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Balochistan and Nationalism

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Balochistan and Nationalism

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Report

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

Master of Arts

The University of Texas at Austin

December 2012

Balochistan and Nationalism

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The University of Texas at Austin, 2012

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Balochistan and Nationalism discusses a divided region in South Asia and their ideas of nationalism. Balochistan is divided among three neighboring countries; Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Each Balochi region within each country still maintains a sense of Balochi nationalism however with somewhat different ideals from one another. This paper discusses the history of the region and the people, and identifies in each region how their approach in the fight for self-determination developed and each region's desired endstate.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

"Our children walk barefoot on a golden soil." – Anonymous, Baloch proverb.

On February 17, 2012 Representative Dana Rohrabacher (CA) along with two co-sponsors, Rep Louie Gohmert (TX) and Rep Steve King (IA), submitted House Concurrent Resolution 104. House Concurrent Resolution 104's title is "Expressing the sense of Congress that the people of Baluchistan, currently divided between Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, have the right to self-determination and to their own sovereign country." Word of Concurrent Resolution 104 spread fast overseas and was met with harsh criticism from Pakistan almost instantly. Pakistan's Foreign Officer protested commenting, "The resolution is based on Ignorance and lack of understanding. This would be taken as clear interference in Pakistan's internal affairs... (and warned) US authorities against any irresponsible step, asserting that such acts would not be tolerated."¹ Following, the US Embassy along with other US leaders reassured Pakistan that "the US respected Pakistan's sovereignty and Balochistan was an internal matter of the country."²

Yet there are several analysts who, in looking at US interests, believe that a self-determining Balochistan is advantageous to the US and the rest of the Western world. Such as M. Hossein Bor's "controversial assertion (which was later censored in Pakistan) that supporting an independent Balochistan stretching from "the Strait of Hormuz to

¹ Unknown, "FO protests US Congress bill on Balochistan" (The Nation, February 18, 2012), <http://www.nation.com.pk/pakistan-news-newspaper-daily-english-online/national/18-Feb-2012/fo-protests-us-congress-bill-on-balochistan>

² Unknown, "US Distances itself from Balochistan Resolution," (DAWN.com, February 18, 2012), <http://dawn.com/2012/02/18/us-distances-itself-from-balochistan-resolution/>

Karachi" would be a better policy approach than ongoing US efforts to counter the Iranian and Pakistani regimes."³ On the flipside other analysts indicate that openly supporting Balochistan would contradict "three cornerstones of the Obama administration's current regional policy approach: 1) Normalizing relations with Pakistan's government and military; 2) Incorporating the Taliban into the current Afghan political system; 3) Overly accommodating an emerging Iran."⁴

America's political and strategic interests aside, Balochi nationalists/terrorists have been struggling to regain their Balochistan from Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. This idea of an independent Balochistan is not new. By taking a brief look at Balochistan's history, to understand the people and cause of its division, I will argue that Balochs in Iran are rallying around a different cause than compared to the Balochs in Pakistan and Afghanistan and that the approaches taken by Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan towards their respective Balochistan regions have had a direct result on how the local populations and terrorist groups developed their ideology. Following the brief history of the region, I will discuss Iran and its approach to dealing with Balochistan, and the reactions exhibited by the Balochs towards the Iranian government. This section will then be followed by a similar section involving Pakistan and its Balochistan province, then a section following the same pattern on Afghanistan. Once the evaluations are complete some comparison between the three Balochistan provinces will be discussed. This paper will not attempt to debate the question of whether a self-determining

³ Eddie Walsh, "Should the US Support an Independent Balochistan?" (Al Jazeera, March 3, 2012), <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/02/201222112203196390.html>

⁴ Ibid.

Balochistan is right or wrong, but instead investigate the cause and effects governments have had on Balochi nationalism in all three countries.

Chapter 2: Background on Balochistan

Baloch nationalism straddles across borders of Iran, Pakistan and, Afghanistan. “Balochistan is in the northwestern province of Pakistan, bounded on the east by Sind, on the south by Arabian Sea, on the northwest by Iran, and on the northeast by Punjab and north by Afghanistan.”⁵ The geographical characteristics of Balochistan include six hundred miles of coastline, consisting of eight ports such as Gowader. The exact boundaries of Balochistan, that is where Balochs live in sizeable majorities, to this day remains uncertain. “*The Encyclopedia of Islam* defines its boundaries as comprising the south-east part of the Iranian plateau from Kirman desert east of Bam and the Bashagird Mountains to the western borders of Sind and Punjab.”⁶ In comparison, *The Encyclopedia Britannica* “marks its boundaries as extending from Gomalriver in the Northeast to the Arabian Sea in the south, and from the borders of Iran and Afghanistan in the west and north-west to the Suleman Mountains and Khirthar Hills in the east.”⁷

Balochistan is also rich in natural resources including; iron, copper, gold, coal, manganese, and chromite.⁸ According to the Government of Balochistan’s official website, “Area wise Balochistan is the largest province of the country constituting about 42% of the total land mass and has been endowed by nature with blessing of substantial mineral wealth mineral wealth which need(s) to be explored and developed in true

⁵ Dr. Mahmood Ali Shah, *Essays on Balochistan: Society, Polity, and Tribal Administration* (Lahore: Classic, 2008), 51.

⁶ Mir KhudaBakhshMarri, *Searchlights on Baloches and Balochistan*, (Lahore: Ferozsons (Pvt.) Ltd., 1997), 17.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸ “Balochistan Rich Natural Resources” (July 15, 2009)

<http://kaleemahmedbaloch.blogspot.com/2009/07/balochistan-rich-natural-resources.html>

spirit.”⁹ It is because of these reasons that Balochistan was and remains such a contested area in the region. In its long history Balochistan has “changed hands frequently between the great empires of ancient epochs.”¹⁰

Traditionally the Baloch were nomadic and focused on agriculture and livestock. While in contemporary times more Balochs are entering the fields of trade, commerce, and other professions, initially the Balochs were tribal and did “not have any masterly skill in trade and commerce. It is something, which did not suit an ‘honorable Baloch’.”¹¹ In terms of population “the urban population is only 15.6%. The majority of the work force in the province comprises of peasantry and they constitute 69% of the total population. A sizeable number of 17.5% are nomads and carry their homes on their backs.”¹²

Balochs also continue to use a tribal system, the Sardari (feudal) System, which consists of the tribal Sardar, who represents a powerful pressure group in the political system of the country and province. There is a history of Sardars, since the time of the British; of being beneficial to the tribes they lead, but also of being corrupt and intolerable, as seen today. The National Assembly in Pakistan abolished the Sardari System in May 1976, understanding the challenges of incorporating tribal government into more contemporary government. This has weakened their power to some degree;

⁹ Government of Balochistan, “Mines and Mineral Development” <http://www.balochistan.gov.pk/mines-&-mineral-development.html>

¹⁰ Dr. Naseer Dashti, ed., *In a Baloch Perspective*, (Quetta: Asaap Pub., 2007), 29.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹² Shah, *Essays on Balochistan: Society, Polity, and Tribal Administration*, 71.

however the Sardari System is still active throughout Balochistan due to the lack of literacy, economic development and good governance.¹³

The Balochs' religious background is diverse, resulting from the many cultural changes they encountered due to their migratory culture and due to changing ruling empires. In fact religion is the major factor holding the Balochs together, providing a base for unity and common social order. "Before (the) Christian era the great Iranian religion, Zoroastrianism, had swept the entire region as far as Afghanistan, therefore Zoroastrian influences on the Baloch is visible."¹⁴ With the introduction of Islam, the majority of Baloch converted to the Islamic faith. The majority of Baloch are Hanafi Sunnis. There is also a community of Zikri Baloch and a small population of Shi'a. There is a community of an estimated 500,000 to 700,000 Zikri Baloch, who are mostly found in the Makran area and in Karachi. The Zikris believe in the Messiah Nur Pak, whose teachings supersede those of the Prophet Muhammad. Their beliefs, considered heretical, have led to intermittent Sunni repression of their community since founding of the sect in the fifteenth century. It is interesting to note that in Balochi society they follow a resilient secular attitude towards religion despite growth of religious fanaticism elsewhere in Iran and Pakistan. In Balochi culture, therefore, the religious preference is left of to the individual and considered a private matter.¹⁵

Baloch nationalism straddles across borders of Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. It also harbors the ambition of amalgamation of Brauhi, Balochs, and Sulemani Balochs

¹³ Dr. Riaz Ahmad, *Balochistan Through History*, (Islamabad: Quaid-i-Azam University, 2008), 30.

¹⁴ Dr. Naseer Dashti, ed., *In a Baloch Perspective*, (Quetta: Asaap Pub., 2007), 17.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

who speak different languages and a varied set of social customs and norms. Over 300,000 ethnic Baloch people inhabit the Afghan part of Balochistan, though the Pakhtoons or Pushtuns (Pathan) heavily populate the tract. The Pathan people also inhabit large tracts in Pakistani Balochistan.

The Balochs culture and customs carry a heavy sense of nationalism in itself, because the origin of Balochi culture can be traced back to Mesopotamia. The tribal laws of Balochistan play an important role in establishing the code of conduct that allows people to live and work within the premises of their cultural and traditional life. The cultural landscape of Balochistan portrays various ethnic groups that speak different languages like Balochi and Pashtu, yet there are similarities found in their literature, beliefs, and customs. “These strong traditions and cultural values are important to Baluch people and have enabled them to keep their distinctive ancient cultural identity and way of life with little change to this day. The culture and traditions of the Baluch have historically been passed down from mother to daughter, and men from father to son.”¹⁶

An important time in Balochistan history is the age of the Khanate of Kalat, which is attributed with being the emergence of the Balochi State. “At the peak of its power, the Khanate of Kalate included the entire region of present day Pakistani Balochistan, and most of the Iranian and Afghani Balochistan...The Kalate State was a confederacy, with tremendous powers allowed to tribal leaders.”¹⁷After the formation of

¹⁶ “Baloch People,” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baloch_people

¹⁷ Dr. Naseer Dashti, ed., *In a Baloch Perspective*, (Quetta: Asaap Pub., 2007), 33.

the Kalat State, the British occupation marked another important time in the region's history in 1839. It is important because it is during Britain's occupation that Balochistan was partitioned to Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. The result was the creation of the "Goldsmid Line" in 1871, forming the present boundary between Pakistan and Iran, and the "Durand Line" in 1893 between Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹⁸ This time period is not only significant because it divided Balochistan between three countries, but because it sparked the idea of Balochi nationalism and resistance towards foreign dominance.

¹⁸ Ibid., 37.

Chapter 3: Balochistan History Under Imperialism

As stated briefly in the background, the region of Balochistan resides in three countries; Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. This chapter discusses imperialism and how it resulted in the tri-sectioning of the region. The strategies used by the imperialist nations, most notably the British, towards Balochistan will also be discussed.

The origin of the Balochs is very much contested by many historians, scholars, and travel –writers throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁹ Balochs, like any other people, cannot claim to be devoid of an intermixture of other races. Over course of many centuries, people of different racial, or ethnic, groups have joined the Balochs during their nomadic travels. “In fact, one can notice streaks of Dravidian blood among the Brohi tribes of Kalat; and Medes, Rajput; and Afghan strains among the Baloches of Sind, Punjab and Balochistan.”²⁰Marri, in the book *Searchlights on Baloches and Balochistan* goes so far as to provide three different dictionary meanings of the word ‘Baloch’. These definitions are stated below:

Burhan-Katih – A famous Persian dictionary compiled by Mohammad Hussain bin Khalaf al-Tabrezi in 1651/52 at Hyderabad Deccan in India...defines ‘Baloches’ as “cock’s comb, crest, or the name of certain barbarous people who inhabit the mountains on the border of Kirman. It is said that they are descended from the Arabs of Hejaz...*Farhangi-Sarwari* – Another dictionary, has to say this much: “Baloches are a people who inhabit the desert and plunder the caravans; and for the great part are warlike and good archers; they are also styled as ‘Koch’ and ‘Baloch’”. However, according to Francis Johnsons English, Arabic and Persian Dictionary, ‘Baloch’ means, “name of a wild tribe on the bank of Indus.”²¹

¹⁹ Marri, *Searchlights on Baloches and Balochistan*, 24.

²⁰ Ibid, 31.

²¹ Ibid, 23.

As Marri later goes on to explain, the idea of what a Baloch is, or was, is based entirely on which part of the region the definer was looking at. For example the border of Kirman and the idea that Balochs are descended from Arabs is based on the eastern part of the province, in Iran. While on the other hand, the Persian dictionary version is based on the western portion of the province.

The British entered Balochistan as *invaders*, under the flag of imperial expansion, in the 1830s. When the British Government began its rule in India's subcontinent, Balochistan was sparsely populated. Between 1838 and 1876 the British encountered strong armed opposition from the various tribes in the region. Therefore after the British attained control of the region, the British adopted a new policy in the region, one that supported their divide and rule policy in India. That policy was the Sandeman System; named after Robert G. Sandeman the first Agent to Governor-General of Balochistan.²²

The Sandeman System contained four points that supported the divide and rule policy. The first principle was that Sardars were to be the representative of the tribesmen, but were to be loyal and accountable to the British for the conduct of their behavior. Secondly, they would maintain support of the British as long as they were successful in mobilizing support of the tribesmen in favor of British rule. Thirdly, the Sardars were autonomous in the exercise of their duties regarding the affairs of their tribes, provided there was no threat of disobedience or uprising towards British rule. And fourthly, the Sardars were not elected by their tribesmen, but rather chosen by the British

²² Dr. Ahmad, *Balochistan Through History*, 24.

and could therefore be replaced by the British.²³ Britain's participation in Balochistan's political, administrative, social, and economic systems, as a result, was still under the chieftanship of Sardars, Maliks, and Khans.²⁴ It has been argued that due to the nomadic nature of the Baloch tribes, and other tribes within the region, as well as the semi-hands off approach to governance within the region, Balochistan's society remained underdeveloped. Following the exit of the British Raj, and formation of independent nation Pakistan, Balochistan could have easily been transformed from the Sardar system to governance based on legislature representation. However, "the system continued after independence in its entrenched form due to the lack of literacy, economic development and good governance."²⁵

Based on Balochistan's census data the title of 'backward people' was attached to the region. "Among every 1000 persons, there were totally 33 persons (31 males and 2 females) educated in Persian and Arabic. In 1911 only seven males and one female were literate in English...As regards (to) indigenous requirements, it may be mentioned that among every 1000, only 170 sayeds, 60 Lasi, 57 Jatt, 38 Baloch and 32 Brauhis could be considered literates in 1911."²⁶

The lack of education facilities and teachers in the late 1800s and early 1900s were the result of several factors. However one of the biggest contributors was the Raj. The British policy of divide and rule and the Sandeman System allowed the British to

²³ Ibid, 25.

²⁴ Ibid, 34.

²⁵ Ibid, 30.

²⁶ Ibid, 38.

govern Balochistan with minimal effort. In doing so the British were able to overlook the task of improving, or in some aspects such as roads, and creating infrastructure in the region. By maintaining a form of tribal rule in the region the job of creating schools, roads, and other infrastructure remained in the hands of the Sardars. These are the same Sardars that were appointed by the Raj, and also controlled by the Raj.

Along the same lines, infrastructure and economic development were also poor. In fact the Balochs held occupations dealing largely in livestock, camel driving, and agriculture.²⁷ During the time of the British Raj industrialization of Balochistan remained non-existent. Despite the overflow of natural resources, to include sulfur, chromite, and coal, there was little in the way of industry to exploit these resources. The industry that did exist in the region during this time period included building industries (such as well diggers, masons, house builders, and ceramics), food industries (such as flour mills, bakers, butchers, and grain parchers), and metal industry (blacksmiths, tinsmiths, and gun makers).²⁸ However these industries focused on producing items needed for everyday life and not the tools and refineries needed to extract and refine raw materials.

The Balochs' nomadic lifestyle created a region that was also underdeveloped in the transport and communications realm. Prior to 1882 there were no railway lines, post offices, or telephone houses.²⁹ Following Britain's arrival into the region railways and roads were built in Balochistan going in and out of Balochistan. However it has also

²⁷ Ibid, 41.

²⁸ Ibid, 43.

²⁹ Ibid, 45.

been argued by many, including Syed Iqbal Ahmad in his book *Balochistan: Its Strategic Importance*, that while the British did build railways and some roads in Balochistan, they “were built in furtherance of British strategic interests in the area, and not to benefit the people of Balochistan.”³⁰

At first glance Ahmad’s statement may appear to echo sentiment felt by all in the region, however Dr. Deedar Hussain Shah Rizvi wrote in an article, “Construction of Post Offices and telegraph houses was also started...Development of the means of transport and Communications on the modern lines expanded the scope of social and economic activity in the province. Balochistan also moved towards the inclusion in the list of the provinces of India...The economic activity surged and moved towards the well being of the common man also.”³¹ Dr. Rizvi’s statement may hold true when taking a broad look at the region; however when the scope is narrowed and close attention is paid to where development was undertaken it becomes clear that the objective was Quetta and other larger cities in the region. In turn, the target groups to benefit from such advancements were non-Balochs; Hindus travelling to the cities for job opportunities, British administrators travelling in and out of the region, etc. After all, the literacy rates, educational statistics, type of employment held by Balochs in the region did not substantially improve.

But how would an underdeveloped Balochistan benefit any imperial power? In regards to Balochistan and Britain, a backward province was exactly what Britain needed

³⁰ Syed Iqbal Ahmad, *Balochistan: Its Strategic Importance*, (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1992) 100.

³¹ Dr. Ahmad, *Balochistan Through History*, 46-7.

in order to meet its security requirements. Balochistan's place in India's sub-continent, and in the British Raj's imperial colony, held a large strategic advantage. Balochistan laid on the western edge of South Asia, while also laying on the eastern borders of the Middle East, as well as the southeastern border of Afghanistan (a portal/route for Russian expansion). Balochistan's importance was also identified by India's leadership, namely the Congress' Jawaharlal Nehru and the All India Muslim League's Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

No sides wanted to readily give up Balochistan, because of its prime real estate. However at the same time Balochistan's Khan of Kalat was pushing for Balochistan's sovereignty. The Khan, in March 1946, "substantiated his arguments by drawing parallels with the King of Nepal, who had an independent status, diplomatic privileges and immunities granted by His Majesty's Government (HMG)."³² In comparing the treaties made between HMG and the Khan of Kalat and those also made with the kings of Nepal, Iran, and Afghanistan, the Khan's argument does hold some legal validity. However Nehru disagreed, stating "the fact that Kalat is a border state adds to its importance from our point of view, as frontier areas are always strategic areas. An independent India cannot permit foreign forces and foreign footholds such as Kalat might afford near its own territories."³³

The fear among the British and Indian government, prior to Indian and Pakistani independence, was that a self-determining Balochistan had the potential to pose security

³² Ahmad, *Balochistan: Its Strategic Importance*, 114.

³³ *Ibid*, 115.

issues for Britain and India. First of all, Balochi tribes resided in British Raj India, Iran, and Afghanistan and continued to settle in all three regions, characteristic of their nomadic lifestyle. Secondly, it was feared that should Balochistan become independent it may form alliances with other foreign nations, due to ethnic and tribal ties with neighboring countries. The result of creating new alliances would be the end of Balochistan's position as a buffer between invading foreign forces, specifically Russia and Iran. It is because of these two reasons that Balochistan was never granted sovereignty and following Pakistan's independence in 1947 was annexed, an act that was contested by the Khan until he signed the Instrument of Accession on 27 March 1948, marking Balochistan as the last state of Pakistan.³⁴

The history of Balochistan and its nomadic tribes traversing the region are diverse and rich in culture. However through the age of imperialism, as newly independent countries began to take shape Balochs found their land being split among three countries, with little say in the matter. Through the hardships of being neglected by imperial powers and left behind developmentally, to the lack of respect for their Khan, and not being recognized as an independent country the Balochs carry a lot of resentment to their current situations. The result today is resistance towards their current governments in the form of terrorist and criminal actions.

³⁴ Ibid, 120.

Chapter 4: Iran and the Balochs

Iran's Balochs are mainly residing in the Sistan-Baluchistan region in Southeast Iran. The area consists of two sections, Sistan and Baluchistan. The capital of the province is Zahedan, which is located in the Baluchistan region. The region is the most underdeveloped and impoverished regions. In addition it is one of the driest in the country. As a result the Iranian government has been working to improve the area through programs such as the Chabahar Free Trading Zone.³⁵

During the 1970s the Iranian government began to assist settlement and economic development by building dams and power plants but following the Iranian Revolution the new Iranian government reduced or ceased developments in the region. Prior to the revolution there was a relatively insignificant force operating within the Baloch Nationalist Movement, when compared to its counterparts across the border in Pakistan.³⁶ The reason for the increase in activity from Baloch Nationalist groups is that discrimination against the Sunnis, and other minority religions, increased. This was due to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's interpretation of Twelver Shi'ism as the religious base of the Islamic Republic. As the Sunnis "were not a recognized category... (they were) disfavored in mosque buildings, representation, and other ways, partly owing to the economic underdevelopment of their regions and their cross-border ties."³⁷

³⁵ Iran Chamber Society, "Provinces of Iran: Province of Sistan and Baluchistan," http://www.iranchamber.com/provinces/21_sistan_baluchistan/21_sistan_baluchistan.php

³⁶ Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO), "West Balochistan" <http://www.unpo.org/members/7922>

³⁷ Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 312.

With the increased discrimination Balochi nationalist movements, currently referred to as terrorist groups, began to build up. Terrorist activity in the Sistan-Baluchistan province was reported on several occasions in American newspapers such as a December 20, 1979 issue of The Progress, of Clearfield, PA. The paper reported, “Fighting in Zahedan, broke out as "Dr.Yazdi" — presumably top Khomeini lieutenant Ibrahim Yazdi, a former foreign minister — was delivering a speech. The report did not identify the "groups" that fought each other.”³⁸ Although the reporter was not able to identify the groups, the story did indicate that it was religious based by writing, “It said the Sunni Moslem (sic) religious leader of the region, MowlaviAbdolaziz, issued a message to Zahedan citizens saying the disturbances were engineered by ‘enemies of Islam.’”³⁹ It should be noted that MowlaviAbdolmalekAbdolaziz was a Sunni authority from Zahedan. He was “prosecuted because of his complaints to the government for the regime’s discriminatory behavior towards Sunni and thus forced to go to Pakistan and was terrorized by the Islamic Republic agents in 1998.”⁴⁰ Based on Abdolaziz’s standing in the Baluchistan province, it can be interpreted that when he refers to the “enemies of Islam” he is referring to the Iranian Shi’a majority.

Violence continued in Sistan-Baluchistan province, as the incident from December 20, 1979 gained momentum, as reported on December 23, 1979. Reporters recounted, “Two persons were shot dead Saturday in renewed sniper fire, pushing the

³⁸ Alexander S. Higgins, “Iran Hit by New Violence,” *The Progress*, December 20, 1979, 1.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ “Statement by Special Representative on Iran,” Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights <http://www.light-speed.ca/personalpage/siamak/ghassemlu/United%20Nation.htm>

known death toll in three days of shooting to 12. At least 73 others were listed as injured.”⁴¹ The paper reported that the Balochs were demanding a greater share in provincial administration following the ratification of Iran’s new Islamic constitution, as a result of the revolution. When the Turkish-speaking followers of Ayatollah KazemSharitmadari were successful in the defiance of the Islamic regime in west Iran, winning major government concessions on managing their own affairs, the Balochs took it as a positive sign, and as a result the Baloch nationalist movements did not give up its fight for more representation and equality within the Iranian government through the 1980s and early 1990s.

Riots followed in 1993 and 1994 following the destruction of Sunni mosques, in Masshad and other locations. In addition a number of Sunni leaders, both Baluchi and Kurd, have died under suspicious circumstance, according to the 1996 Human Rights Report. In it the report states, “On January 28, a 50-year-old Sunni cleric, MolawiAhamedSayyad, imprisoned by the Government from 1990-95, disappeared at Bandar Abbas airport. His body was found in a suburb of the city on February 2. Allegedly, six members of the Revolutionary Guards arrested him at the airport; he is believed to have died in their custody. In early March, 46-year-old Molavi Abdul Malek, a Sunni cleric and Iranian Balouch leader, was reportedly killed by Iranian intelligence operatives in Karachi.”⁴²

⁴¹ “Iran Fights another Minority Challenge,” Times-News, December 23, 1979, A-3.

⁴² “Iran Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996,” U.S. Department of State, http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1996_hrp_report/iran.html

Following his election in 1997, Mohammad Khatami “spoke and acted against such discrimination.”⁴³ Khatami was President from 1997-2005, but following his presidency was Mahmud Ahmadinejad, who returned Iranian policy to reflect Islamic revolutionary policies.

Coinciding with the violence, human rights violations, and discrimination occurring in Sistan-Baluchistan the Iranian government was making progress, economically and infrastructure-wise, in the region. Such projects were the largest dam in the province built in Pishin for agricultural purposes in 1990. A highway system running from Zahedan to Tehran, a rail line from Zahedan to Quetta, and a rail line from Zahedan to Kerman in central Iran. Zahedan is also served by an international airport. This infrastructural investment is attributed to the free trade zone in Chabahar which became active in 1995. “There is a dock in Chabahar Free Zones which harbors ocean-going vessels and facilitates loading and unloading of up to 2000000 tons of goods per year...The high priority projects in Chabahar free trade zone are; Desalination plant, Oil Refinery petrochemical projects, Sea side resorts, Fishery industries, Auto Manufacturing, Power plant, etc.”⁴⁴

The main terrorist group operating within Iran’s Sistan-Baluchistan Province is the People’s Resistance Movement of Iran (PRMI), also known as Jundallah. In a letter to several world leaders (including President Obama), PRMI’s leader Abdul Malik Regi outlines the overarching goal of the PRMI. As stated in the letter it is, “Our long-term

⁴³ Keddie, *Modern Iran: Roots and Results of Revolution*, 312.

⁴⁴ Hussain Mehdi, “Sistan-o-Baluchistan, Iran,” <http://www.shiachat.com/forum/index.php?/topic/234967796-sistan-o-baluchestan-iran/>

objective is to work for the establishment of a democratic Iran where all citizens, no matter to which ethnic group or religious sect they belong, enjoy justice and equal rights under a federal system and their right to self-determination is respected.”⁴⁵

Based on PRMI’s goal, as projected in Regi’s letter, the group is not demanding a separate country for the Iranian Balochs. As has always been the case in Iran history, the Sunni Balochs are striving to overcome the discrimination and human rights violations imposed on them, and achieve equality within Iranian society and government. The flipside is the tactic used by the PRMI to accomplish this task; violence. The result is a relabeling of the organization on the global front to terrorist organization. Regi claims in the letter above that they are forced to ‘stoop down to their level’ because passive actions are ineffective.

It has also been observed that militants conducting terrorist acts in Baluchistan are criminals, making use of poor border security along Pakistan and Afghanistan. A large portion of those criminals are involved in drug trade/smuggling. However, according to United Nations officials, Iran is a consumer country and transit country. In fact there are many occasions when Iranian security forces have had shoot-outs with drug traffickers. In order to make investigations easier, these criminals are categorized as Baloch terrorists, and it is hard to determine whether or not these claims are true or not. ⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Abdul Malik Regi, “Abdul Malik Regi Leader Of People Resistance Movement Of Iran Write A Letter To Ban Ki Moon, Barak Obama And RecepTayyeb Erdogan,”<http://baloch-community-sweden.blogspot.com/2009/11/abdul-malik-regi-leader-of-people.html>

⁴⁶ "Iran: Country's Drug Problems Appear to be Worsening," RFE/RL, July 18, 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1059991.html>

Based on the past history of Iran and its dealings with the Sunni minority it is evident that, in general, the Balochi community in Sistan-Baluchistan has been yearning for equality and a sense of self-determination. For this group of Balochs self determination comes in the form of an equal political voice at the local and national levels. The improvements to the region in the form of the trade free zone and infrastructure development are also providing the Balochs the opportunity to slowly move into trade and commerce.

Chapter 5: Pakistan and the Balochs

Balochistan in terms of area is the largest province in Pakistan, covering approximately 347,188 square km of area in the country. The Balochistan province in Pakistan, as stated previously, is mostly uninhabitable, but rich in natural resources. The land is also arid and dry making it suitable for herds of goats and sheep. Just as in Iran, the Balochs are mostly nomadic due to the geography of the region. There are few irrigated lands for agriculture, but those are small and minimal. Therefore a large majority of the Baloch population concentrate on herding and marginal agriculture.⁴⁷

The Balochs, during the Kalat period, were living and working as an independent nation, loosely tied to India. The British had declared in the Government of India Act, 1935, that Kalat was an Indian state. As a part of the Indian colony, Kalat would be given an option. The Khan of Kalat, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan, at the time of partition, was allowed to assert Kalat's (Balochistan) independence. The Khan of Kalat envisioned an independent Balochistan. In order to ensure they remained self-determining following Britain's exit, he along with his suzerainty, GhausBakhshBizenjo, an emerging Baloch nationalist, and AbdusSamad Khan Achakzai, an avowed Gandhian and the leader of Indian National Congress, campaigned to prevent the voting college from including Kalat in Pakistan. "Their efforts failed on 29 June 1947 and the selected Electoral College,

⁴⁷ Peter Blood, ed. *Pakistan: A Country Study*. (Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1994), <http://countrystudies.us/pakistan/35.htm>

under pressure from the British Agents and Muslim League, voted in favor of Pakistan.”⁴⁸

Following Partition in 1947 from India, Pakistan was in disarray. During Pakistan’s first decade of independence economic disparity between East Pakistan (Bangladesh) and West Pakistan became evident. This was one of many factors that led to the civil war in 1971, creating an independent Bangladesh. As Pakistan moved on, without Bangladesh, it turned its focus towards the Punjab and Sind provinces as economic progress began to increase. The result was Balochistan’s economic progress, along with the North West Frontier’s, began to fall behind.⁴⁹

The sense of being neglected by Pakistan only increased the Balochs’ sentiment of discrimination. Knowing that they, the Balochs, were handed to Pakistan by the British, without having any voice in the matter, the Balochs began to sow the seeds of dissent. Economic progress with Balochistan would not occur until 1970. “One (reason) among them was the fear that Balochistan will not be the part of Pakistan...Balochistan was divided into two divisions, Quetta and Kalat. In 1970...Balochistan became for the status of a province of Pakistan.”⁵⁰ These are two of the reasons why Balochistan developed into a poor and weak province within Pakistan.

Up to and throughout the 1990s, the economic situation in Balochistan changed very little, with most of the economic development in Balochistan centered on Quetta due

⁴⁸ Maloy Krishna Dhar, “Balochistan- Cruces of History,” <http://www.balochunity.org/history/144/>

⁴⁹ Myron Weiner and Ali Banuazizi, eds., *The Politics of Social Transformation in Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1994) 294.

⁵⁰ Shah, *Essays on Balochistan: Society, Polity, and Tribal Administration*, 145.

to its population density. In the rural parts of Balochistan mining the natural resources has begun, but a majority of the income does not stay in the Balochistan province for further developments in infrastructure or social services. One of the biggest examples of such a situation is the Sui natural gas field in Balochistan. In addition to being the largest province in Pakistan, Balochistan is also home to Pakistan's largest gas field, producing 45% of the country's supply. But with all that gas production Balochistan remains poor "with 45 percent of the population living below the poverty line. There is rising resentment in the province that despite the fact that its natural gas generates \$1.4 billion annually in revenue, the government remits only \$116 million in royalties back to the province."⁵¹

In addition to gas production, Pakistan has plans for Balochistan's port city Gwadar, on the Arabian Sea. Pakistan along with the support/partnership of China is building a \$1.1 billion deep water port. China has invested \$200 million into the first phase, with promises of more money for development in the region. With the promise of an India-Iran natural gas pipeline also being planned, it is surprising to see Balochistan drop down to the poorest province in the country.

The Balochs are not happy and view their situation as dire due to their economic inequality with the rest of the country, not including the North West Frontier. The feelings of discrimination compounded on the fact that their belonging to Pakistan was

⁵¹ John C. K. Daly, "The Baloch Insurgency and its Threat to Pakistan's Energy Sector," Terrorism Focus Volume: 3 Issue: 11, http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=709

not by choice provides additional arguments for a self-determining Balochistan. Compound this with their long history of resisting foreign dominance.

Resisting Pakistan, for the Balochs, is the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). It has been reported that the BLA was organized by the USSR during the Russo-Afghan war composed of a left-wing student organization, the Baloch Students Organization. In 2006 it was officially labeled a terrorist organization under the Terrorist Act of 2006 by the United Kingdom.

The Balochistan Liberation Army targets Pakistani are indiscriminate on who they target. However they have been known to target government leaders and facilities. One example is the Sui Gas facility, which was targeted on March 26, 2009. In that incident the BLA blew up two gas pipelines in Sui and DeraBugti as a result gas supply to parts of Sind including Karachi was suspended.⁵²

Another example of Baloch freedom fighters targeting natural resource companies was conducted by another Balochi terrorist group, the Baluch People's Liberation Front (BPLF). The BPLF has been around since 1973 and is believed to, at some point, have received funding from India and Afghanistan. The BPLF "claimed that it had carried out the rocket attack on the Chinese Oil and Gas exploration team in Sunny region... (and) said that the BPLF would continue to carry out such attacks on survey teams and not allow anyone to plunder it resources."⁵³ One civilian driver was killed and three civilians

⁵² Baloch Voice, "2 gas pipelines blown up in Sui," http://www.balochvoice.com/index_a.html

⁵³ "BPLF Claims Responsibility," Balochistan Express, Thursday, May 10, 2001
<http://www.balochvoice.com/archive/BPLF.html>

from the survey team were injured during the May 9th attack. The attack was successful in discontinuing surveys in the area for some time.

On March 30, 2002 the BLA once again claimed responsibility for an attack, this time on the Frontier Corps, a federally controlled paramilitary force in Pakistan. The BLA stated, “The attack was in retaliation for the murder of its members near Kalat on the 7.1.02. The email read that they will continue their struggle against the Punjabi establishment, army and its stooges until they liberate Balochistan from this repressive and fascistic Pakistan.”⁵⁴

“On another occasion Baloch Pro-independence leader and Guerrilla Commander Dr. Allah NazarBaloch, in a statement, said that on April 18 Tehreek e Nafaz e Aman has issued a threat to the newspapers and media to target his young sons NodanBaloch and Tamoochan Baloch” in order to pressure him to surrender. Dr. Allah NazarBaloch continues with his statement comparing the Balochs to Bengalis stating, “Just like Pakistan Army could not stop the Bengalis to achieve their independence after mass murdering three million of their population, similarly they cannot stop the Baloch movement with the genocide of Baloch.”⁵⁵ By comparing the Balochs situation to that of the Bengalis in Bangladesh Dr. Allah NazarBaloch is giving his fellow Balochs the courage and hope needed to continue their fight. As a final exhibit of determination on his part, he says, “It will be an honor for a member of independence struggle like me if

⁵⁴ “BLA claims responsibility for carrying out an attack on the FC,” March 30, 2002, http://www.balochvoice.com/Laworder_in_Balochistan.html#65

⁵⁵ Dr. Allah NazarBaloch, “My Sons and I are not Above the Baloch National Struggle: Dr. Allah NazarBaloch,” [Baloch Community – Sweden](http://baloch-community-sweden.blogspot.com/search?q=Balochistan+liberation+army&max-results=20&by-date=true), <http://baloch-community-sweden.blogspot.com/search?q=Balochistan+liberation+army&max-results=20&by-date=true>

mine or my children's blood is used for the irrigation of freedom movement." He mentions again to build reinforcement the importance of gaining Balochistan's independence.

In Pakistan's Balochistan Province the Baloch have been struggling to find economic equality and success. Rather than accept the outcome, and remain content with a semi-nomadic agro-pastoral lifestyle the Balochs are fighting for their own social and economic rise. The means they have available are various militant nationalist groups, all terrorizing the local governments and civilians under the same banner, "Independent Balochistan."

Chapter 6: Afghanistan and the Balochs

Afghanistan's Balochistan region lies along its southern border running along both Iranian and Pakistani borders. The region, much like the regions found in Iran and Pakistan are composed of mountainous rugged terrain, and dry flat lands. Afghani provinces that contain a Baloch presence are Nimroz, Helmand, Kandahar, and Farah. The province with the largest Baloch presence is the Nimroz province, followed by Helmand.

Afghanistan's history with the Balochs began with the drawing of the "Durand Line" in 1893 and Afghanistan received a small portion of Balochistan at its southern border. There is not too much information on the Baloch's integration into Afghanistan's administration. This is mostly due to the fact that Afghanistan's early years, prior to the Russian-Afghan War, was governed by both tribal and state governments. Such times in Afghanistan's history include the Mohammed Zahir Shah era (1933-1973), and the Taliban era (1996-2001), when central authorities ceded significant power to tribal leaders. "Part of the recipe for stability [during Zahir Shah's tenure] was a competent, legitimate central government that had the ability to establish order in urban areas of the country ... and a tacit agreement with local tribes, subtribes, and clans in rural areas of the country."⁵⁶

In regards to the issues facing Balochs in Iran and Pakistan, the Afghani Balochs were not facing discrimination or under-representation from the Afghani government.

⁵⁶ Greg Bruno, "A Tribal Strategy for Afghanistan," Council of Foreign Relations, <http://www.cfr.org/afghanistan/tribal-strategy-afghanistan/p17686>

This was due largely to the fact that representation at higher government levels was not of the most importance to a province that was, and still remains, mostly nomadic. The tribal system of governing at the local/tribal level suffices for all of their daily needs. This type of system decentralizes the Afghanistan government and prevents them from disturbing the natural order of the tribes.

In more contemporary times, The U.S. Army has “deployed anthropologists to help its troops understand the shifting mosaic of tribal interest groups. In Parliament in December, Britain's prime minister, Gordon Brown ...said Britain needed to “understand the tribal dynamics”. ”⁵⁷ The Taliban, a terrorist group operating in Afghanistan, understands this point as they are quick to make allies with individual tribes, when these tribes have feelings of inequality of discrimination from the government, to increase their support chain and/or recruitment numbers.⁵⁸ For Baloch tribes, which are largely nomadic and small, this poses a threat. This is because they, the Baloch tribes, can be easily influenced, whereas “the provinces where tribal structures are strongest, such as Paktia, Paktika and Khost, have proved most resistant to Taliban encroachment.”⁵⁹

The economic situation in Afghanistan’s Balochi provinces, however, is similar to both Iran and Pakistan. All three Balochi regions, from all three countries, remain the most underdeveloped parts of each country. The lack of education, combined with their nomadic lifestyle, does not allow for them to have much upward mobility, in terms of

⁵⁷ “Afghanistan's Tribal Complexity, In the Dark: Far More Than Two Sides to the Conflict,” The Economist, http://www.economist.com/node/10608929?story_id=10608929

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

better jobs, working in cities such as Kandahar and Helmand. When there is lack of financial stability, terrorist groups identify this as a vulnerability they can use to their advantage. Compound this with the small, nomadic Balochi tribes and the terrorist groups, such as the Taliban, see a suitable recruitment base.

The economic situation in Afghanistan's Balochi provinces has created an environment that is cultivating the illegal drug business. The southern portion of Afghanistan is of vital importance to the drug trafficking rings, as it is a portal, much like the Silk Road during the 19th century, for opium production and smuggling. When a province or region with a dire economic outlook is faced with an enticing offer of quick cash, nine times out of ten that region is going to choose the quick cash. This is the case in Afghanistan's Helmand, Kandahar, and Nimroz districts, to name only a few.

In the bigger cities of Helmand and Kandahar the drug trafficking business is the largest in the country, if not the world. The district in Helmand is the largest producer of opium in Afghanistan producing 75%. In relation to the world, Afghanistan is the world's largest producer producing 90% of the world's opium and Helmand the largest province producing 42%.⁶⁰ With these types of numbers the demand for farmers and smugglers is high, and with a large number of poor Baloch's, along with Pashtun and other tribes in the region, willing to break the law for fast money the supply is also high. The decision to break the law is, of course, made a little easier when taking into account that in the border areas the law/policing units are small and powerless.

⁶⁰ "Helmand Province," *Wikipedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helmand_Province

Drug and weapons smuggling consumes a majority of the interest and efforts of all three countries, and rightly so this type of contraband are useful tools in destabilizing a country dealing with terrorism. However consumer goods are also smuggled across the borders on a daily basis. Smuggling of this type is generally from Iran and Pakistan into Afghanistan and is in the form of flour, cooking oil, and blankets. Afghani Balochs and Balochs from the other provinces in Iran and Pakistan smuggle these into Afghanistan because these are consumable goods which are easily sold, thus providing some economic stability. “The local society condones smuggling, pointing to the laghris’ (Pashtun for naked, referring to their economic status) need for a source of income in an otherwise limited economy. The border guards also largely condone it and charge a minimal ‘fee’ of Rs. 10 (approx. 22 cents) per trip.”⁶¹

The Balochi ties between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran are advantageous for drug smuggling and smuggling of other contraband. The advantage of having these tribal ties has provided Balochs from either country crossing borders to seek refuge or trade. Afghani Balochs have a history of making use of the lax border security and Baloch identity. Baloch identity and support for the other Balochs across the borders is strong because at time or another Balochs have had to flee across the borders, whether it be the Taliban's violence, the Ayatola's repression, or Islamabad's iron fist. This accessibility to Pakistan and Iran has also increased cross-border Balochi relations, as the prospect of economic stability became more prominent with the weapons and drug trade.

⁶¹ “Afghans in Quetta: Settlements, Livelihoods, Support Networks, and Cross-Border Linkages” (Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU), January 2006), 16.

Balochi nationalism also evolved due to its history. Although, Afghani Balochs' nationalism was a result of not only Afghanistan's actions, but also a result of Iranian and Pakistani actions towards the Balochi tribes. Balochs from the neighboring countries of Iran and Pakistan have always had a cross border relationship. The fact that a majority of the Balochs were, and still are, nomadic allowed for freedom of movement. In the early years, dating back to before the Durand Line, the moves were mainly a result of seasonal agriculture or the need to follow herds for sustenance. However in the contemporary period it was to escape discrimination, which has resulted in some tribes being stretched out between two, or even all three, countries.⁶²

Since the 1980s, Afghan refugees have settled in Pakistan's Balochistan province, mainly in and around Quetta. The reason many Balochs chose Quetta over other parts of Pakistan because of the ethnic commonalities they shared. However, these refugees do not seek feel the immediate sense of wanting repatriation. That is because the Afghan Balochs have a different sense of nationalism towards their 'homeland'; Afghanistan. For Balochs "perceptions regarding Afghanistan are highly individualised and shaped by place of origin and ethnicity... (and) land disputes, as well as the absence of social services, are other discouraging factors in the decision to return."⁶³ One drawback of moving to refugee camps in Pakistan is that they trade one level of economic despair and security issues for another. While the economic opportunity may be better, to some degree, in Quetta, the discrimination from Pakistanis towards Balochs is evident. Sher

⁶² Karlos Zurutuza, "Baloch from Afghanistan: Between Insurgency and Famine," http://www.crisisbalochistan.com/secondary_menu/analysis/history/baloch-from-afghanistan-between-insurgency-and-famine.html

⁶³ "Afghans in Quetta: Settlements, Livelihoods, Support Networks, and Cross-Border Linkages," iv.

Muhammad, age 21, residing in the Saranan Camp outside of Quetta, said, “When we mind our own business, we feel no different from Pakistanis. But the moment we have a fight with a local, everyone including the administration differentiates between locals and us.”⁶⁴This is an interesting look at how governments view refugees, because in Afghanistan and Pakistan Balochs are not necessarily singled out and discriminated against by ethnicity, yet in Pakistan the Afghani Balochs are discriminated against for being refugees.

The Afghani Baloch’s idea of nationalism has been influenced by the nationalist fight being witnessed across the borders in Iran and Pakistan. The religious discrimination being faced by Balochs in Iran was similarly felt by Afghani Balochs and the Taliban’s religious extremism. As previously mentioned, the Baloch believe that someone’s religious preference is private and not something to be forced on one another. It is that cultural belief that contradicts the Taliban’s practices of suppressing women and covering women’s faces in public, as an example, are not practiced by Balochs living in Helmand, Nimroz, and other provinces.

In addition, the Balochs have a history of forming militant groups to oppose the Taliban and other discriminatory groups, to include the support of Balochs in Iran and Pakistan. One such group is the Partisans of National Liberation of Afghanistan (PNLA), also known as the Nimroz Front or Southern Alliance. The PNLA is a nationalist guerrilla organization formed in 1979 in Nimroz and led by Abdul Karim Brahui, who was later of governor of Nimroz in 2011. According to Brahui the PNLA “was

⁶⁴ Ibid., 13.

essentially a Baloch group but there were also Pashtuns. We took shelter in Iran and conducted guerrilla operations against the enemy inside Afghanistan.”⁶⁵ The PNLA initially conducted operations against the Russians and then continued operations against the Taliban as they took control of the Afghani government.⁶⁶

Afghani’s Balochs appeared to be unaffected by the fact that they were a minority because of Afghan’s method of governing. This however did not mean that the Baloch were not involved in the Russian occupation or the over-arching control of the Taliban. The Baloch’s culture and traditions in this instance were a factor in creating a nationalistic guerilla force to resist Russian and Taliban pressures. Economically, the Balochs are in the same situation as its Iranian and Pakistani counterparts. The economic development is slow and not necessarily targeted towards the nomadic Balochs.

⁶⁵ Karlos Zurutuza, “Baloch from Afghanistan: Between Insurgency and Famine,” http://www.crisisbalochistan.com/secondary_menu/analysishistory/baloch-from-afghanistan-between-insurgency-and-famine.html

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Chapter 7: The Balochs' Nationalism – a Comparison

The Balochs, whether in Iran, Afghanistan, or Pakistan, share the same culture and history. A history which I believe is still part of their ideology. Up until the Kalat period the Balochs were forced to live under the rule of a foreign ruler or empire. That experience, although not a part of their living memory, carries over through traditions and folklore to the Balochs living today. And whether someone believes it or not, the experience of being dominated generations ago plays a role in formulating a society's ideals. In all cases Iranian Balochs, Pakistani Balochs, and Afghani Balochs feel the strain of being discriminated against. However, the type of discrimination, and root cause are different.

In the Iranian Balochs case the source of discrimination is religion. More specifically, how the leaders in a post-revolutionary Iran interpreted that difference between Shi'a and Sunni Muslims. This resulted in a minority group with no rights, living in fear and uncertainty. Being able to pull from past experiences via history and traditions the Iranian Balochs roused up their sense of Balochi nationalism and began to demand their due equality. I further argue that Khatami's reversal of the TwelverShi'ism during his presidency provided the Iranian Balochs a view, albeit a short view, of what life would be like under Iran, when represented equally. That may also explain why terrorist actions resumed following Khatami's departure from office, because the Iranian Balochs found themselves discriminated for their religious preferences.

In Pakistan the Pakistani Balochs also found themselves feeling discriminated against, and not getting a fair shot at what was rightfully theirs. In Pakistan's case, however, the Balochs were not seeking religious equality and equal representation within the government machine. The Pakistani Balochs dispute is regarding their economic disparity compared to other provinces in Pakistan, particularly Punjab and Sind. The Pakistani Balochs are aware of the natural resources available in their ancestral home, yet when Pakistan begins to gain access to these resources the Balochs notice that they are not getting their fair share of the revenue. Therefore the feeling of being cheated and suppressed from economic prosperity the Pakistani Balochs also began to rally around the idea of Balochi nationalism. Except in this case, the Pakistani Balochs are demanding the right to self-determination.

In Afghanistan the Balochs also faced discrimination, but I believe that in Afghanistan the Balochs pulled from both the Iranian and Pakistani experiences. In regards to the Iranian experience, the Afghani Balochs also began to feel the pressures of religious extremism from the Taliban in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The unwillingness to conform to the Taliban's practices partly resembled the Iranian Balochs' plight in Iran; except that it does not appear that the Afghani Balochs wanted more representation at the national level. As an alternative, the Afghani Balochs were fighting to expel the Taliban from their region so they could return to their own version of tribal governance. The economic situation in Afghanistan is similar to both the Iranian and Pakistani Baloch regions. It is because of the poor economic condition that criminal activity blossomed in the Balochi provinces of Afghanistan. This spike in criminal

activity is not part of Balochi nationalism, on the Afghani Baloch's part, as I believe it is purely for economic gain. However the smuggling on the receiving end in Iran and Pakistan may have some part in those regions' nationalist movements.

There are two more factors which are common to both countries and their respective Balochistan, which I will refer to as the flashpoint and success story. In both cases the outcomes directly resulted in the type of 'demands' set forth by either Balochistan province.

In regards to Iran, its flashpoint was the Iranian Revolution in 1979. It was this event that brought about a change in religious thinking in Iran, which in turn took away many religious and human rights away from the religious minorities, such as the Sunni Balochs. As far as the success story, for the Iranian Balochs it is the success of the Turkish-speaking followers of Ayatollah Kazem Sharitmadar. I believe that by seeing the successes they had in gaining political equality, the Iranian Balochs, for the most part, believe that having their voice heard in Iranian government is possible.

The Pakistani Balochs also experienced a flashpoint and success story of their own. Undoubtedly the flashpoint in Pakistan is the partition in 1947. I believe this is the point when things changed for the Pakistani Balochs because during the initial ten years, or so, Pakistan's government and administration was chaotic and was not able to focus on all the provinces. As a result, Balochistan was sacrificed for other provinces showing more immediate economic possibilities. This, more so than the involuntary inclusion into Pakistan, is what planted the seed of dissention. The success story that helped plant that seed firmly was Bangladesh's Independence in 1971. Following their independence,

Balochistan's nationalist movement began to rally around the banner of self-rule and self-determination. After all, if Bangladesh could do it, why couldn't they?

The Afghani Baloch's flashpoint, uniting them under a nationalist cause, was the actions being taken by their fellow Balochs in Iran and Pakistan. I argue that upon witnessing the religious discrimination in Iran and the actions being undertaken by the BLA, the Balochs in Afghanistan began to demand that their provinces, Nimroz, Helmand, and Farah, not be included in Afghanistan and its newly developed government. In 2001, following 9/11 and Operation Enduring Freedom, the Balochistan News Service reported, "Different tribal and ethnic groups are trying to control their areas and declaring their autonomy from a non existing central authority in Afghanistan... The decision was taken unanimously by a tribal Jirga (tribal assembly of elders) recently held in Nemroz province."⁶⁷ This is another piece of evidence in which tribal people within the Balochistan regions voicing their idea of nationalism and desire for self-rule.

⁶⁷ "Baloch Provinces of Afghanistan Seek Independence," Balochistan News Service; November 24, 2001, http://www.balochvoice.com/News/English/2001/01-11-24_Baloch_Provinces_of_Afghanistan_Seek_Independence.html

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Balochi nationalism is an idea that spans three countries. In each country it also appears that the official nationalism of each country, at one time or another, was in opposition to Balochi nationalism, thus creating Balochi nationalist movements like the PRMI, BLA, and PNLA. Benedict Anderson wrote in *Imagined Communities* “that nationalism has to be understood by aligning it, not with self-consciously held political ideologies, but with the large cultural systems that preceded it, out of which – as well as against which – it came into being.”⁶⁸ Anderson goes on to identify two systems relevant in a nation’s cultural history; religion and dynasty.

In terms of the Balochs, it is evident that they rally around their cultural beliefs, and when discussing the religious realm Balochs believe in religious tolerance. Having gone through several religious conversions in their history, from Zoroastrianism to Islam for example, the Balochs are not discriminatory towards other faiths and take offense of religious oppression. The Balochs therefore are an example of how the tenet of religion in their culture has been essential in bolstering Balochi nationalism.

The second system argued by Anderson was the dynastic realm. This has, and continues, to keep the Balochi nationalistic ideal alive. Balochs, after being ruled by many, eventually formed their own dynasty in the Khan of Kalat. Following the Imperialistic British division in the Durand Line and Goldsmid Line in late 1800s, the

⁶⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 2006), 12.

Kalat was dissolved. However the Balochs, especially those in Pakistan, have continued to rally around the Kalat as a nationalistic symbol and legitimizing tool for sovereignty.

The Balochs are the Kurds of Central Asia, forced to be divided among three Islamic nations. Each region has remained to have cultural ties to the others; however each region approaches its idea of nationalism and overall goal slightly different, from complete independence to equality and greater representation in existing government. The commonality among all three is that they are sitting on top of land rich in natural resources, which remain underdeveloped, resulting in a stagnant economy with barefoot children walking on golden land. The three governments' approach towards the Balochi plight therefore is the direct cause of three different nationalist movements, among a group of people connected by ethnicity and culture.

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Vita

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