

**Baloch Leadership and the 1970s Insurgency in Balochistan: Reforms, Challenges, and Government Dismissal**



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**Abstract:** *Baloch political leadership in contemporary Balochistan maintains a distance from the federal government, and a trust deficit exists between them. The 1970s sowed the seed of distrust between the Baloch leadership and the federal government. However, in 1972, the Baloch leadership formed government in the province of Balochistan. They attempted to implement numerous reforms in the provinces, but the federal government faced challenges from the Mengal government, ultimately leading to its dismissal in February 1973. The dismissal of the government sparked a deadly insurgency in Balochistan during the 1970s. This study aims to understand the political landscape in Balochistan and explore the circumstances that led Baloch leaders into a challenging position against Islamabad. The study focuses on answering questions such as: How did Baloch leaders like Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo and Attaullah Mengal form the provincial government? What were the reforms that faced opposition from the federal government, and why was their government dismissed? Why were Baloch leaders imprisoned, and how did the insurgency break out in Balochistan? Why did Iran get involved in countering the insurgency? This study concludes that the NAP-JUI coalition government was short-lived in Balochistan. The provincial government wanted to introduce multiple reforms to solve long-standing problems, but the central government, on the other hand, was very much against the provincial government reforms. In February 1973, Bhutto suddenly dismissed the Balochistan government. Because of this dismissal, an uprising in Balochistan began in 1973, which lasted until 1977.*

**Keywords:** Balochistan, Nationalist Leaders, General Elections 1970, Coalition government of NAP-JUI, Central Government, Dismissal, Insurgency

**Introduction**

Baloch leaders like Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, Attaullah Mengal, and Khair Bakhsh Marri were struggling under the banner of the National Awami Party to bring political and social growth to Balochistan. Following the 1970 general election, the NAP-JUI coalition government was formed in May 1972, only to face dismissal after nine months. After forming the coalition

government in Balochistan, the Baloch leadership faced difficulties on two fronts.<sup>1</sup> One was the tribal-oriented elite, and the other was the power elite of Pakistan's power structure at the center, which was at odds with the Mengal (NAP) administration in Balochistan. The Mengal administration desired a stable, people-centered social and political framework for Balochistan and wished for genuine reforms in

<sup>1</sup> Abdul Rahim Zafar, *Sing-e-Larzan: BSO from formation to split* (Quetta: Baloci Lvzank, 2011), 43.

the political and social sectors of Balochistan.<sup>2</sup> The tribal elite, which had support from the central government, challenged and rebelled against the Mengal administration. Bhutto, along with tribal Jams and Sardars, worked together to overthrow the Mengal administration, or NAP government, in Balochistan. The Bhutto overthrow of the NAP government in Balochistan served as a trigger for the conflict between the Baloch and the federation. Baloch political activists protested against the central government, leading to the imprisonment of Baloch leaders. As a result, the insurgency started in 1973 in tribal regions and later spread throughout Balochistan. The Pakistani establishment, with the help of the Shah of Iran, countered the insurgency, and it ended in 1977.

### **Mengal and Bizenjo in Power: General Election of 1970, NAP-JUI Coalition Government (1972-1973) Reforms in Balochistan**

It was not only the 1970 elections that created political unrest in Pakistan, the country faced such uncertainties since its inception in 1947. In 1958 it saw the dawn of dictatorship with the imposition of martial law followed by the introduction of the presidential constitution, turning Pakistan's political authority into an authoritarian one. The political demands of the public were unable to be met by changes in the power structure. When the people of Pakistan became fed up with the authoritarian government of President Ayub, they started agitation against him. Ayub Khan was weary of the political unrest in Pakistan, both in the East and in the West, therefore he stepped down, and handed over power to General Yahya Khan, Commander in Chief of the Army, in 1969.

However, Yahya Khan indicated that new general elections would be held in 1970, he disintegrated One Unit System and eliminated parity system, gave Balochistan the status of a province. The general elections were held, the majority seats were won by the Awami League, followed by the PPP in Punjab and Sindh, and the NAP in Balochistan and the NWFP (Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa).<sup>3</sup>

However, the Pakistan Peoples Party and the military junta misjudged the political scene, their misjudging led to more political unrest in Pakistan. PPP leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto connived with the military and opposed any change in the balance of power from the leadership of Punjab to Bengali leadership in Pakistan. As a result, the political deadlock began among political parties to form the government. Being the majority party, the Awami League manipulated and politicized public opinion particularly in East Pakistan, which led to large-scale protests in East Pakistan.<sup>4</sup> In the end, Pakistan was divided, and a new sovereign state appeared on the world map. Pakistan's darkest period occurred in the early 1970s because of the country losing the majority of its population in 1971. After being split apart from a sovereign Pakistan in December 1971, East Pakistan became Bangladesh. However, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto took advantage of the political situation and was able to assume office as President and Civilian Administrator of Martial Law in Pakistan on December 20, 1971. The PPP established a government in Punjab and Sindh; the NAP-JUI did the same in Balochistan and the NWFP.<sup>5</sup> Bhutto and other lawmakers drafted a constitution which was implemented on August 14, 1973.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Rasheed Azam Baloch, "Official Allegations on Nationalists: An Analysis," *Asaap*, January 30, 2003. (Provide details about Asaap, whether it's a daily newspaper or Magazine).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Adeel Khan, "Baloch Ethnic Nationalism in Pakistan: From Guerrilla War to Nowhere," *Asian Ethnicity* 4, no.2 (June 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Syed Fakharuddin Shah and Mohammad Zubair Khan, "Zulfikar Ali Bhutto Regime and Growth of

the Baloch Nationalism in 1970s," *Global Journal of Human Social Science* 12, no. 7 (April 2012): 61.

<sup>6</sup> Gulshan Majeed, and Rehana Saeed Hashmi, "Baloch Resistance during Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Era: Causes and Consequences," *South Asian Studies* 29, no.1 (Jan-July 2014): 323-325.

Abdul Rahim Zafar, *Sing-e-Larzan: BSO from formation to split* (Quetta: Baloci Lvzank, 2011), 92.

According to 1973 constitution, Pakistan got a federal form of government. As a result, power was shared between center and federating units. Bhutto was in favor of making Pakistan a centralized federal state, but NAP leaders like Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo and Wali Khan were in favor of making Pakistan a loose federal state in which federating units were autonomous bodies. Bhutto feared that autonomous provincial bodies would lead to repeat the incident like fall of Dhaka. NAP leadership was calling for stable and autonomous provinces, in this context Baloch leaders were also calling for stable and autonomous provincial government. The autonomous province would be able to decide its political matters without the interference of the center or military.<sup>7</sup> The notions of centralized federation and loose federation furthered the differences between center (federal government) and provinces (federating units).

The Baloch leaders like Attaullah Mengal and Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo were leading NAP in Balochistan. Baloch leadership formed provincial government in Balochistan. Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo was appointed as the Governor of Balochistan, while Attaullah Mengal was elected as the Chief Minister of the province.<sup>8</sup>

NAP's provincial government tried to introduce reforms in Balochistan. However, Mengal government introduced the indigenous security force consisted of locals of Balochistan that was known as *Dehi Muhafiz*.<sup>9</sup> The *Dehi Muhafiz* force was formed to control the internal matters of the province because previously military intervened to deal the political unrest in Balochistan. However, the central government criticized the formation of indigenous force and claimed that Baloch leaders were planning to organize a private army to further their nationalistic views, which would conflict with Pakistan's interests.<sup>10</sup>

Mengal administration tried to bring locals in the

administrative institutions in Balochistan, but official positions were already occupied by the settlers in the institutions because of One-Unit System in West Pakistan. Since Balochistan was part of One-Unit, and administrative positions were occupied by the people from other parts of West Pakistan, when One-Unit disintegrated, the disintegration resulted in the formation of Balochistan as a separate province. The Mengal administration adopted a policy to send officers to their home provinces. However, the federal government often accused nationalists in the administration of wanting to drive out Punjabis or the settlers from Balochistan due to their nationalist tendencies.<sup>11</sup>

Mengal administration was urged by Baloch students to make Balochi the official language or the language of instruction in educational institutions. The Baloch intellectuals and political circles praised the idea of introducing the Balochi language as medium of instruction in Balochistan. But it became a critical problem when Baloch students, intellectuals and political leaders decided to adopt "Roman Script" in Balochi language at official forum.<sup>12</sup> The central authority also rejected this notion, claiming that using Roman script rather than Arabic, would go against ideology of Pakistan. Central government claimed that Urdu was national language of Pakistan, and Urdu adopted "Arabic Script", so local languages needed to adopt Arabic Script as well.<sup>13</sup>

Mengal administration wanted to abolish Sardari System in Balochistan. In this regard a resolution to "Abolish the Sardari System" was passed in provincial assembly of Balochistan. The provincial assembly deliberated over the issue of eliminating the Sardari System. The NAP leadership moved the proposal, which was opposed by very few independent MPAs. It seemed likely that a two-third majority of MPAs voted in favor of the resolution abolishing the

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, *In Search of solutions: An Autobiography of Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo* (Karachi: Pakistan Study Center, 2009), 166.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Gulshan and Hashmi, 324.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Taj Mohammad Breseeg, *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 2004), 307.

<sup>13</sup> Gulshan and Hashmi, 324.

Sardari System in Balochistan. After the approval in provincial assembly, it was sent to national parliament for approval and implementation.<sup>14</sup> Bhutto opposed the resolution to abolish Sardari system in Balochistan, and it was put in cold storage by the central government. Furthermore, Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo talked in his autobiography "In Search of Solution" about reforms that proposal for various reforms were prepared by NAP-government in Balochistan which were as following:<sup>15</sup>

- To introduce land reforms for the settlement of the nomads in the province, it included to provide and distribute land to the nomadic communities living in Balochistan.
- Proposals were invited for the exploration of minerals and other natural resources and to make natural resources the property of public by putting a stop of private or tribal monopoly over the mines and minerals of Balochistan.
- Land revenue on *zamindaris* of less than 12 acres and grazing tax was abolished.
- Land taxes on the *zamindaris* of Zamran region were written off.
- An extensive survey was launched to identify all possible venues for the province's development and a new structural framework for development was designed.
- All prisoners were granted 2 months' remission per year of imprisonment and the time they had spent in jail prior to the pronouncement of judgment to be included in their period of imprisonment.

### **Dismissal of NAP: Removal and Imprisonment of Baloch Nationalists**

The central government did not tolerate the reforms of Mengal administration because these reforms were making provincial government stable and autonomous. So central government created hurdles and removed Mengal and Bizenjo from the position of chief minister and governor in February 1973.<sup>16</sup> It was evident that Pakistan's ruling class had grown displeased with Baloch leaders in power in Balochistan. One could argue that Bhutto's stance towards Baloch or NAP leadership was uncompromising, rigid, and firm.

In September 1972, National Press Trust issued a report, according to which plan has been prepared by ethnic leaders to disintegrate Pakistan into multiple states.<sup>17</sup> Pakistani Media blamed Baloch and Pashtun leaders that they prepared plan and they met with Sheikh Mujeeb in London about execution of the plan.<sup>18</sup> According to Plan, Baloch and Pashtun leaders were struggling to seek help from the outside world to secure independent Balochistan and Pashtunistan. Baloch and Pashtun leaders denied accusations about so-called London Plan<sup>19</sup> Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo referred to it as propaganda, stating that its main goal was to disrupt NAP government in Balochistan.<sup>20</sup>

In Pat-Feedar area, native farmers attacked the settlers and destroyed their villages. Villagers were from Punjab region, they were settled during One-Unit period, farmers attacked them to send them back to their province, Punjab. Attack started on 27 November, and it was believed that a settler named Taj Mohammad was killed, and many got injuries. Situation was getting worse, federal government sent Frontier Corps to control the situation in the Pat-Feedar on 2 December 1972.<sup>21</sup> Situation got normal within a week. Federal government blamed NAP-leadership inciting ethnic tension between

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<sup>14</sup> Bizenjo, 173-4

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 173-4

<sup>16</sup> Taj, 308.

<sup>17</sup> Saleem Kurd, *Ruzen-A-Zindan* (Karachi: Ilmoadab Publisher, 2022), 142.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Fakharuddin and Zubair, 64.

<sup>20</sup> Bizenjo, 182.

<sup>21</sup> Saleem, 152.

farmers and villagers in Pat-Feeder.<sup>22</sup> Another incident occurred during Mengal administration, Jams and Sardars of Lasbella rebelled against NAP-JUI government in Balochistan in October 1972. Saleem says, these Jams and Sardars were associated with Pakistan People's Party, Mengal sent *Dehi Muhafiz* force, but situation further deteriorated, however, on 9 February Bhutto sent military force to control situation in Lasbella.<sup>23</sup> Troops controlled and normalized the situation on 10 February 1973.<sup>24</sup>

The Iraqi embassy in Islamabad was raided by security personnel on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1973, and a substantial cache of Russian weapons was found and confiscated. These events were reported in dramatic fashion in the national press. The government spread the rumor that they had found a cache of arms and ammunition and around three hundred Soviet submachine guns in the Iraqi Embassy. The Pakistani administration claimed that the weapons were intended for the Baloch nationalists in Balochistan. In addition, it was claimed that Baloch, with assistance from the Soviet Union and Iraq, were getting ready to secede from Iran and Pakistan. Baloch nationalist leaders believed that the Pakistani establishment was deliberately trying to oust Baloch leaders like Attaullah Mengal and Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo from Balochistan's government.<sup>25</sup>

After two days of this incident in Iraqi Embassy, Bhutto immediately dismissed the ten-month-old NAP or Mengal administration on February 12, 1973, accusing its leaders of repeatedly abusing their constitutional powers and linked NAP-leadership to Baloch separatists in Balochistan.<sup>26</sup> It was falsely claimed that weapons were mostly headed for Baloch living regions of Iran and Pakistan, as retaliation for Shah's support of the Kurdish uprising in Iraq. It seems that the central government of Pakistan dismissed the Balochistan's provincial government out of fear that the East Pakistan crisis would recur in Balochistan. The dismissal

of the NAP-led administration in Balochistan shocked people of Balochistan. In NWFP, the NAP-led administration resigned to show moral support to the dismissed NAP government of Balochistan.

NAP leadership started a series of protest against the actions of Bhutto government in Balochistan, Baloch students supported the protests of Baloch leaders against Bhutto. Central government started a crackdown on Baloch leaders who were part of NAP government in Balochistan. Attaullah Mengal and Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo were arrested on 15 August, and Khair Bakhsh Marri on 16 August 1973. As a consequent of dismissal of Mengal administration and imprisonment of Baloch leaders bloody insurgency started for the next four years in Balochistan.

### **Insurgency, Counterinsurgency and Role of Iran**

In 1973, the Pakistani establishment dismissed the Baloch ethno-nationalist government and arrested Baloch political figures. Attaullah Mengal, Khair Bakhsh Marri, and Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo were among the prominent Baloch political figures incarcerated. After toppling the NAP government, Bhutto resolved the Baloch political question in a Machiavellian approach, he used force to silence the political protests and processions in Balochistan. As a result, Balochistan faced a deadly insurgency until 1977.<sup>27</sup>

Due to the influence and popularity of Baloch political leaders like Mengal, Bizenjo and Marri among public, Baloch tribals and students gathered to start political and armed struggle against central government. They launched an armed resistance movement against the Pakistani system along with a small group of Baloch who shared socialist, communist, and anarchist ideologies. Prior to dismissal of NAP administration and imprisonment of Baloch leaders, the Baloch Guerrilla group was thought

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. 153.

<sup>24</sup> Fakhruddin and Zubair, 63.

<sup>25</sup> Bizenjo, 183

<sup>26</sup> Taj, 332.

<sup>27</sup> Surat Khan Marri, *The Serviles: Baloch Resistance* (Quetta: Goshab-e-Adab, 2014), 53.

to have already begun preparations for an armed conflict with the center.<sup>28</sup> The NAP government's dismissal served as a trigger for the onset of armed conflict since it was evident that they were getting ready for it. Asim Sajjad claims that NAP leadership just backed the Baloch guerrilla group and said that nothing less than the independence of the Balochistan was acceptable.<sup>29</sup>

The armed resistance was started in Marri and Mengal tribal areas, but it quickly spread throughout the whole Baloch region of Balochistan. The armed struggle was mainly consisted of Marri and Mengal tribesmen due to the imprisonment of their tribal chiefs such as Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri and Sardar Attaullah Mengal were in jail during 1973-1977. The armed struggle was composed of diverse range of people. However, the organizational group that led the insurgency was known as the Baloch People's Liberation Front (BPLF); and the Baloch Students Organization (BSO) supported the BPLF armed struggle against establishment of Pakistan. They adopted tactics of guerrilla warfare.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, a group of Baloch and non-Baloch individuals with socialist, and communist views joined the insurgency and supported it as well and took part in it.

Insurgency spread widely because non-Baloch individuals such as Asad Rehman and Dilip Das joined the movement, actively engaged, and fought against the oppressive regime in Pakistan. The "London Group" considered themselves socialist and they believed that Balochistan was the ground to start a guerrilla war which could spread widely. They joined the Baloch rebel movement. The London group was inspired from Che Guevara-style guerrilla warfare, Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism. Their participation in the Baloch guerrilla movement was influenced by these powerful ideas and ideologies. Since they believed that it

would be the starting point of the socialist revolution. Their engagement in the Baloch nationalist movement altered its fundamentals because, whereas it had previously been primarily driven by nationalist impulses, the London group introduced a socialistic impulse. Through their contacts with Khair Bakhsh Marri, the London group got involved in the Baloch nationalist struggle. With the exception of Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo, who consistently believed in and backed parliamentary resistance, nationalist leaders like Khair Bakhsh Marri, Attaullah Mengal, and many others supported the decisions made by young Baloch who had taken steps for guerrilla warfare or insurgency.<sup>31</sup>

Armed with weapons, Baloch nationalists went into the mountains of Balochistan in April 1973, intending to launch an armed insurrection against the Pakistani administration. Young Baloch made up the majority of the militant nationalist leaders. They had a strong animosity towards the Pakistani military junta or hegemony. Their instrumental hostility had been sparked by nationalist projects and objectives. They employed guerrilla tactics from the hideouts in the mountains of Balochistan. They used very effectively the mountains hideouts when they struck and targeted Pakistani military troops. They repeatedly used the "Hit and Run Policy" to harm the military. Baloch militants ambushed army and paramilitary troops in Balochistan using guerilla warfare techniques. Additionally, they were successful in cutting off military routes in order to obstruct military communications. The Baloch insurgents were able to station and set up camp in mountains of Balochistan.<sup>32</sup>

The Pakistani military responded by marching into the closest villages with a great deal of anger. In one such operation, the Pakistani military marched through "Mali Village" in August 1973. During the operation, the army

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<sup>28</sup> Asim Sajjad Akhtar, "Balochistan versus Pakistan," *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 45 (Nov 2007): 75.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Adeel Khan, "Baloch Ethnic Nationalism in Pakistan: From Guerrilla War to Nowhere," *Asian Ethnicity* 4, no.2 (June 2003): 289.

<sup>32</sup> Asim, 75.

killed 35 innocent villagers. Surat Khan Marri compared the situation to that of the Pakistani military's "Chamalang Operation," in which the Pakistani military, according to Marri, stole 150 animals, including lambs and goats. Additionally, thousands of tribesmen were detained and held for an extended length of time at Kohlu in a concentration camp.<sup>33</sup>

In 1974, the insurgency was spreading more widely. However, the Pakistani government's brutal counterinsurgency measures quickly turned it into a low-level or confined insurgency. As a counteroffensive, Bhutto sent 80,000 Pakistani forces into Balochistan. Repressive tactics have been used by Bhutto to quell the insurgency. "Army Concentration Camps" were set up by the Pakistani state apparatus in Quetta, Sibi, Khuzdar, and Malir in Karachi. The Pakistani army was mostly concentrated in mountainous areas of Jhalawan. The Marri area turned into a combat zone in 1974.

The students supported and actively participated in the insurgency. Majeed Baloch, a 22-year-old student and BSO member, planned a suicide mission on August 2, 1975, before his mission, during a speech in Quetta, he targeted Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto for the sufferings of Balochs.<sup>34</sup> However, Majeed Baloch was prematurely killed en route to his intended location when the device detonated prematurely.

Bhutto traveled to Tehran in April 1973 and, following a meeting with the Shah, declared that Iran would offer US \$200 million in emergency and financial support to counter Baloch guerilla insurgency. In mid-1974, Iran's dispatch of helicopters to Pakistan was the most significant aid. Iran dispatched thirty Huey Cobra helicopters, provided by the United States, to confront rebels. Bhutto using astute and shrewd political maneuvers, declared "General Amnesty" for hostiles imprisoned in Balochistan in 1974. The statement was made with the intention of demonstrating control over the situation in Balochistan and the defeat of the

insurgency. Bhutto conveyed the idea that Balochistan's military operations had been concluded in the same year. In a statement, Bhutto also promised to free Khair Bakhsh Marri provided his supporters stopped their "Opposition to Developmental Works" in the Marri region.<sup>35</sup> The propaganda machine of the state pushed the idea that the military was the last resort for bringing development in the Balochistan, maintaining that the Army's presence in Balochistan was necessary for the province's growth. In accordance with a different strategy, the Pakistani military killed "Relatives of Baloch Leaders" like Asadullah, the son of Attaullah Mengal, and Mir Lawang Khan, the brother of Gul Khan Naseer. Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo's son Mir Bizen was arrested, and Attaullah's son Muneer was also imprisoned.<sup>36</sup>

In the mid-1974, Bhutto led Air Force operations using Iranian helicopters against Baloch insurgents. Both Pakistan and Iran took concerted action to suppress insurgency. Because both believed that empowered Baloch insurgents challenge the Eastern Balochistan in Pakistan and Western Balochistan in Iran aiming at to start struggle for united Balochistan. In a response, Iran supported Pakistan's military operation against Baloch insurgency in Balochistan. However, regional and imperialist powers were affected by Balochistan and the Baloch National Question. Balochistan, however, has a unique geopolitical position since it is surrounded by Gulf states and oil-rich Iran. It's interesting to note that imperialists like the United States and other capitalist nations valued it strategically. Iran of Shah was dubbed the "Watchdog Cop" of America in the Gulf and Middle East, and Shah was regarded as the darling of the West. At the time, Pakistan and Iran were supporters of capitalist bloc. On the other hand, Afghanistan had clear pro-Soviet inclination. It was also thought that the Soviet Union intended to go from Afghanistan to Balochistan in order to reach "Warm-Water" in

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<sup>33</sup> Surat, 75.

<sup>34</sup> Hassan Janan, "Majeed Baloch," *Athshi Bagolon Ke Ahndyan*, ed. Abid Mir (Quetta: Asaap, 2008), 10.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

Gwadar. Because of Iran's membership in the capitalist camp and US policy of containing the Soviet Union, the United States of America became concerned about the situation in Balochistan. However, the US indirectly got involved in the Baloch rebellion through Iran. According to Baloch nationalists, a significant portion of "United Balochistan"—which includes the delicate "Gulf of Hormuz"—lay in Iran.<sup>37</sup> The Shah of Iran was greatly worried about the Baloch insurgency in eastern Balochistan in Pakistan. Since Iraqi-backed Baloch insurgency was still ongoing in Iran. Spread of Baloch insurgency in western Balochistan posed a threat to Iran.<sup>38</sup>

The underlying equation of connection was transformed in the 1970s by the necessity for security for a divided Pakistan and the regional aspirations of a powerful Iran, which made the former dependent on the latter.<sup>39</sup> The dissolution of East Pakistan in the 1970s dealt a devastating blow to Pakistan's economy and military morale; at that time, Pakistan needed greater financial support and regional cooperation. As a result, Pakistan needed Iran for security and Iran needed Pakistan for its regional aspirations, and their friendly relations were strengthened.

The Shah of Iran became increasingly involved in the Balochistan's affairs. During this period, the central government of Bhutto began to rely on the Shah of Iran. Nonetheless, Pakistan's attitude toward Balochistan was impacted by Iranian regional policies. Being the provider of aid to Pakistan at the time, the Shah's regime was especially concerned that the autonomous Baloch provincial government in Pakistan would incite Iranian Baloch to pursue a similar goal of self-rule. Furthermore, the Iraqi-backed Baloch rebels, who were then operating in Iranian Balochistan, were accused by the Shah of being supported and assisted by the leftist-leaning Baloch leaders as well.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Bizenjo, 160.

<sup>38</sup> Taj, 322.

<sup>39</sup> Saffia S. Mohammadally. "Pakistan-Iran Relations: 1947-1979," *Pakistan Horizon* 32, no. 4 (1979): 51-52.

Hostilities broke out partly due to Bhutto's bigger political goals in Pakistan, pressure from the Shah of Iran, tensions between Iraq and Iran, and Soviet assistance to Baghdad in its dispute with Tehran. Shah was eager to put an end to the Baloch insurgency in Pakistan due to Iran's concern that the rebels from that region would strengthen their position against the Shah of Iran by providing support to the other side of the border. As a result, Islamabad received financial and military backing from Shah of Iran to quell the Baloch rebellion in Pakistan. Consequently, the counter-insurgency operation, and the insurgency continued until 1977, widening the divide between Islamabad and the Pakistani province of Balochistan.<sup>41</sup>

In 1977, Zia took power in its hand, he overthrew Bhutto, finished the "Hyderabad Conspiracy Case", and released Baloch political leaders from prison. Zia also granted "General Amnesty" to the Baloch insurgents or rebels. Most of the Baloch rebels went to Afghanistan, and they set up camps for refugees there.<sup>42</sup> Baloch political leaders disintegrated, and they abandoned their political struggle.

## Conclusion

During the early 1970s, Baloch leaders oversaw a province for a short time. During that time, they made plans to introduce reforms that would solve long-standing problems of Balochistan. One of these reforms was putting together an indigenous-led security force to make security under the control of the locals. Plans also included sending settler officials back to their home provinces. These steps were viewed as steps towards greater autonomy and self-government in Balochistan. The legal recognition of the Roman script for the Balochi language was another important step. This was a step toward preserving culture and giving people more power over their language. Also, work was done to get rid of the Sardari system, which was

<sup>40</sup> Taj, 333.

<sup>41</sup> Selig S. Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981), 37

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., 34.



an established way of running things in Balochistan, with the goal of creating more fair ways to run operations of province under the government. Lastly, they planned land reforms aimed to provide nomadic communities with housing, facilitate their integration into settled life, and enhance the social and economic stability of the region. These changes showed that the Baloch leaders were serious about solving Balochistan's social and political problems. The central government, on the other hand, was very much against the provincial government reforms. In February 1973, Bhutto suddenly dismissed the Balochistan Government. Because of this dismissal, an uprising in Balochistan began in 1973 that lasted until 1977. Baloch tribes and students actively took part in the uprising, seeking justice through guerrilla warfare against the central government in Balochistan. With help from Iran, Pakistan tried to put down the rebellion in several ways. However, the military operations and tactics did not succeed. When Gen. Zia ul Haq overthrew Z.A. Bhutto government in a coup, he announced general amnesty to the Balochs which ultimately led to political normalization in Balochistan.

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