

Title

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the Political Turbulence occurring in Baluchistan by discussing the root causes of it and recognizing the outcomes of these unresolved issues. At the end, action recommendations are proposed for sustaining peace in the region.

Introduction

Located in the north-west of Pakistan and sharing international borders with Iran and Afghanistan, Baluchistan is the largest province of Pakistan by area. It has a long coastline along the Arabian Sea, which adds to its already undeniable economic importance. With a diverse cultural heritage marked by Hazara, Baluch, Pashtun and Brahui traditions, Baluchistan makes up about 6.2% of Pakistan's total population. It is a region significantly known for its mountain ranges, deserts, valleys, plateaus and coastal plains, and encompasses nearly 44% of Pakistan's total land area.

Despite being a province celebrated for its tribal culture and hospitality nationwide and being blessed with extensive capability, Balochistan has always been under the influence of extreme political disruption, which has recently increased and manifested in situations as critical as violence against the state.

Key Drivers of the Political Chaos:

Historical Background

The conflict among the Baluch people and the state's government is not a newly emerging conflict; in fact, it is a decades-long conflict that dates back to the accession of Kalat (1948), featuring onwards multiple insurgency waves and countless military operations in the region. The primary cause of this prolonged hostility is concluded to be the coercive and heavy handed federal interference, which is resisted by Baluch nationalist groups and political parties as they demand and advocate for greater regional autonomy.

Extrajudicial Killings and Enforced Disappearances

A major human rights issue in Baluchistan is that of unlawful abductions of natives, journalists, activists, or students who dare to speak up against state policies. They are abducted on suspicion of being militants, and their whereabouts are not disclosed. Families of the abductees go through severe psychological and financial trauma while trying to find their loved ones. These individuals mostly never return or are later found dead. According to their family members, intelligence agencies, the Frontier Corps, and the local police are to be blamed (HRW, 2011). The state's lack of accountability and legitimization of these abductions by bringing criminal charges against the abductees has further fueled hatred among the people.

Backward State

As per the 7th NFC Award (2009), Baluchistan receives the highest provincial transfer on a per capita basis, but clientelism and the incremental allocation of development funds lead to only partial attainment of the annual development goals (PIDE, 2022). Baluchistan has the lowest literacy rate among all the provinces (PBS, 2021). Schools lack basic facilities such as classrooms, toilets, and electricity. Only 4.4% of households have safely managed drinking water, while 93.8% of household drinking water samples were found to be contaminated with *E. coli* upon examination (BCDGS, 2023). The population living in urban areas is only 30.96%, while 69.04% of the population resides in rural areas (PBS, 2023). Collectively, these issues faced by the natives due to the government's political and economic neglect have developed feelings of social exclusion among the Baluch people.

Marginalization in Mega Projects

Baluchistan possesses significant reserves of natural gas, copper, coal, gold, chromium, and other valuable minerals, which attract national and international mega-projects spanning infrastructure, energy, and mining, such as the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Primarily, these projects are intended to stimulate the economy and connect the province to national trade networks, but Baluch sentiments regarding these projects are not uniform. Except for a small portion supporting these projects, most of the population argues that these projects not only fail to generate sufficient benefits for local communities but also exploit the region's resources. According to their perspective, they have mainly faced inconvenience in the form of land acquisition, displacement, and unemployment due to these projects.

Effects of the Deemed Issues

Baluch resentment against the state has not only produced a "revolution" but has also contributed to prolonged cycles of protests by local people, sit-ins by civil society groups, student and rights movements raising education and employment issues, national political activism, armed insurgency by separatist militant groups, and counterinsurgency operations.

Strategic Measures

The issues of Baluchistan require the design and adoption of strategies that address both the security concerns and the underlying causes. To solve the identified issues, the following initiatives should be taken:

- Security Operations should be carefully targeted at the militant groups rather than broad crash downs that harm the civilians.

- Government should encourage political dialogue with the political representatives, tribal leaders and community leaders.
- Provincial Institutions should be provided with adequate authority and resources to respond effectively to local needs.
- Abductees should be released and Public Apology should be issued by the state addressing and apologizing for all the harm done .
- Freedom of speech should be guaranteed and incorporated.
- Allocation of development funds should be transparent, equitable and responsive to district's needs.
- Local Participation should be encouraged and regulated to restore the public's confidence.
- Instead of abductions , state should encourage and opt for fair trials against the offenders.
- Judicial institutions and processes should be strengthened to fortify the mechanisms that sustain the accountability and justice.

Conclusion

Baluchistan's political turmoil cannot be understood through the lens of security alone, as it is the outcome of complex interactions between state actions and local responses. Challenges associated with education, healthcare, the availability of basic necessities, and employment opportunities have heavily contributed to recurring cycles of unrest. Achieving stability in the region will require the government to adopt a strategy that addresses the social, political, and economic problems faced by the local population.

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