeting does not necessarily escalate the number of fatalities but the type of target does. For example, the number of attacks against settlers and LEAs is lower but in terms of precision, their lethality is higher. This correlation also applies in the case of dead bodies. Most significantly, settlers' killings, despite being nearly half in terms of incidence, have an equal hit rate vis-à-vis LEAs (Table 3). This trend is not visible in the case of collateral or militants' deaths. The reason lies in the manner of engagement of a target i.e., selective, opportunity and random, which is related to the degree of preparedness, vulnerability or social location of a target. This in turn determines their priority for the perpetrator. Furthermore, the targeting pattern indicates multiple levels of engagement. While selective or random killing occurs at the human, and social level, other types of targeting i.e., against the FC, police, vital installations, is systemically multilateral, with the state, regional/provincial and central governments respectively as the objectives.

Table 3: Correlation of number of incidents and fatalities

Targets / victims	Incidents / %	Fatalities / %	Correlation %	Engagement
Settlers' killings	257/12.37	227 /12.53%	88.33	Selective
LEAs	451 (21.70 %)	297 / 29.35	88.03	Opportunity
Collateral	571/27.48%	566/31.24	99.12	Random
Dead bodies	384	384	100	Selective
Militants' deaths	350	98	28	Random/opportunity

Source: Author's compilation

The writ of the state and local administration

All development projects by the provincial government are centered on Quetta mainly to strengthen the institutional or functional capacity of the provincial government.⁶⁹ No major project has been reported in the backward Baloch districts. In the seven reviewed districts, Kalat, Kech, Gwadar, Jhal Magsi, Kharan, Panjgur and Quetta, the utilization of the provincial Public Sector Development Programme) for the fiscal year 2009/10 is skewed.⁷⁰ The percentage of utilized funds has varied between 6.74% and 20% while no mention is made of the disposal of the balance released for development. The major contributor in development projects inside Balochistan is the Pakistan Army, which has opened cadet colleges, schools, and welfare centers in Dera Bugti, Sui, Kohlu, besides introducing the large-scale induction of Baloch youth into the army by relaxing age and other selection criteria.⁷¹ Among others, the "induction of thousands of Baloch youths into the army" is claimed as a success story over the last three years.⁷²

The non-availability of data at a single source and number of NGOs, mostly local, make it difficult to locate their field operations and identify the challenges they face. In Quetta district, there are 220 NGOs, with the majority based in Quetta city.⁷³ These mainly focus on social welfare, women, and development projects though without any appreciable signature. There are several other NGOs, including foreign organizations, working in remote districts in health, environment, food, infrastructure development, and education. Noteworthy among these are the National Rural Support Programme, Balochistan Organization for Rural Development, Bargad Organization for Youth, Marie Stopes Society (Makran), Development Association of Youth Balochistan (Sibi), Pakistan Family Planning Association, Society for Education Promotion and Rural Support (SEPRS), IUCN, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).⁷⁴ The Falah-e-Insaniyat Foundation of Jamaatud Dawa (JuD)—the front for the anti-India Lashkar-e-Taiba—is another major NGO that has announced developmental and welfare projects in Balochistan.⁷⁵

Apart from FAO and ICRC, IUCN has engaged in a major way in implementing the Integrated District Development Visions project in Mastung, Quetta and Pishin districts.⁷⁶ However, the space for continued operations by these NGOs is increasingly constricted due to security concerns. Officials from the FAO, ICRC, UNHCR, Balochistan Rural Support Programme (BRSP) and other organizations are often kidnapped and have been killed in different parts of the province over the past couple of years, generally in non-Baloch areas. Most prestigious organizations working in interior Balochistan have therefore, stopped their operations owing to security threats.⁷⁷ It is difficult to ascertain the identity of the perpetrators responsible for violence against

NGOs: involved observers refer to it as the handiwork of strategic competitors of Pakistan.⁷⁸

The total number of cases recorded by levies and police in 20 districts during three years is 1,561. Khuzdar division tops the list with 520 cases.⁷⁹ Out of these, only a handful of cases (12) have been registered. In almost no case has there been any nomination of suspects or arrests or details made available of further investigation. In the meanwhile, more have been added and met with an identical fate. The authority and influence of the police as well as levies, a vital link in criminal justice system, is practically non-existent in these areas. The critical shortfall of experienced police officers is a major factor in accentuating this situation. Most Pakistan Police Service posts remain vacant in Balochistan as no officer seems ready to discharge duties there.⁸⁰ The same is true of the civil administration.

There is no evidence available on any progress in resolving the lingering disputes among tribes, which reflects the rhetorical nature of commitments made by political governments.⁸¹

The yearly type and mean of intensity patterns in Table 4 have been generated by employing an intensity matrix covering 20 Baloch districts (less Jhal Magsi, which, other than tribal feuds, has not witnessed militancy). The mean pattern in each district depicts its overall stability outlook. Apart from Quetta, which is classified as rampant, two are grave, one is marginally grave, eight are heightened and the same number is episodic. No district is found to be simmering or dormant. With 12 districts showing signs of intense violence, the effectiveness of the administrative machinery can be easily ascertained.

Aggregating the combined effect of five variables, the districts can be identified in terms of administrative effectiveness as shown in Table 5 below. Out of 20 districts, the writ of the state is totally non-existent in 2, is about to collapse in 8, is poor in 3, and weakly functional in 7.

Table 4: Intensity patterns

Distt	Year	Incidents/ fatalities	Yearly pattern	Mean intensity pattern	Dist.	Year	Incidents/ fatalities	Yearly pattern	Mean intensity pattern
Kech	2009	30/16	Htn	Marginally grave	Mastung	2009	16/9	Htn	Grave
	2010	22/21	Htn			2010	22/25	Htn	
	2011	24/30	Grv			2011	30/54	Ram	
	2012	3/21	Htn			2012			
N/abad	2009	15/29	Grv	Heightened	Noskki	2009	5/4	Epd	Episodic
	2010	7/5	Epd			2010	6/3	Epd	
	2011	23/16	Htn			2011	2/5	Epd	
	2012	4/5	Epd			2012			
Jaffarabad	2009	15/12	Htn	Heightened	Kohlu	2009	6/4	Epd	Episodic
	2010	6/2	Epd			2010	10/4	Epd	
	2011	15/30	Grv			2011	9/6	Epid	
	2012	4/7	Epd			2012	1/1	Epd	
Quetta	2009	170/163	Ram	Rampant	Pangur	2009	4/1	Epd	Heightened
	2010	141/170	Ram			2010	15/13	Htn	
	2011	82/185	Ram			2011	11/18	Htn	
	2012	8/7	Epd			2012			
Dera Bugti	2009	73/45	Ram	Heightened	Kharan	2009	4/1	Epd	Episodic
	2010	25/12	Htn			2010	4/2	Epd	
	2011	60/34	Ram			2011	3		
	2012	14/12	Htn			2012			
Lasbela	2009	10/2	Epd	Episodic	Barkhan	2009	5/2	Epd	Episodic
	2010	30/14	Htn			2010	2/1	Epd	
	2011	13/5	Epd			2011	6/6	Epd	
	2012					2012			
Gwadar	2009	17/3	Htn	Heightened	Khuzdar	2009	44/22	Htn	Grave
	2010	22/9	Htn			2010	45/31	Ram	
	2011	5/11	Epd			2011	10/10	Htn	
	2012	3				2012	-		
Kalat	2009	14/17	Htn	Heightened	Sibi	2009	5/5	Epd	Episodic
	2010	23/18	Htn			2010	6/2	Epd	
	2011	8/7	Epd			2011	4/15	Htn	
	2012					2012			
Awaran	2009	6/4	Epd	Episodic	Washuk	2009	5/4	Epd	Episodic
	2010	3/1	Epd			2010	1		
	2011	6/4	Epd			2011	1/2	Epd	
	2012					2012			
Bolan	2009	19/12	Htn	Heightened	Chaghi	2009	4/2	Epd	Episodic
	2010	9/8	Epd			2010	1	Epd	
	2011	14/13	Htn			2011	1/1	Epd	
	2012	3				2012			

Key: Ram (rampant); Grv (grave); Htn (heightened); Epd (Episodic); Sim (simmering); Dor (dormant).

Source: Author's compilation

Table 5: Degree of the writ of the state

Rank	Districts	Total	Status
1	Quetta, Dera Bugti,	2	Total failure
2	Kech, Khuzdar, Mastung, Jaffarabad, Panjgur, Naseerabad, Gwadar, Kalat,	8	Near failure
3	Bolan, Lasbela, Barkhan	3	Poor
4	Awaran, Kohlu, Noshki, Kharan, Sibi, Washuk, chaghi	7	Weakly functional
	Grand total	20	

Source: Author's compilation

Political and popular support

The provincial assembly elected in 2008 comprised several ethnic Baloch belonging to mainstream political parties, coupled with some nationalist representation e.g., the Balochistan National Party (Awami) (BNP-A with 7 seats), National Party (1 seat) and eight likeminded independents out of a 65-member assembly, including women legislators which in toto constituted 24% of the Baloch nationalistic voice in provincial affairs.⁸² In the national assembly of Pakistan, out of eight Baloch members, only one belonged to an ethnic party i.e., BNP (A), and the remaining members represented major national political parties.⁸³

Voter turnout for the national and provincial assembly elections in Balochistan in 2008 was assessed at 31.32% and 33.29% respectively—only fractionally ahead of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and closely trailing behind Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but substantially low compared to the rest of the country.⁸⁴ This voting pattern is identical to that of the local government elections of 2005 (31.06%).⁸⁵ In addition to the marginal culture of political participation, some nationalist parties such as the Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party concede that the boycott of the previous election caused more harm than good. The BNP (Mengal) has recently adopted a clear position in favor of democracy and the unity of Pakistan.⁸⁶ There are nevertheless unsolicited reports of militants having pressurized the Baloch segment of the political parties to wean away from the 2013 elections. Senator Shahid Hassan Bugti of the Jamhoori Wattan Party (JWP) observes: "It does not matter whether nationalist politicians agree with the ideology and demands of the separatists. The fact is they have sympathies for those in the mountains."⁸⁷

Although there have been protests and antigovernment rallies and strikes in Balochistan spurred by diverse factors including religious factors, none have occurred persistently, barring sporadic sit-ins and protests by the relatives of missing persons (not more than 100 persons at a time). The US-based Minority at Risk Project does not indicate any major Baloch protest that has brought together 10,000 people or more.⁸⁸ Even later counts have not crossed three digits. Likewise, the district administration has not been targeted in the Baloch belt and no armed popular protests have been reported.

In March 2011, the Pakistan Army and the FC organized republic day celebrations in Quetta, Gwadar, Loralai, Khuzdar, Chaman, Pasni, Kech and other townships,⁸⁹ which were joined by the Chief Minister and parliamentarians in similar ceremonies. The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority suspended cell phone services in Balochistan on the day reportedly to prevent anti-state propaganda, but citing technical reasons.⁹⁰ In 2012, both on 23 March as well as 14 August, Prince Muhammad Khan Ahmadzai, the son of the Khan of Kalat, hoisted the Pakistani flag at his residence and at a public meeting in Ziarat. The Khan of Kalat, Mir Suleman Khan Daud, in self-exile in the UK, however, played down his son's speech in Ziarat, and argued for the continuation of the struggle for an independent Balochistan.⁹¹ Both were however criticized by the Baloch media.⁹² A Baloch website, Balochwarna News, claimed enthusiastic Independence Day celebrations by the Baloch community,⁹³ but this was not substantiated by any credible source.

In the same vein, cultural symbols have been employed by the Baloch nationalists as rallying narratives to co-opt the public: freedom struggle heroes such as Mir Ahamad Yar Khan, Nawab Nouroz Khan, Sher Mohammad Bijarani Marri, and Nawab Bugti; a tricolour independent Balochistan flag, and Baloch nationalism, etc.⁹⁴ However, other than a pride intrinsic to all cultures, the impact of culture as a unifying force for inciting a popular war is not visible on the ground. A Gallup survey for DFID on July 20, 2012 revealed that the vast majority of Balochis oppose the idea of an independent Balochistan, while 79 percent of the Baloch population and 53 percent of Pashtuns support the idea that the people of Balochistan should have greater control over their political affairs. Among the Baloch, 37 percent favor independence whereas among the Pashtun population only 12 percent do so.⁹⁵

Salient findings, conflict typology and theoretical framework

A set of three variables was selected to measure and determine the character of Baloch militancy. Two suggestions were made at the outset: that the present labeling of the conflict is subjective and structurally flawed. It is claimed that the Baloch context contains the germs of postmodern conflict, and that the intensity of the violence is correlated with ethnicity rather than the number of incidents. This study vindicates these assertions. In general terms, material support from India and Afghanistan or the Gulf States seems exaggerated. Other than verbal claims by state functionaries, no verifiable evidence exists for implicating these countries. Some studies suggest that they provide covert support to Baloch militants, but their argument is not substantiated by data.

No nationalist or mainstream political parties are found to be engaged in the militancy. Anti-state rhetoric is common in public statements mainly by the BNP (M) and National Party, but this is true of elsewhere in Pakistan. Elected representatives from the Baloch regions have lost their influence in managing the affairs of their constituencies, else there is a dire lack of will or capacity to do so, which is evident from the ineffective governance of public institutions. Furthermore, the degree of state penetration in Baloch districts is seriously questionable.

What emerges is that the prevailing state of militancy in Balochistan is a complex web of a variety of contexts that does not easily fit into any of the operational forms it is generally associated with. Besides, the profile of militancy cannot be termed a simple problem, a case of public disorder, unrest or the perpetrators categorized as miscreants. These claims are beset by risks. To speak of the problem as a 'conflict' carries with it an objectifying force that underestimates the complexities of the problem.⁹⁶

The organizational contours and characteristics that underpin the structural form of Baloch militancy suggest that it is a major armed conflict driven less by traditional 'contested incompatibility' and more by a retributive vigor toward resisting state symbols and authority.⁹⁷ While there is discontent, the facets of a popular uprising and sustained armed protest are absent. One possible restraining factor inhibiting large-scale concentration may be the province's territorial sprawl and difficult terrain. The population appears to be neutral at best, unlike those seen in insurgencies elsewhere.

Empirically, no evidence is available on the existence of any liberated territories. Therefore, the Balochistan situation is not a classic insurgency or rebellion; there are signs of large-scale guerilla warfare but without any deliberate attempts to seize power and secure areas as operational bases. This casts doubts on the commonly heard secessionist agenda of militancy. At the same time, it points out that whether collapsed, fragile or ineffective, the state commands a nominal presence in the form of *de jure* borders with neighboring countries, national and provincial legislators as part of decision-making bodies, a fairly functional judiciary, LEAs, district and rural governments, a modicum of power, and communication infrastructure.

In institutional terms, the structure of violence is not monolithic due to the involvement of multiple region-based actors. The absence of a unified vision, central command authority, (military or political) as well as a coherent campaign strategy suggest that the militant regimes are factionalized, which is partially highlighted by the diversity in target selection, methods of attack and spatial dimensions. Element of territoriality among the groups operating on the behest of diverse ideologues imply strong vibes of warlordism, which is also reflected by the multi-source political economy sustaining the conflict, mostly from abroad.

The study also finds strains of ethnic cleansing by ethno-nationalist militants, as well as by anti-militant forces. The targeting framework appears to have multilateral objectives on the part of the militants while the opposite side engages only humans. The mysterious killings of ethnic Balochis appears to be a countervailing strategy allegedly adopted by the state apparatus to indirectly redress the impact of violence on aggrieved settlers' families from other provinces but mainly to eliminate opposition in order to reduce the leverage of its competitors.

This confrontation suggests two behavioural patterns. First, the total number of incidents against state symbols (FC, police, and installations) and settlers, i.e., 708 vis-à-vis military encounters and mysterious abductions, i.e., 734, leads us to conclude that a deliberate tempo of violence is maintained by both sides, suggesting that the higher the level of violence on one side, the more likely it will be met with a matching response, perhaps even a more intense one. Second, collateral damage has accounted for the highest number of incidents (571 or 27.48% of the total incidents), with corresponding civilians' deaths numbering 566—the highest proportion of 31.24%. Besides, there is no indication of efforts to avoid undue bloodshed, suggesting traces of impunity. This implies that killing civilians is part of the conflict strategy of the militants as argued by Hultman, who says that “rebels kill more civilians when fighting a democratic government and it should be understood as a strategy than a consequence of war.”⁹⁸ The evidence points to this propensity. Elements of atrocious behavior are visible from both sides to varying degrees. This is also validated by the minimal correlation between incidents and fatalities in the case of settlers and Baloch youth. It indirectly warrants enhanced security cover for settlers as well as to known Baloch activists by LEAs without distinction of lineage or ethnicity.

The role of state in dealing with Balochistan's conditions remains dubious. On one hand,

it cautiously recognizes the existence of the conflict, but on the other some of its power instruments have tended to act as a violent competitor, adopting a warring orientation. This in turn has spawned 'qualified (non) state forms' challenging the juridical monopoly of the state structure, locking both into a cycle of vendettas. Technically, the paradigm resembles chaotic ethno-terror militancy (CETM) generated by the interplay of identity, atrocity, anarchy, connectivity and transnationality. In some ways, this can be constructed as a post-modern conflict.

Theoretically, it implies that a decolonized nation-state comprising diverse ethnic identities, some of which are situated in the border region with a transborder homogenous presence and also have open maritime lines of communication, are more prone to CETM prototypes. Unresolved grievance from past conflicts, politico-military authoritarianism and the absence of conflict resolution mechanisms will accentuate the environment for such conflicts. Ideologically, a CETM revolves around culturally embedded ultra-nationalism, while systemically it is anarchist, symbolized by tribalism, multiple power centers, and diffused territoriality. Geopolitics, foreign-based leadership, globally connected money supply chains, impunity in terror violence, state warlordism and chaos account for many if not all the germs of postmodernism. Inclusion, accommodation and systematic conflict transformation strategy informed by popular appeal is possible solution for dispute resolution in this context.

We have attempted to conceptualize Baloch militancy drawing on the prevailing reality and offered a novel typology of armed conflict. Its theoretical contours have been established but warrant further study to test the proposed construction. Without the due cognizance of policy analysts and decision makers, the conflict is unlikely to be resolved; understanding its objective structure and shape is key to achieving this end.

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Editor's note: *Balochistan has seen many military operations and matching insurgencies by the valiant Baloch, but with no victors. The state and armed forces need to recognize the Baloch identity and respect their genuine aspirations. Instead of taking the course of repression, the best way is to engage all the nationalists by allowing them a greater share and holding back unscrupulous elements of the state apparatus, while reaching out to the militants and winning over Balochistan's alienated youth.*

Endnotes

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