

## **Balochistan: A Key Factor in Global Politics**

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### **Abstract**

Balochistan is a land which has always been visited by different nations throughout the history. Despite of many phases of obscurity, this marvelous land never lost its geo political and geo-strategic importance. Being located close to Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia and Indian Ocean, Balochistan has always been serving as a passage for foreign historian, politicians and armies. The geographical location of Balochistan makes it a sensitive region not only for Pakistan but also plays the key role in determining the significance of this region on international level by developing historic interest of the global powers. Being the best possible marine passage in the Indian Ocean of the Eastern, Central, and Western divisions of Asia, Balochistan has attained highly significant position among international powers by developing great atmosphere of competition for securing and dominating its sea paths which are now essential for the enormous world trade and energy shipment. Unique and outstanding physical geography of Balochistan is taking on increased importance in regional political affairs. Vast fields of natural gas reserves and other valuable minerals have become the centre for attraction and interest of foreign investors and developers which would provide an ideal profitable aim for global powers. The objectives of foreign states are to become economically more powerful to get global hegemony by controlling the major portion of world's energy resources. so it is the biggest requirement of time to spread their influence over world energy resources, energy transit corridors, major land and maritime trade links and for this purpose, Balochistan has especially become the focus of global geo-political exploitation.

**Key Words:** Balochistan, Global Politics, Energy Resources, Super Powers, Geo Political Manipulation, Economic Interests.

### **Introduction**

The current land of Balochistan is divided into three parts, Northern Balochistan, Western Balochistan and Eastern Balochistan which are spread between three countries that are Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan by a differentiating border called Goldsmith Line. It was drawn by British General Goldsmith in 1870-1872. Balochistan became a part of Pakistan on August 14, 1947 and got the status of

## South Asian Studies 30 (2)

province in 1972. The location of Balochistan which connects Iranian Plateau with South East Asia and the Central Asian States to its long coastal line on the Arabian Sea provides it with a great significance in the terms of geography.

Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan in size but smallest in population. The Province covers 34.7 million hectares, almost 44 percent of the country's land area. According to 1998 Census, its population is about 6, 511,000. Balochistan geographically is bounded by 60 52' east longitudes to 24 54' north latitude and 70 17' east longitudes to 32 6' north latitude. (Census Report Balochistan, 2001:58)

Balochistan is a mountainous desert area. It borders Iran, Afghanistan and its Southern Boundary is the Arabian Sea with strategically important port of Gwadar on the Makran Coast, commanding approach to the Strait of Hormuz. Balochistan shares 900 kilometer long border with Iran and 1,002 kilometer long border with Afghanistan (Sial and Basit, 2010:5). Historically, its western region was the southern part of Sistan o Baluchestan province in Iran. Eastern part was Pakistani Balochistan and in the northwest, the Helmand province of Afghanistan existed. The Gulf of Oman formed its southern border. It has common borders with all the other three provinces in Pakistan, North West Frontier Province (NWFP) through Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) in the north, Punjab in the extreme north east and Sindh in east.

The land of Balochistan has always been visited by different conquerors, travelers, settlers and traders throughout the history. Although Balochistan has witnessed many periods of obscurity, but this marvelous land never lost its geo-strategic importance. Much importance lies in the fact that it is close to Middle East, Central Asia, South Asia and Indian Ocean. This region has been a passage for historian, politicians and large foreign armies like Persian, Greek, Arab, Mongol, Ghaznavids, Ghoris, Mughals and British has given Balochistan an added importance. (Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1908:274)

The geographical location of Balochistan, which makes it a sensitive region of Pakistan, plays the key role in determining the significance of this region both. Any politico-military development in Afghanistan, Iran and the Gulf Region directly affects the security of Balochistan. (Khan. 1997:2) strategically, it is located in the Warm Water Belt, which has always been a region of historic interest for the super-powers.

Balochistan is located at the possible marine passage in the Indian Ocean of the Eastern, Central, and Western divisions of Asia and the Indian Ocean has already attained high significance in international powers by developing great competition for securing and dominating its sea paths which are now fundamental for the enormous world trade and energy shipment. Due to its location in the middle of the Central, Western Southern and South-western Asia, it is directly affected by global geo-politics. With the extreme proximity to the oil lanes of the Persian Gulf and a common border with Iran and Afghanistan, Balochistan covers almost the whole coast of Pakistan of about 470 miles of the Arabian Sea with a

high value sea port, completed with Chinese support at Gwadar Balochistan. (Mazhar, Javaid and Goraya, 2012:117) The region of Balochistan has got a special importance as a military route because it has proven to be at an important position for the quick and abrupt increase of influence and becoming more unbeaten deployment and supplying to the Central Asia, South Asia, Middle East, China and Russia. Stations of air force and navy at Gwadar are also useful for a keen observation on any military activity and foreign control over important international choke point in the Persian Gulf, the Strait of Hormuz, and the shipping trade through the Indian Ocean. (Ismail, 2014:184).

Because of a unique and outstanding physical geography and with the discovery of vast fields of natural gas reserves and other valuable minerals, Balochistan is taking on increased importance in regional affairs and is attracting interest of foreign investors and developers. The government of Pakistan have planned and launched many important projects for economic development in Balochistan with the support and cooperation of national and international actors. These mega projects are meant to facilitate the transportation of goods and services throughout the region more efficiently and rapidly. In addition, the overall environment of Balochistan makes it a major site for the development of roads, railroads and pipelines to connect the Middle East, Central Asian and South Asian regions, in addition, the construction of a deep-water port at Gwadar has the prospective of bringing globalization to the region.

Present Balochistan is also a territory of international strategic importance due to the political problem within Balochistan where the Baloch people are struggling for autonomy, better governance, and perhaps even independence from Pakistan. There are great impacts of this struggle on the security of not only Balochistan but also of surrounding regions. The current Baloch insurgency has high lightened the geo strategic significance of this region to the regional and international players and Balochistan has got the status of a common denominator to them. 'In fact no policy of any of the countries competing for power in the region could be called comprehensive and practical unless it considers Balochistan in its defense plans. The conflicting interest of the Great Powers in the region-ranging from peripheral to central, converge in Balochistan, in a way that they subject to political pressures of varying degrees at various points of time and space'(Ahmad, 1992: 148)

### **Political and Economic Interests of Foreign Nations in Balochistan**

Balochistan has always been influential on local, national, and international politics. As Balochistan borders two very significant strategic countries Afghanistan and Iran, and having majority of Baloch residents in Afghan and Iranian areas, any type of unrest or violent insurgency in Pakistani Balochistan would disturb regional instability affecting the neighboring countries and consequently become a regional dispute. Baloch insurgency may create large problems in Iran and Afghanistan due to the strong demand for greater Balochistan which includes Baloch areas of Iran and Afghanistan. (Javaid, 2010:116). Being

located in the middle of the Central, Western Southern and South-western Asia, Balochistan is always under the effects of global geo-politics. The maritime significance and potential of port Gwadar to connect the landlocked, Afghanistan and the Central Asian states to the Indian Ocean as an international trade route and an energy transit corridor, and mineral resources have heightened geo-political competition among global powers, in the Eurasian region Balochistan provides an ideal profitable aim for global powers.. Plenty of energy resources, trade routes and maritime choke points, Balochistan has attained not only its national interest but can be more important than on international level too. This unique and valuable situation provides golden opportunity to the global powers to instigate their regional play. The world is increasingly moving towards multi-polarity and economic and military powers are growing in the Asian regions. United States has been at a powerful position exclusively since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The objectives of Asian states like China and India are to become economically more powerful to get global hegemony by controlling the major portion of world's energy resources.

Demand for energy supply of China, India, and other Asian countries is quickly increasing, so it is the biggest requirement of time to spread their influence over world energy resources, energy transit corridors, major land and maritime trade links. For this purpose, Balochistan has become the focus of global geo-political manipulation in this region. The resettlement of borders in the name of Greater Balochistan would definitely affect the economic development of China, Iran, India and Pakistan. United States have many times highlighted the geo-strategic and geo-political significance of Balochistan and they have presented and supported the idea of free Balochistan which could serve best to secure US geopolitical and geo strategic benefits.

In order to counter Iran, the land of Balochistan is of much importance for America. The natural resources of China and oil of the Arab world are going to eliminate in coming 30 to 40 years (Mazhar, et al. 2012: 120) and then the US will have to rely upon Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan; and for this purpose, US would have to cross Balochistan and its Coast, due to the interference of China in Balochistan, it would not be possible for US to attain an influential position. America would not be able to extend its economic hegemony for a long time, it will be substituted by China which is going to be influential over Gwadar Port and coastal line of Balochistan. That is the main reason behind US displeasure with the construction of Gwadar Port in collaboration with China.

When the Taliban administration ended in Kabul and rebellious groups of Taliban crossed the Pak-Afghan border to enter into Balochistan and organized revolutionary struggle against the aliened forces in Afghanistan. Moreover, the re emergence of the Baloch nationalist insurgency also complicated the internal situation of Pakistan's security; Balochistan obtained a new geo-strategic significance and became focus of US as a Trans border energy route.

The Baloch insurgency was recharged with the development of Gwadar sea port and their demand to share the benefits of Gwadar Project attracted strong US interest in Balochistan because it has the capacity to convert Balochistan in a main corridor of energy transportation from Central Asia and Iran to other parts of the region in minimum time. The US has to maintain a crucial and essential role in the new great game of resource development in Balochistan and in other parts of Asia. Therefore, all the three prominent factors; the Taliban militancy, Baloch insurgency and future significance of Balochistan as an energy transit route, played a very strong role in attaining and developing serious attention of US to Balochistan. (Aazar, 2010:164) Prior to that, Balochistan due to its defensive proximity with Afghanistan had a significant hand in the early triumph of US war on terror post 9/11. Pakistan provided US the access to airspace and airfields in Balochistan for US aerial bombing on Kabul to destroy the Taliban regime and their network in Afghanistan. (Aazar, 2010:165) Balochistan has been playing a central role in the geo strategic development of South and West Asia long before the US war on terror post 9/11 but during war, Balochistan's territorial proximity to Afghanistan was a great strategic advantage which was fully exploited by US forces.

American involvement in Balochistan is somehow blamed for supporting Baloch insurgents in order to deal with the Chinese influence in Balochistan. It is believed that CIA agents in Afghanistan provide financial support to the Baloch insurgents. (Bansal, 2008, pp.182–200) it is discovered that the US spy agency CIA is involved in recruitment of local agents in Balochistan to locate the members of Quetta based Taliban Shura. The Quetta Shura is a term used by the Americans for the Mullah Omar-led Taliban commanders. (Waheed, 2011, Apr.27) The incident of the arrest of a CIA Spy Raymond Davis in a murder case of two Pakistani in January 2011 increased the tension in Pakistan-US relationship and also exposed the CIA immoral activities in Balochistan. Above all, CIA's activities in Balochistan are clear sign of US growing interest in this region. In fact, Creation of "Greater Balochistan" is the top most agenda of US, India and Israel cooperation. (Hassan, 2011, May.04) Apparently, US propagate her concerns for the stabilization of Pakistan, but at the same time, she does have a deep interest in delaying projects that would enable China to be strategically present in this region and establish herself as an emerging economic power particularly at the Port of Gwadar. Americans are also interested in increasing their influence in Gwadar and other parts of Balochistan. Therefore, the any harm caused to China-Pakistan joint venture of development of Gwadar port is one of the main US interest in Balochistan. Thus, any type of violence in Balochistan protects US interests in the region because it is helpful in delaying the development projects between China and Pakistan.

The basic objective is to control the increasing Chinese existence in Balochistan. China is an economic rival to US and its presence in Balochistan is not beneficial for the strategic and economic future of US. The Gwadar port can serve as the marine base for Chinese forces which is a matter of great anxiety for

US. The Indian Ocean, near the Strait of Hormuz, a route for the export of oil from the Gulf States, will definitely come under the observation and influence of China will create serious problems for US in maintaining its monopoly in the region. The divergence of interests of various powers is also worsening the situation in Balochistan. Under the unstable and insecure circumstances in Balochistan, China will not move forward to provide any further technical or financial assistance to Pakistan for the development and progress of any economic project. (Mazari, 2005, Feb.2)

The clear objectives of US are to deteriorate Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan to establish a strong hold in Central Asian Region and harming Chinese economic interests in African and Middle East through creating obstacles in the Gwadar project. This can be possible only by supporting Balochistan Nationalist Movement to disturb the situation and creating unfavorable environment for any economic investment by China. "CIA supported elements are using America, United Kingdom, India and Afghanistan as their platforms for organizing, planning and operational bases for execution of the plan of Independent Balochistan. Moreover, some militarily supported political lobbies of America and UK are facilitating anti Pakistan elements to carryout nefarious activities against Pakistan". (Hassan, 2011, May.04) US interests are also intended to counter Iran, The United States is not happy with the expansion of Chinese energy and military assets, particularly so close to Iran and the Gulf region. An instable Balochistan is far more preferable to US than a stable and economically flourishing Balochistan. Any disturbance in Balochistan reduces the possibility of development of the Iran-Pakistan oil pipeline. The US has openly shown her discomfort with the proposed pipeline project. (Bansal, 2008:182).

The US is not only interested in Balochistan, but also has strong concerns about the massive resources of Central Asian States and Balochistan is the most convenient available path to these resources. US is much anxious to get control over the whole region for their future security plans and eliminate the influence of their only rival and competitor China. US interest in Balochistan highlights two long term objectives, firstly, US has to create a secure and reliable route to all the energy resources of Central Asia to USA, and secondly to contain China. Balochistan provides the shortest passage between the Indian Ocean and Central Asia outside of the Gulf. Therefore any unrest in Balochistan directly affects and effectively discourages Trans-Afghan pipeline project that is planned for transferring Central Asian resources to South Asia as the control of economically strong and established states of South Asia over this region will not allow US to flourish economic hegemony.

US and Russia have always focused their interest on Balochistan to exploit the land as a tool to make Pakistan a weaker state. Russia has encouraged the "Secessionist Movement of Sindhu Desh, Pakhtonistan or (Independent) or Greater Balochistan" (Najmuddin, 1984: 60). With the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979, it was predicted that the Soviet would try to take possession

of deep-sea-water port on the Indian Ocean, and the Baloch insurgents and their rebellious activities would be significantly helpful to Soviet attempt. (Harrison, 1981:173)

Having controlled Afghanistan, Russia tried hard to convince the Baloch to revolt against central government of Pakistan and the Baloch insurgents were assured by Russia that they would be given autonomy over Balochistan after the Soviet completely conquers Afghanistan. (Ismail, 2014:184) The Russian strategy was to establish full control in Kabul as their base and to raise the issues of Pakhtunistan and Greater Balochistan from the land of Kabul, and try to separate and disconnect Balochistan from Pakistan and to either merge it with Afghanistan or to create a new independent country that should be under full control of Moscow. "Whether Russian loose their interest in Afghanistan, yet in Balochistan and Indian Ocean its interest would not die down" (Ahmad, 1992: 253).

Russia also needs a suitable corridor to the warm waters of the Indian Oceans. Like USA, Russia also wants to preserve its monopoly over all the energy resources of Central Asia. At present all the Central Asian States (CAS) are entirely dependent on Russia for export of their energy projects. Soviet Interests in Balochistan have various aspects which are not much different than that of US. Russia wants to control the Gulf oil, which constitute almost 60 percent of world's known reserves. Any trouble in Balochistan gives Russia a hope to discourage Trans-Afghan pipeline or any other similar projects.

A Russian influenced Balochistan would bring the natural resources of the Indian Ocean and Antarctica under direct control and pressure of Russia. Fish catch from Indian Ocean and particularly from Arabian Sea, which constitutes almost 1/3rd of total fish catch, will be transported to Central Asia Republics over lands, without any trouble, in less time, thus will be more economical. (Ahmad,1992: 256) Balochistan will provide Russia the shortest route to the world's largest untapped mineral resources which are located at Antarctica. (Mazhar et al. 2012:119). All these future probabilities which can provide economical stability to Russia are related to Balochistan.

Balochistan is the only Province of Pakistan which shares direct border with Iran. The geographical location of Balochistan plays a very significant role in shaping the relations between Pakistan and Iran in the socio-cultural and economic perspectives. Balochistan is the only factor which can directly influence Pak-Iran relations both negatively and positively. Unfortunately, there are certain disappointing and inadequate factors which are creating confusions, doubts and stress and making Balochistan a weakening factor in Pak-Iran relations. Balochistan plays a key role in Pak-Iran economic and social integration. The close relation between the people of both countries on the basis of many religious and cultural similarities significantly increases the economic, cultural and social communication between the people of Iran and Pakistan. Infrastructure projects of roads and railways networks can make possible easy trade within the region and cross border. The proposed venture of oil refinery in Hub will do a lot for the promotion and betterment of economic cooperation between Pakistan and Iran,

which has been going through a tensed situation in the past few years because of political misunderstanding over Afghanistan issue. (Khan, 2012:137)

The project will provide an economic momentum to this least developed province Balochistan and will help to meet the increasing demand of high speed diesel. It will also make possible the exploration of oil and gas in Baloch region. The construction of gas pipeline between Iran-Pakistan is the most positive aspect of economic relationship. The proposed gas pipeline project would bring economic and political profit to both the countries equally.

The ongoing insurgency in Balochistan has badly affected the friendly relations of the two countries as the Iranian government blame Pakistan's involvement in the Balochistan based Jandullah Organization which is a group of Baloch nationalist militants which is also creating political disturbances in Iranian areas with the active support and cooperation of USA. (Khan, 2012:137) Moreover, the growing competition between the Pakistani sea port at Gwadar and the Iranian Port Chabahar, and strong rivalry between India, China and Pakistan to increase their influence in Central Asia through these ports, have already disturbed economic and political relations of Iran and Pakistan.

Chabahar seaport is situated at about 70 kilometer distance from Pakistani seaport of Gwadar, developed with Chinese assistance. Both these ports are great competitors as both are constructed with the same objectives in a same region. The difference between the two lies in the fact that Gwadar port is facing many issues like the bad security situation in Balochistan and lack of proper infrastructure of connecting links to main highways. The project is not making progress due to slow and process of development. While there is no such situation at Chabahar which is being developed rapidly and also has gained attention and interest of China successfully. Not only China but also Iran, Afghanistan and India are equally emphasizing at Chabahar Port ahead of Gwadar as regional trade and commerce center.

The Chabahar seaport is located outside the Strait of Hormuz, in Iran's Free Economic and Industrial Zone. This port is away from the passage of heavy sea-traffic in the Persian Gulf waters and provides more easy entrance to ships besides connecting it to Afghanistan and Central Asia. A road and rail communication system is also being constructed between Chabahar and Herat to connect with Central Asian States. India is seriously interested in the development of this seaport just to avoid Pakistani route to Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asian States. (Hussain, 2015:146)

Chabahar is somehow is an Indian financed Port and a part of the Indian plan to develop another mean of transportation in eastern Iran to counter and reduce the emerging influence of Pakistani port of Gwadar. India intends to connect Chabahar port with Central Asian countries through roads and railway to avoid Pakistan, and to reduce the dependency of Central Asian countries on the port of Gwadar. (Khan, 2012:135) As Gwadar port is expected to improve not only Pakistan's but also Chinese influence in Central Asia and beyond. Gwadar can be

a potential trade route for the landlocked Central Asian States and this new trade route would have tremendous economic impetus to Pakistan in the form of new and great investments as the CARs will rely upon Pakistan for their trade and commerce.

Chabahar is providing India with an easy access to Afghanistan through the Indian Ocean. An agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan has been signed according to that, Central Asia and Afghanistan are bound to give special preference and tariff reduction to Indian trade goods. (Khan, 2012:135) Therefore, Gwadar port is a threatening factor to Indian trade through Indian Ocean. Being so close to the Straits of Hormuz, Gwadar would create negative impact on India's commercial interest by enabling Pakistan to implement vast control over entire energy routes. Gwadar will also enable China to observe and examine Indian naval activity in the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea and any future maritime cooperation between India and Iran will be easily monitored by China. Similarly, Iran has clear apprehensions about the use of Gwadar port by the United States as a base to monitor activities inside Iran. (Asia Times, 2005, April.29).

India also is trying to secure energy routes to counter the growing Chinese influence in the Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf, and the Indian Ocean. So India chose Iran as her economic and strategic ally. India has spent huge amount on the construction and development of Iranian Port of Chahbahar. Iran is already working on Chahbahar port in sistan Baluchistan, which will facilitate Indian trade activities to Afghanistan and Central Asia through roads and rail links. The Chinese involvement in Pakistani Gwadar and Indian influence on Iranian Chahbahar has resulted not only in economic competition and strategic rivalry between India, Pakistan and China but also has increased risk of controversy for the economic and natural resources of Central Asia.

The growing competition between China and India has an unfavorable impact on the Pak-Iran relations. Gwadar and Chahbahar are the main causes of geo-strategic and economic competition. China is largely alarmed by the growing Indian growth in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. Moreover, the progress and warmth in Indo-US relations since the conclusion of US-India civilian nuclear cooperation and mutual aid between India and Iran in Afghanistan and Central Asia became a matter of serious concern for China's long-standing strategic and economic objectives in the region. (Khan, 2013: 79-80)

India is establishing good relations with Pakistani neighbors; Iran and Afghanistan just to contain Pakistan and to counterbalance Chinese emerging power, because China is the only power which is quite capable of competing and suppress Indian hegemony and supremacy in the region. As Indian navy is greater than that of Pakistan, therefore to surpass India, Pakistan needs Chinese support and cooperation in the Port of Gwadar which is in the best welfare of both China and Pakistan. Through the Gwadar, China can keep a strict watch on Indian approach and emergence in the Indian Ocean, the Arabian Sea, and Persian Gulf. (Khan, 2013: 79-80).

So far as Afghanistan is concerned, she has historically been remained a dispute between major powers. Mostly, Afghanistan remains in state of war and process of nation building, so there is no functional type of economy in Afghanistan and mostly depends on limited agriculture which is not meeting the basic food requirements of Afghans and they have to depend upon foreign donated food for survival. (Shah, 2007:65) The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-Iran (TAPI) pipeline project is a big hope to help restore the Afghan economy as the project could bring in over 300 million dollars royalty to the country and other foreign investments in the project may do a lot to stabilize and revive Afghan economy with the renovation of other infrastructure. Afghan transit trade was earlier handled through the Karachi port, but now the Gwadar port will serve this purpose well. Afghanistan has admitted the significance of Gwadar as a gateway to wealth for Afghanistan and also has offered support for the development of the Gwadar port. (The Dawn, 2003, Aug.5)

### **Global Political Players and Current Baloch Insurgency**

There has always been a belief among government of Pakistan that an outside hand is playing a role in the Baloch insurgency. Pakistan has always been claiming that the Baloch insurgents possess highly refined artillery and modern military training which may be a clear sign of the possibility of foreign support and intervention in the province. (The News, February 2, 2005.). A major example took place in 1973, during Bhutto regime; when Pakistan government found an ammunition store at Iraqi embassy in Islamabad. Weapons including about three hundred submachine guns and forty eight thousand 48,000 rounds of ammunition were located by Pakistanis officials. Akbar Bugti was the only Baloch Sardar at that time that fully supported central government in dismissal of NAP government in Balochistan and got the designation of Governor of Balochistan as a reward. (<http://pksecurity.blogspot.com/2012/11/what-are-short-term-objectives-of.html> 13 April, 2015) He is the one who supervised the worst military operation against the Baloch insurgents during 1973-77 revolt. The government claimed that the Iraqi weapons were being sent to help out the Baloch insurgents.

India developed interest in Afghanistan in the mid-1970s in the post-Bangladesh era and simultaneously, India started its efforts to put Balochistan in the same condition through encouraging an insurgency in Balochistan. For this purpose, India exploited the enmity between the state and the rebellious Baloch Sardars. The aims of India were to keep away Pakistan from the energy resources to turn Pakistan into an economically weak state. This kind of economic and political instability would damage the strength of Pakistan to survive as an independent state.

The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) occurred during the era of 1970s as the most active insurgent group with a strong leaning towards Soviet Union. It is believed that BLA received arms from the Soviet Union found many insurgents were secretly trained and educated there. The Baloch leaders have openly listed

India among their sponsors. Grand son of Akbar Bugti, and a BLA leader, Brahamdagh Bugti, had accepted assistance from India and Afghanistan to defend the Baloch nationalist cause. (<http://pksecurity.blogspot.com/2012/11/what-are-short-term-objectives-of.html> accessed on 14 April, 2015) “We love our Indian friends and want them to help and rescue us from tyranny and oppression. In fact, India is the only country which has shown concern over the Baloch plight. We want India to take Balochistan’s issue to every international forum, the same way Pakistan has done to raise the so-called Kashmiri issue. We want India to openly support our just cause and provide us with all moral, financial, military and diplomatic support.” (<http://www.balochonline.com/en/why-insurgency-in-balochistan.html> 14 April, 2015)

The selection of targets and use of modern weapons clearly shows the fact that the Baloch rebels have been trained by military experts. These large scaled insurgencies cannot last without large funding as the insurgents cannot rise on their own. According to an estimate the financial expenditure of BLA alone is about 50-90 million rupees per month. Supposedly, considerable cash is flowing into their hands from Afghanistan through US. (<http://pksecurity.blogspot.com/2012/11/what-are-short-term-objectives-of.html> 14 April, 2015).

It is said that US has been encouraging Baloch separatist movements for a long time through the help of India. United States had been encouraging India to strengthen its spy network in Afghanistan by helping it open consulates along the Afghan border with Pakistan. These Indian consulates were used as bases of Indian intelligence agency, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and the Baloch rebels are receiving financial and other assistance through these Indian centers. In 2004, the chief minister of Balochistan Jam Muhammad Yusuf openly declared that the Indian secret services were maintaining forty terrorist camps all over Baloch territory. (The News, February 2, 2005). The Pakistani officials have been continuously referring to Indian involvement but they also have expressed their doubt about Iranian and even US involvement.

India has established nine training camps along the Afghan border to provide military training to the members of the Baloch Liberation Army. India and the UAE are also alleged for providing armed and economic assistance to Baloch rebels. The aim is to create hurdles in the construction of the Gwadar port. Russian government has been directly involved in supporting the Baloch insurgents. Former president Pervez Musharraf had also raised the point with US officials in September 2007 and he asked the US to get involved on issue of attempt from Afghanistan and India to destabilize Balochistan. General Musharraf stated that “Pakistan had proof that India and Afghanistan were involved in efforts to provide weapons, training and funding for Baloch extremists through Brahamdagh Bugti and Baloch Marri, two Baloch nationalists, who were living in Kabul.” (The Express Tribune, 2012, Dec 3) The former Governor of Balochistan, Owais Ahmed Ghani stated “India is not only helping annoyed people with weapons, but is training them as well, India is financing the

insurgency and Afghan warlords and drug barons of arming the militants'' (<http://www.saudigazette.com.sa/index.cfm?method=home.regcon&contentid=2009041535146> on 16 April, 2015).

Afghanistan has also played role in supporting Baloch separatist movements. It is believed that during the first three insurgencies, the Baloch militant insurgents were provided with political and logistic support by Afghanistan. The first insurgency in 1948 led by Abdul Karim, was initiated during his stay in Afghanistan. (Harrison, 1981:26) and he was seeking support from both Soviet Union and Afghanistan. Although, Karim received significant support from Afghanistan but Baloch nationalists never admitted it openly. (Harrison,1981:26). When Karim instigated the second Baloch insurgency in 1958, again Karim had appealed Afghanistan for support of the insurgency. (Harrison, 1981:28).

During the third insurgency of 1962, Afghanistan directly and openly supported Baloch rebels. The prime minister of Afghanistan, Mohammad Daud granted permission to Baloch insurgents; the Pararis; to establish their camps along the Afghan-Pakistan border. (Harrison, 1981:39) These camps were initially established to provide refuge to the Baloch migrants but in fact, these refugee camps were largely utilized as Baloch insurgent headquarters. that's why, when General Zia ul Haq extended amnesty to the Baloch rebels, he also included Baloch living in Afghanistan and allowed them to return to Pakistan. (Harrison, 1981:40)

The government of Pakistan also suspects Iran of supporting Baloch militants. Iran is of the opinion that Pakistan; in collaboration with US; is planning to make Balochistan a front base in a future offensive against Iran. (Daily Times, January 29, 2005) because Iran is ambitiously trying to become the preferred passage to the sea for Central Asia at Pakistan's expense, and for this purpose, has built its own port at Chahbahar with Indian assistance to counter Pakistani Gwadar Port. But Iranian government never admitted any involvement in the troubles in Balochistan, claiming that it Iran has no intentions to harm the Gwadar project by helping Baloch Militants. (Daily Times, February 7, 2005).

However, Iran does not need to get involved in the Baloch insurgency directly as Iran probably would not be able to openly oppose Pakistan because Iran and Pakistan have a common interest in exporting Iranian gas to India, and an revolution in Balochistan would only harm the chances of building a gas pipeline through the province and consequently, it would be a big economic loss to both the countries. (Daily Times, February 5, 2005.) The only concern of Iran regarding Baloch insurgency is the unrest caused by Iranian Baloch, living within the territory of Iran and supporting their Pakistani Baloch companions for the liberation of Baloch regions located in Iran. It was for this reason that Iran assisted Pakistan during the insurgency of 1973 to help it put down the Baloch rebellion.

The government of Pakistan has doubts about the role of United States as a probable troublemaker. It is believed that US would like to use Balochistan as a front base for an attack on Iran and would also like to get China out of the region

by supporting Baloch insurgents. (Daily Times, January 30, 2005). The US has been asking Pakistan to allow it to open a consulate in Quetta and deploy CIA to keep an eye on the Taliban based Quetta Shura. However, the government of Pakistan did not allow the US to open a consulate in Quetta. (<http://www.pakistan-today.com.pk/2012/02/19/national/pakistan-to-expose-us-indian-interference> April 14, 2015).

But the US intentions are never clearly explained by Pakistan, it is difficult to understand whether US is opposing the Baloch nationalists because they are supported by Iran or whether US is supporting the Baloch because they are aggressive to the China. On the other hand, the Baloch nationalists put blame on government of Pakistan for conspiring with the US to crush down the Baloch fight for freedom.

## **Conclusion**

The geographical location and huge mineral and energy resources of Balochistan, make this land extraordinarily important for almost all the world and specially a mark of special interest among regional and international political actors such as the US, India, former Soviet Union, UAE and Afghanistan. All these countries have one common interest in this region and an independent Balochistan is in high favor of their geo-strategic and geo political interests.

The Gwadar port is estimated to be the focal point of an energy and trade passage to and from China and the Central Asian Republics. China has got legal right on Gwadar as it has invested a lot in this project financially and technically. China has also invested in a coastal highway to link Gwadar with Karachi. China is also involved in the Saindak gold and copper mining project in Balochistan. China and India have been engaged in several trade plans for their joint benefits but there has always been a sense of rivalry and an economic competition between the two countries So, India may not desire to see the development of Gwadar port as profitable for China as well as for Pakistan. The US involvement is also seen as a part of the "Great Power game" which is being played by global powers in Central Asia since the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It is widely believed that the US wants to compete China and Iran through controlling the oil supply lines from the Middle East and Central Asian States and to achieve its goal, US is using its Greater Middle East plan to take apart the major Muslim states and redesign borders in the region according to its own political and economic desires and benefits. It is believed that the US and British intelligence agencies are supporting the Baloch militants to destabilize the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project and weaken the Gwadar port from becoming functional due to Chinese involvement which would definitely be a major threat to US oil and naval interests in the Gulf region.

A constant insurgency in Balochistan is becoming a great threat to the image and development of Pakistan as it would split the nation in different ethnic groups as it has gained the status of a separatist movement. The Baloch demand and

armed struggle and separatist movement for an independent Balochistan have strategic impacts not only on Afghanistan, India and United States but also it has economic impacts on Iran, UAE, China and Central Asia. This situation would bring dramatic changes in the economic, political, and strategic landscape of South and Southwest Asia. Furthermore, international pressure from India, Iran, China, Afghanistan, and Central Asia is complicating and weakening Pakistan's position on international level. These countries have strategic energy and economic interests tied up in Balochistan by means of pipelines, ports, and roads.

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