CHAPTER SIX
THE FUTURE OF BALOCH POLITICS UNDER THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Certainly, the future of Baloch politics in Iran depends on two major factors. Firstly, how the Islamic Republic has approached and dealt with the Baloch and what have been the consequences of actions and reactions between Baloch and the central government in the last twenty-nine years of rule? Secondly, how influential and successful has been the Islamic Republic towards its foreign policy particularly vis-à-vis the United States of America, which is labeled by the Islamic Republic as a sponsor of insurgency in the boundary areas of Iran including Balochistan.

In order to assess the future of Baloch politics in Iran, this chapter is organized in nine sections. The first focuses on the outcome of religious political developments in Balochistan, how religion has been politicized. The second examines the major socio-political demands of the Baloch, to what extent their demands have been fulfilled by central government. The third deals with the concept of national unity and Islamic integrity; to what extent this policy has been successful. The fourth looks at Iran's monoethnic approach towards the Baloch. The Fifth refers to the emergence of recent Baloch insurgency, what lies behind the politics of insurgency. The sixth explores Balochi political inclination; do they prefer autonomy or looking for independence. The seventh concentrates on the effects of global communication over political developments in Balochistan. The section eight presents a hypothesis on the future of Baloch politics under the Islamic Republic of Iran. And, the final section deals with a proposal to the problem.
POLITICIZATION OF ISLAM

The Islamic Republic of Iran has generally been considered among the top most theocratic states in the world. The politicization of Islam is deeply rooted in the Iranian society especially after the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Radical groups including both Shia and Sunni have remained strong. The Islamic symbols, slogans, ideology, and organizations became prominent features in Iranian politics. Islam remains a major political force both in state politics and in Balochi society. In state politics Shia Islam is dominated and in Balochi society Sunni Islam has dominated the culture. As a result of state (Shia Islam) and society (Baloch Sunni) relationship a number of major ideological differences have emerged between Shia and Sunni in Iran. These developments, as shall be discussed in the following paragraph, have in fact politicized Islam to a great extent in today's Iran.

The Sunni Baloch of Iran like the Shia of Iran highly respect *imam* Ali, the son in law of Mohammad (the founder of Islam). Both *imam* Hassan and *imam* Hossain (the grandsons of Mohammad) are also highly respected by the Sunni Baloch. But, there are some historical differences between Shia and Sunni branches of Islam in which the impacts are reflected even today in the Sunni populated societies of Iran like Balochistan. As a matter of fact, Shia Islam emerged out of a dispute over the succession to Mohammad (founder of Islam). His successors, called *caliphs*, were both political and religious leaders of the theocracy (earthly kingdom under divine rule) that Mohammad had set up. After the assassination of Ali, the fourth *caliph* in 661 AD, the supporters of Ali claimed it had been Ali’s right to succeed Mohammad directly (this concept still is a matter of dispute between Sunni and Shia) and that the previous *caliphs* had therefore been usurpers. They maintain that only the descendants of Ali and his wife Fatima (Mohammad's daughter) were and are entitled to rule the Muslim community. This group or the
supporters of Ali are known as Shia or partisans. However, the Sunni Muslims including the Iranian Baloch reject the Shia doctrine about the succession. Thus, in Balochistan of Iran this difference is noticeable between the Sunni Baloch and the Iranian ruling Shia class especially among the fundamentalists of both groups. Baloch clerics hold the Shia government does not respect the first third successors (Abobakr, Omar, and Osman) of Mohammad, while the Baloch respect all the *imams* indisputably. In this context, as noted earlier, occasional conflicting words such as casual expressions of some common Shia figures against the *caliphs* like Omar can trigger off dissatisfaction and even clash between the Baloch and non Baloch Shia. In 2008, a street clash took place between some Baloch and Basiji groups (disciplinary forces) in Zahedan. The conflict broke out as a result of accusing Sunni’s belief.  

Another religious issue that has assumed a political color is about *Ashura* (an annual festival that falls on the traditional date of Hossain’s martyrdom, the 10th day of the Islamic month of Moharram) which is the most important of the many festivities celebrating martyrdom among Shia Muslims. Both Sunni and Shia Muslims condemn this historical event or massacre in Karbala, which martyrized *imam* Hossain. However, the event is particularly mourned by the Shia on *Ashura*. In this ceremony, Shia people express their grief by cutting their own bodies with razors and whip themselves to emulate Hossain’s bloody wounds. On the contrary, the Sunni Baloch do not only mourn the way that Shia mourn, but also do not appreciate this way of mourning. In turn, this has led the majority of Shia to believe that the Sunni are indifferent towards this Islamic historical movement. In this respect, cleric Abdol Hamid Ismaelzahi (the religious leader of the Iranian Baloch in Balochistan of Iran) in one of his lectures in 2007 stated that “most of the people (Shia) are of the opinion that during *Ashura* period, Sunni people are indifferent towards the family of the prophet Mohammad, simply because, they do not wear mourning dress (black clothes) or do not participate in
mourning ceremonies. But, let me assure that we are not indifferent rather it’s only a difference in religious jurisprudence. Baloch Sunni do not change their clothes in misfortune events, even if their family members (child or father) die they don’t wear black clothes.”

A number of other religious differences do exist between Sunni and Shia in Iran. In Balochistan, as is the case with entire Iran, in most of the public places religious banners are fixed on walls and boards of cities and towns. These religious banners are installed under the supervision of concerned authorities, which are a part of pro-Shia propaganda. For instance, slogans such as “the key of the Heaven is in the hands of imam Ali,” are somewhat indigestible to Baloch, mainly because, the Sunni faith gives priority to Mohammad rather than his successor, Ali. In fact, such and such religious propaganda by the (Shia) state in politically sensitive areas such as Balochistan has actually politicized the religious matters to a great extent, making Sunni Baloch dissatisfied with the policies of the state. According to Dr. Mahmood Zand Moqadam, an Iranian expert in the affairs of Balochistan, the religious sensitivity in Iranian Balochistan has been intensified further in post Islamic Revolution. The Shia, after the Islamic Revolution began to construct more and more new mosques, and this naturally made Baloch clergy to react; making much bigger and finer mosques for the Baloch within Balochistan. These religious maneuvers were not usual in pre-Revolution time in Balochistan. Before the Revolution, Sunni mosques were very simple and small and there was no difference between a Sunni mosque and a Shia mosque in that both Shia and Sunni used to say their prayers even in each other mosques without any sensitivity.
DEMANDS OF BALOCH

A history of twenty-nine years (1979-2008) of rule indicates that the major demands of Baloch, as expected by them, have not been satisfactorily fulfilled by the central government of Iran. One of the major demands of Baloch from central government particularly in the third decade is to allow them to have a key role in the administration of Balochistan. Except recent years, more than 95% of the provincial authorities have been from other parts of the country including Zabol of Sistan. As a result of this demand, however, a number of the educated Baloch recently have been given satisfactory positions. For example, within the third decade several Baloch have been appointed to act as provincial administrators, heading offices such as Maskan-e Shahrsazi Organization (related to public dwelling construction), Office of Employment & Social Affairs (edareh kar va omoor ejtomayee), a Deputy of Governor General in Planning Affairs (moaven ostandar dar omoor-e barnamehrizi), etc., though they have not been able to occupy key offices. Besides, a number of town and city mayors have been selected from Balochistan itself. In this respect, between 2002-2008, in cities such as Iranshahr and Saravan and some other Balochi towns, mayors have been from the Baloch of Balochistan. It is also true with most of the City Council members throughout Balochistan who are Baloch. More importantly, are the appointment of 'Faculty Heads' especially in Saravan, where the heads of all universities such as Payamnoor University, Azad University, and Agriculture Faculty are local Saravani or Baloch. However, sensitive offices such as Chancellery, Governorship and Ministership have not been given to the Baloch.

Another recent demand by Baloch from central government is to allow them to participate in the central administration, demanding the presence of at least one Baloch Minister in the central cabinet, but this demand has not been fulfilled so far.
Freedom of religion has been a core demand. For the last 29 years Baloch have been asking and demanding for more religious freedom. Recently, Baloch particularly Sunni clerics have demanded to build mosques for the Sunni people in non-Sunni populated provinces of Iran especially in Tehran, the capital. Peman Forozesh, a Baloch Member of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (parliament) representing the people of Zahedan, in this regard, states “for the establishment of Sunni mosques outside Balochistan, we met and discussed with a number of high ranking authorities such as President Ahmadinejad, Speaker of Parliament, and so on. We tried much but so far failed to get the permission.” 5 Well, the issue of 'having a Sunni mosque for prayer in Tehran' recently has raised a tumult of protest among the Baloch elite of Iran. A number of Baloch foreign-based opposition including the educated ones took this opportunity and condemned the central government for not allowing the Sunnis of Iran to have a mosque of their own. In 2006, Voice of America/Persian (VOA) interviewed Mahmood Berahooyinejad (a Baloch journalist based in Zahedan) and Dr. Abdolsatar Doshoki (a Baloch physician and political activist based in London). In the interview, both Berahooyinejad and Doshoki pointed out the matter and discussed on the issue of discrimination in Balochistan.6 The issue has also left an impact inside Balochistan. In this regard, in 2008 a number of Baloch students probably hundreds of them met hojatolislam (hojatolislam means authority on Islam) Solemani, the Leadership Representative in the Province. They dared to ask him the question of why government does not allow the Sunni Baloch to set up their own mosque in Tehran. In response, however, cleric (Shia) Solemani asserted, “in fact we have already several Sunni mosques in Tehran. But, our Baloch clerics are demanding another one for Friday Prayer. In all conscience, if our Sunni clerics want a mosque for their religious prayers, then those available mosques are enough, otherwise, the issue can be a politically motivated matter and not a religious one, in which can affect our
Actually, when a mosque for Friday Prayer is allocated to the Sunnis in the capital, they (Sunnis of Iran) can gather in great numbers in Tehran. Because Friday Prayers are institutionalized weekly public prayers in which leaders follow communal prayers often with political speech. This may encourage the Sunnis of Iran to gather in the capital, which ultimately may result in the creation of a politically powerful block in Tehran, as today is the case with Zahedan in Balochistan. Therefore, the act cannot be justified to be a religious oriented matter. In addition, it should not be forgotten that Baloch clerics enjoy liberty in religious matters within Balochistan. Throughout Balochistan, they have established and managed their own religious schools and have taught their own religious principles without government interference. There are many Sunni Religious Schools in Balochistan. Baloch clerics pursue their own religious teachings. Religious students after graduation would be rewarded with their respective degrees without government intervention. After graduation, they can teach in the same schools. Such schools can be found in Zahedan, Saravan, Iranshahr, etc. However, in 2008 central government has been considering a law to check and control Sunni Religious Schools --- what subjects should be allowed and what subjects should not be allowed for teaching purpose in the class rooms. This has made a number of leading Baloch clerics to protest against the policy, though it has not been finalized so far. In this regard, cleric Abdol Hamid Ismaelzai openly warned the establishment not to interfere in their religious matters, because it is against the constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In a report published in 2008 cleric Abdol Hamid Ismaelzai expressed his views by saying "we are not going to give up our religious liberties. Our religious liberties must be regarded within the framework of law."  

According to the reports of the Leadership Office of Zahedan, there are around 12000 Sunni religious students only in Sistan & Balochistan, as well as, there
are approximately 200 Sunni Religious Schools in the province, which all are free in their activities under the law.⁹

Taking the poor status of Balochistan into account, another major demand by the Baloch elite from central government has been to grant the poor Baloch students a privilege to by pass ‘University Conquer Examination’ and provide scholarship to such students so that enable them to pursue their graduations or post graduations. This can increase the number of the educated Baloch who can stay and work in Balochistan. But, this demand was not taken seriously. Why this demand was not taken seriously is perhaps because of its disorganized approach. In other words, this demand failed to be as systematic as others do such as 'the right of having a role in the administration of Balochistan.' In any case, only a handful number of the Baloch could have received scholarship for their PhDs outside Iran. However, the recent developments should not be overlooked. As has been the issue in the entire country including Balochistan, government has eased some of its educational policies. In this respect, for some educational courses like B.A. Pass (a two year course) students are free from Conquer Examination. They can register their names and attend the various branches of Azad University all over the country. Even recently (2004-2008) government took one step further, easily accepting and registering most of the candidates who have attended the formal test for bachelor courses at Azad universities all over Iran. Government has also paved an easier way for Iranians to enroll themselves at Payamnoor universities all over the country including Balochistan, where many of Baloch students have began to attend classes at these two centralized universities (Payamnoor University & Azad University branches in Balochistan) in major cities of Balochistan such as Zahedan, Iranshahr, Chabahar, Saravan, and Khash. In 2008, in Saravan (a city of Iranian Balochistan) most of the students of Azad University and Payamnoor University have been
Baloch who estimated to be around 2000 individuals, studying at bachelor pass levels in disciplines such as Accounting and Education.10

For all this, a number of unofficial local reports show that many Baloch are not satisfied with government policies. They believe, Shia insulting the Baloch constantly. For example, as pointed earlier, a number of times their caliphs such as Omar and Abobakr have been abused by some Shia clerics. However, it seems government does not support such sensitive incidents against the Baloch. In this respect (in 2008) hojatolislam Solemani (Representative of Leadership in Sistan & Balochistan) has addressed to the hundreds of Baloch students that “unfortunately, this is an issue of great concern and we have complained and do prevent such slogans or insulting words, which are being directed towards the Sunnis. We legally do not insult other religious sects, let alone Sunni sect. Those who do so are ignorant people... In spite of that (cleric Solemani continued) if one takes a look at internal situations in Pakistan and Afghanistan, one can see the fights between Sunni and Shia are more intensified than those of Iran.” 11

The Baloch particularly those who are in exile has projected the Islamic Republic of Iran as a state in which favors discrimination between Sunni and Shia. This concept is also being supported by many Baloch including students. In a question why Baloch Sunni are unemployed, the Office of Leadership in Zahedan has commented, “employment has nothing to do with being Shia or Sunni. We have also many Shia people who are unemployed, nevertheless, if in cases there are discriminations between Sunni and Shia, it is our duty to look into the matter.” 12

Many of the Baloch also believe they do not have Sunni Baloch position holders in Balochistan of Iran. In this respect, cleric Solemani (the Representative of Leadership in Sistan & Balochistan) responds that “today (2008) there are around
Baloch managers or directors in the province who all are Sunni. But, if Baloch people prefer to occupy more offices or higher offices then they have to develop and enhance their abilities.”

However, many Baloch are of the opinion that discrimination in employment highly exists in the nature of the Islamic government. There is discrimination between Sunni and Shia on one hand and between Baloch and non-Baloch on the other hand. In order to justify their claims they refer to a number of instances such as the absence Baloch Sunni governors, Baloch Sunni governor general, Baloch university chancellor, Baloch ambassadors, Baloch ministers, etc. They believe concerned authorities select only Shia people for such positions. They back their statements by reasoning that since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 till present (2008) no Baloch has been able to occupy such offices so far. This unfavorable environment, in fact, has led majority of them to conclude that government does not treat them equally. In turn, this can be regarded as a motivational force, pushing the Baloch towards a state whereupon uphold their national sentiment perceptions. Some Baloch political activists are of the opinion that central government deliberately has maintained an unfavorable situation towards the Baloch, because, the Baloch are looked upon as secessionist people. Of course, historical experiences such as politics before Reza Shah’s era (before 1925) as well as the nature of Baloch politics in the history of Pakistan may support this view of government. Besides, some evidences indicate that the Mohammad Reza Shah's regime (1941-1979) has also maintained such a theory. For example, during Pahlavi era, Khalat Bary (the then Shah’s Foreign Minister who was also an ex-Director General of CENTO) had remarked “we always assume the Baloch would attempt to create their own independent state some day with Soviet Union support so it was desirable to keep them as politically weak, disunited, and backward as possible.” Subsequently, under the Islamic Republic, Kaveh (a Persian colonel in Balochistan)
has disclosed almost similar words. Jundollah, a Balochi insurgent group, kidnapped Kaveh in 2006. Under their detention in a film he confessed that one of the major policies of the Islamic Republic in Balochistan has been to keep the Baloch politically weak, disunited, and as backward as possible. His interview by Jundollah was released on CDs and distributed in the province. Later on, according to Jundollah, colonel Kaveh was executed by them. Some people especially Iranian officials claim that colonel Kaveh was forced to talk about this, while such a confession cannot be true.\(^{15}\) In any way, the major reason for discrimination at high ranking offices such as leadership, presidency and ambassadorship, is the presence of ideological differences between Shia and Sunni, as has been clearly referred to Article 115 of the constitution (where it explains the essential characteristics of an Iranian would be President. Throughout the study we have referred to Article 115 several times). Apparaently, such discrimination may be resolved if ideological differences cease to exist. For example, a few number of the Iranian Sunni Baloch who converted themselves and adopted Shia as their faith, afterwards provided with good positions such as chancellorship of university or other fair treatments. The Medical University of Zahedan today (2008) headed by an Iranian Baloch, can be taken as an example.

**NATIONAL UNITY & ISLAMIC INTEGRITY**

The policies of the central government not only failed to bridge the gap of ideological differences between the Sunni Baloch and the ruling Shia, rather further widened the gap. The Islamic Republic is fully aware of this phenomenon, that is why, after 28 years (in 2007) on the first day of Noroz (the Iranian new year) Ayatollah Khamenehi, the religious and political leader of the Islamic Republic, in a televised message addressed the Iranian nation and marked the year of 1386 (2007) a year of "national unity and Islamic integrity." However, to many of Baloch, national unity and Islamic integrity is not
regarded justly in Balochistan. In this respect, Ahmad Narooie, an influential Baloch cleric has expressed his view in the following way, “we talk of national unity and Islamic integrity, while we the Sunni Baloch do not have even a mosque in Tehran. We don’t have even an ambassador, while Saudi Arabia as a Sunni dominated country has appointed a Shia ambassador in Iran. In Bahrain, though statesmanship is in the hands of the Sunni, two third of its Assembly is occupied by our Shia brothers. Interestingly, such countries give priority to their own national interest. Unfortunately, in Iran in a city like Zabol of Sistan most of the Sunni candidates who register their names for the Islamic Consultative Assembly (parliament) considered to be incompetent by the Guardian Council. Obviously, if things go like this how one can expect national unity and Islamic integrity. We request the authorities to condemn and eliminate all those activities such as 'Salam Channel' which trigger violence between Sunni and Shia. Secondly, central administrators should shift their focus on deprived regions of Iran like Balochistan, where most of its parts are deprived from safe drinking water, and where most of the poor Baloch still live in tents and huts. Thirdly, we expect central authorities to establish direct contacts with the Baloch. Several times Baloch clerics have requested the Office of President Ahmadinejad to give them an appointment nevertheless we have not received any answer from his office so far.” 16 In another recent development, at an official meeting in Tehran, cleric (Sunni) Abdol Hamid Ismaelzahi, asked the Iranian leadership to let the Sunni people have their own mosque in Tehran. He said during the month of Ramadan (2007) government authorities stopped a number of Sunni people who were offering their Friday Prayer in Isfahan and soon after that they also stopped the Sunni Friday Prayer held in a Pakistani school in Tehran. In his speech, Molavi Abdol Hamid added previously we used to say Sunni do not have a mosque for prayer in Tehran, but now people feel as if government does not allow the Sunni to offer their Friday prayers in Tehran.17 Whatsoever, it seems that these developments have not prevented the Baloch
clerics from playing a role in politics. They, although not all, have always been active in participating and contesting Expert Assembly. For example, for years cleric Is-haq Madani from Balochistan has been nominated and elected as a Member of Expert Assembly. In this regard, in the election of 2007 around thirteen Baloch clerics have enrolled and nominated themselves for the membership of this Assembly, most of whom however declared disqualified by the Islamic state. On this account, cleric Ahmad Narooie has critically stated "in this election around thirteen Baloch clerics registered their names but unfortunately due to its rigid policies, the Guardian Council rejected most of them. It seems that if authorities do not revise their policies people may lose their interest in elections."  

The issue of national unity and Islamic integrity cannot develop without carefully calculated mutual cooperation. As has been stated earlier, majority of Baloch clerics are Deobandian, whereas ruling Shia belong to Shia Jafari Athna Ashari. In any event, between Deobandian and Shiaism, there are fundamental differences of opinion. Extremist Deobandians look upon the Shia believers as apostates. This is because, they are of the opinion that the Shia religious scholars have distorted Quran, or that some similarities exist between Shia and the Jews. However, the moderate Deobanians do not believe in apostasy of the Shia. Molavi Nazir Ahmad Salami, an Iranian Baloch Sunni cleric and a Member of Experts Assembly in Iran, asserts “those who give to Shia such attributes as for example God’s tendency in approaching Ali (the first imam according to the Shia), instead of Mohammad (the prophet of Islam), or else, Gabriel’s mistake in transmitting Allah’s message to Mohammad, in lieu of Ali, are unaware of the fact that such ideas do not belong to the Shia (the faith of the ruling Shia clergy in Iran) rather these views are the products of Akhbarium or other groups pertaining to Shiaism such as Hulooli and Ghali. Such religious decrees that passes by either from Sunni to Shia or vice versa in fact has its roots in
political differences and organizational interests and thus are not based on scholarly studies.” 19 Whatsoever, in order to reach to the concept of national unity and Islamic integrity, the culture of targeting each other’s religious believes needs to be mended first, and that both parties require to go for some ideological reforms in their approach towards each other.

ASSIMILATION: Iran's Monoethnic Approach

The establishment of a monoethnic state is achieved through assimilating a diverse population into one that shares a single national identity. This approach usually occurs where the hegemonic group has control over the state machinery and uses this to safeguard and impose its own values on other groups within the state boundaries. While this may create strong national identity, it is just as likely to create resentment in the peripheral communities as their identity is challenged. The different central governments of Iran have pursued a policy of assimilation and the same is true with the Islamic Republic of Iran. However, the Islamic state has been less successful in securing peace and in building up a strong Iranian nation.

Balochi culture and language is relegated to their home and cannot be used for other than local purposes. A considerable number of the Baloch who serve in public institutions in Balochistan usually do not wear their local dress rather prefer to wear the official dress. Considerable number of the Baloch, while traveling outside Balochistan usually disguise themselves just like Farsi people. In Balochistan, education is in Farsi and all government businesses are also conducted in this language. The Iranian history would be taught from the perspective of Iranian nationalism and Islamic teachings and therefore majority of the Baloch including students are unaware of their Balochi history. The
symbols of the state and power are Islamic and the non-Shia groups are under the political control of the Shia-dominated government. Thus, state emphasizes the nationalization of the entire Iranian society and the Islamization of the culture. The result of these policies, however, was not the establishment of a strong nation-state. The different Iranian groups such as the Kurds, Arabs, and Baloch occasionally react to the assimilation attempt. The way the Baloch students enthusiastically celebrate every year their own graduation parties can be taken as a prime example. Besides, resistance to the central government's assimilation policy has also taken a military approach especially when it was evident that the Baloch would not have autonomy. Military clashes between Balochistan Libration Front (1964-1979) and the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah, as well as, military confrontation between the Iranian Baloch Jundollah (2004 to the present i.e. 2008) and the Islamic Republic of Iran, can be referred as two notable examples.

Among the other obvious developments are the nominal changes such as the change of 'Balochistan & Sistan Province' into 'Sistan & Balochistan Province' or the nominal change of the 'Balochistan University' into 'Sistan & Balochistan University.' Although these nominal changes may seem superficial, they are part of the plan. The Islamic Republic uses such terms to project unity and divert the ethnic nationalism. It has been also claimed that the central state may divide Balochistan into two major regions: 'Sarhad Province' which may include Zahedan, Khash, and Zabol (a city of Sistan) and 'Makoran Province', which may include Saravan, Iranshahr, Chabahar, etc. Therefore, the probable division of 'Balochistan' may emerge by parting it into these two regions. However, such a claim has not been disclosed officially, nor does one know for sure about the implementation of this policy. Anyway, these developments can be seen as a part of assimilation process.
As far as the question of Baloch is concerned, the Islamic Republic of Iran has been relatively successful in its monoethnic approach. The culture of Farsi people is clearly visible within the educated Baloch families. Many of the educated Baloch including students and state employees are using Persian words while communicating even among themselves and consider such gesture as if it is a sign of modernity. There are also considerable number of the educated Baloch families, who communicate with their kids in Persian and try to persuade their children to speak 'the Tehrani form of Persian' (the accent of the people of Tehran). It is mainly because, these families believe their children should be fluent in Persian language so that be able to speak a standard accent in order to not face with the problem of proper communication in public. The life style of the Iranian educated Baloch is different from that of the Pakistani educated Baloch, who are inclined more towards a traditional way of life. Such signs of assimilation can be also visible more or less in other aspects of life of an educated Baloch such as reading and writing. Most of the educated Baloch in Iran do not read and write in Balochi. It is mainly because since childhood (from primary education up to higher education) they are used to read and write in Persian. Although this has become a matter of concern for many Baloch, no immediate solution can be given to this. The only option left for the Baloch is to practice reading and writing in Balochi and think of organizing Balochi cultural institutions.

However, the process of assimilation of the Baloch by the state administration has not been always against their interest rather they have been benefited too. For example, in comparison with the Baloch of Afghanistan or Baloch of Pakistan, Baloch of Iran have a far better view on female gender. The Baloch women of Iran particularly the educated ones have more freedom in choosing their future husbands or are freer in pursuing their studies. Again, in comparison with the Baloch woman of Afghanistan or that of Pakistan, Baloch woman of
Iran does not consider herself a mere housewife --- she is a partner. These changes have been resulted from the influence of Persian culture in post-Islamic Revolution Iran, especially in the third decade. On concepts such as women's rights and equality (though these concepts are not being respected generally in Balochistan of Iran as far as the issue of Baloch women is concerned) in comparison with the Baloch women of Afghanistan or those of Pakistan, the Iranian Baloch young women of current time are relatively better versed in the issue.

**REOCCURRENCE OF BALOCH INSURGENCY: Jundollah or People's Resistance Movement of Iran**

Since 1928, the year of the establishment of modern government in Balochistan of Iran two major politically oriented movements emerged in Balochistan, both these movements receiving foreign support. The first was the emergence of Balochistan Liberation Front (1964-1979) against the central government of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, as discussed earlier in chapter five of this study. The second movement emerged in 2004 against the Islamic Republic of Iran. It was in the year of 2004 that a rebellious Balochi group called *Jundollah* emerged and made its appearance in Balochistan. *Jundallah* (Soldiers of Allah, also known as Iranian People's Resistance Movement) is an insurgent Sunni Islamic Organization based in Balochistan that claims to be fighting for the rights of Sunni Muslims in Iran. It is believed to have 1,000 fighters and claims to have killed 400 Iranian soldiers. The group has been identified as a terrorist organization by the Islamic Republic of Iran and many Iranian authorities believe it is linked to Al-Qaeda. But, Jundollah adamantly denies any connections to Al-Qaeda or the Taliban. Jundullah was allegedly headed by Khalid Sheikh Mohammed (originally an Iranian Baloch) the al-Qaeda operational commander of the September 11 terrorist attacks in the US, who was arrested in Pakistan early in 2003. Judollah or Peoples Resistant Movement of Iran
Jundollah is a religious organization based on Sunni fundamentalist ideology led by Abdol Malek Rigi, a rebellious Baloch who frequently attack government military bases and army personnel throughout the Iranian Balochistan. In his various interviews with Iranian foreign-based media, Rigi has said that the purpose of the formation of his group (Jundollah) was to oppose the policies of the regime in Balochistan. Jundollah’s role become threatening when in 2006 it attacked and killed around twenty-two personnel of Iranian army, intelligence and military at Tasooki, a place between Zabol and Zahedan. The reasons of
the attack has been explained by Abdol Malek Rigi himself in a video record, as saying "for several times we had some contacts with the state concerned authorities and in our conversations we discussed with the authorities and said to them that let's not involve the innocent people in our problems. We are in war with those who are in power. There are innocent Farsi or Shia people, as well as, there are innocent Baloch who are not involved in our war against each other (Jundollah and State). Thus, until you do not harm our innocent people, we too do not harm your innocent people. Whenever you find our group members you can kill them and you are welcomed in doing so, but whenever we find your security and army members, we will kill them and so it is welcomed. But, let's not target our innocent people. However, state concerned authorities did not listen to us. Without any conviction, several weeks ago they killed three Baloch from Nootizahi tribe. Several months ago they killed three Baloch from Shahbakhsh tribe, etc. So, they did not listen to us. Tonight, we are going to take our revenge by attacking you. For this attack of tonight which is going to happen, the Islamic Republic and its Intelligence Ministry are responsible."

Minutes later of this video confession, Jundollah attacked twenty-two personnel of Iranian army, intelligence, military, and a few of the innocent citizens at Tasooki, a place between Zabol and Zahedan. The entire operation was filmed by Jundollah and later on distributed in Iran.  

Since 2006, Jundollah has launched around 20 major attacks on Iranian security and revolutionary guards in Balochistan. In 2006 they attacked four security forces while these forces were on duty in Bozorgmehr Street in Zahedan. In another development, two bombs exploded in mid February 2006 by Jundollah in Zahedan. The first blast killed at least 11 members of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) and injured 18 who were travelling in a bus from their housing compound to a nearby military base. The second bomb, followed by sustained clashes between police and Jundollah. In 2008, a
Persian judge was assassinated in Saravan by Jundollah. In the same year, around 16 military forces were kidnapped from Saravan and were executed one by one. Jundollah has committed a number of other similar attacks on Iranian security forces. But government has been very weak in combating Baloch insurgency. It is because of several factors. Firstly, soldiers of the Islamic Republic particularly in recent years lack a strong zeal in patriotism. The kind of patriotism which used to exist during the revolution time (1979) or during the eight years war with Iraq (1980-1988) does not exist today among the military or security forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran. In this respect, Dr. Shahryari (a Sistani parliamentarian who is representing the people of Zahedan) says "security forces first need to secure their own safety and then look after the common people. They have not been successful in bringing about security. This is the problem."

Secondly, Baloch insurgents easily frequent Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan and are very well familiar with different routs, whereas the Iranian soldiers or commanders who mostly belong to other parts of Iran are not well familiar with these routes. Thirdly, the Baloch insurgents such as the members of Jundollah are equipped with a strong religious zeal as if they are the right people to save the Baloch. For them life has no value and they are created to fight till get killed especially when they have nothing to lose in a war with the central government. For them death or martyrdom is the road towards heaven as it is promised by Islam, therefore, these people welcome death any time. Such particular characteristic vis-a-vis the Baloch insurgency does not exist in the Iranian security forces.

Subsequently, Jundollah was renamed into Jonbesh-e Moghavemat-e Mardom-e Iran or ‘People's Resistance Movement of Iran.’ Based on their nominal change, they changed also their tactics remarkably. For instance, previously they used to hold Taliban kind of ideology. For example, in 2006 a CD was distributed by Jundollah, in which a Baloch beheaded a man. According to Jundollah, the man
was a spy appointed by the Islamic Republic’s intelligence to assassinate Abdol Malek Rigi, the leader of the organization. Reportedly he was found guilty by Rigi and was beheaded by them. The CD had left a bad impression about the Baloch of Iran. Besides, Jundollah's focus used to be on the Iranian Baloch rights only. However, after the adoption of the new name ‘People's Resistance Movement of Iran,’ Jundollah stopped beheading its enemies, and its focus shifted on the entire Iranian rights whether Shia or Sunni. During his previous interviews, Abdol Malek Rigi used harsh and unprofessional language while speaking to media, whereas subsequently he changed his tone remarkably, using a more professional and political language.

Behind this behavioral transformation that changed the tactics of Jundollah, so does the personality of its leader, lays a clear reason. Apparently, Abdol Malek Rigi, Jundollah’s leader, either gradually began to establish or was persuaded to establish some connections with the Iranian exiles in Europe and America including Dr. Ali Reza Noorizadeh, a well known Iranian journalist and opposition figure who only in 2007 has taken several interviews from Abdol Malek Rigi. There is a strong possibility that figures such as Dr. Ali Reza Noorizadeh based in London have caused Rigi and his organization to change their tactics --- using nonviolent methods rather than violent methods. In a number of his interviews with the Iranian foreign based media such as Voice of America, Sedaye Iran (Voice of Iran), and Channel One, Abdol Malek Rigi constantly asking the Baloch, as well as, other Iranians to stand and join his organization against the Islamic Republic, saying that he will resist and try his best to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Immediately after each attack against the forces of the Islamic Republic, Abdol Malek Rigi details about the attacks in his interviews with Iranian foreign-based media. Rigi claims he has formed a people movement and that he does not
attack civilians, rather his targets are the Iranian army and intelligence personnel and those who cooperate with these state security institutions whosoever including the Baloch. In his interviews, Rigi (Jundollah's leader) claims his organization does not have any foreign financial support rather Baloch people finance him. However, Iranian government rejects this idea and holds that Rigi and his terrorist cell belong to America. Iran accuses the United States of backing Judollah, possibly from Pakistani territory with Islamabad's support, although Pakistani officials strongly deny this. Brigadier General Esmaeil Ahmadi-Moqaddam, the Police Chief of the Islamic Republic of Iran believes that British and U.S. spy networks support Jundollah to do sabotage acts in Iran from its bases in Afghanistan and Pakistan.  

Dr. Shahryari, an influential Zaboli figure and parliamentarian who represents the people of Zahedan, in an interview in 2007 with Ayaaran (a local newspaper) has said “Rigi and his terrorist group are the puppets of Western powers like US and are being supported by US to divide Sunni and Shia and create violence between them in the province.” Whereas, cleric Ahmad Narooie (an influential Baloch) holds a different view. In the same year, in an interview with Radio Zamaneh, Ahmad Narooie openly remarked that “the emergence of groups like Jundollah is in fact as a result of some undesirable policies of the government in Balochistan. For example, in some cases government forces had stopped and shot innocent Baloch boys without any legal instruction. Such and such incidents in Balochistan can be responsible for events like Tasooki (where as noted above, Jundollah killed a number of Iranian forces). He adds further, in order to tackle these problems people should increase their participation and awareness and government also should respect and have confidence in Baloch… We should not forget that the presence of Sunni section of Iran is an undeniable fact.” In this regard, Times of India has published a report on April 5, 2007 in which Alexis Debat (a senior fellow on counter-terrorism at the Nixon Center) says “according to ABC News citing unnamed US and Pakistani intelligence sources, Jundollah
is a Pakistani tribal militant group which is secretly encouraged and advised by American officials since 2005. ABC said that Pakistani government sources confirmed that the secret campaign against Iran by Jundollah was on the agenda when Vice President Dick Cheney met with Pakistani dictator Parviz Musharaf in February, an exchange that would corroborate reports that Washington was using Pakistan in its campaign against Iran. The report further says that US provides no direct funds to the group, which would require an official presidential order, etc., instead tribal sources told ABC News money is funneled to Jundollah’s youthful leader Abdol Malek Rigi through Iranian exiles with connections in Europe and Gulf States.” Reportedly, Rigi is commanding a force of several hundred-guerilla fighters that stage attacks across the border into Iran on Iranian military officers, Iranian intelligence officers, kidnapping them, executing them on camera, etc.  

As a result of Jundollah’s calculated attacks in Balochistan of Iran against government forces, the Islamic Republic has taken severe measures to punish the members of Jundollah or whosoever hold some sort of association with the organization. Therefore, government has launched a series of pacification campaigns against Baloch rebellion, using its strong arms methods, which include assassinations, arrests, torture, and executions, in order to put down any real or potential resistance to their rule. On this account, around four Baloch clerics including Khalilullah Zareyi and Hafiz Salahodin Seyedi have been condemned to death and executed in 2008 by judicial authorities in Zahedan.  

It was said that both had connection with Jundollah. Likewise, Yaghoob Mehrnehad (a young Baloch activist) the Secretary General of the 'Youth Association of the Voice of Justice' (Anjoman-e Javanan-e Sedaye Edallat, an NGO in Zahedan) was executed in 2008. He was convicted of having connection with Jundollah. In an interview with the Iranian newspaper Ayyaran on 17 March, Hossain Ali Shahryari (a Sistani parliamentarian) stated "prisons in Sistan &
Balochistan hold more than 700 people under sentence of death.” 34 As a reaction, Baloch rebellious groups such as Jundollah have sporadically engaged themselves in armed resistance against the Iranian government, killing Iranian forces on the grounds of defending and revenging the rights of the innocent Baloch masses. 35 On the other hand, a number of Baloch political activists in exile such as Reza Hosainbor and Dr. Abdol Satar Doshoki fight against the Islamic Republic in their own way. For example, they write and publish online articles against the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Balochistan. In their various reports they try to project these Baloch victims as innocent people. 36 In order to highlight the crisis in Balochistan of Iran, a number of foreign-based Balochi political parties began to organize demonstrations in different cities of Europe. For instance, a demonstration held on 21 May 2006 outside UK Prime Minister House in London. A large number of Baloch gathered in severe weather to denounce the Iranian government bombardment of Balochi villages in the Iranian Balochistan. 37 Many of Baloch exiles either in the form of small groups or individually have appealed for international help to stop executions in Balochistan. Letters has been sent to Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and United Nations Commissions for Human Rights, the European Parliament, and Think Tanks. The main signatories of such appeals have been groups like Balochistan Peoples Front, Balochistan Peoples Party, Balochistan United Front (Federal Republicans), Balochistan National Movement-Iran, Balochistan Mobarizeen Movement, and so forth. 38

AUTONOMY OR INDEPENDENCE

The term autonomy refers to self government in a federal system or an autonomous province which can regulate its own affairs except those which can be regarded vital for the national interest of a country such as defense. United States of America or India can be taken as prime examples of such systems.
where different states enjoy political autonomy. The term independence is used as emancipation from a dominating power. It is a state of not being controlled by another power through colonialism, expansionism or imperialism. Independence may be obtained by decolonization or by separation or dissolution, as was the case with Pakistan which became independent in 1947.

In 1928, the Balochi traditional federal set up was defeated by Reza Shah and so they come under the control of Pahlavi’s (Reza Shah and Mohammad Reza Shah) central governments. In 1979, the Islamic Revolution broke out and the Baloch placed under the control of a theocracy till the present time (2008). Therefore, throughout the history they have been facing political ups and downs, sometimes cooperating with the central administration and sometimes not. Whatever, the question is: Despite these developments what is the political inclination of the Iranian Baloch --- autonomy or independence?

It cannot be easily assessed, what is the exact political inclination of the Iranian Baloch, mainly because, many of them including the Baloch elite of Iran may not disclose their true aspirations, due to security and safety reasons. However, based on the following records, a generalization can be presented in which may tell us about the Balochi inclination.

In the early months of the Islamic Revolution when the Islamic constitution recognized only Shiaism as the state religion and Farsi as the only official language, cleric Abdol Aziz (the former religious leader of the Iranian Baloch) expressed his opposition in the following way, "we are not secessionist. And it is not in our interest to be independent in all fields. Our goal is to see that the Baloch make their own decisions in cultural and political fields, instead of being forced to accept decisions made in Tehran. We want to choose our own
governor general, governors, and administrators (although not military officials). That is what the Baloch mean by autonomy. 39

In 2008, cleric Abdol Hamid Ismaelzahi (the present religious leader of the Iranian Baloch) has asserted, "we are not against the Islamic Republic of Iran. We are Iranian and therefore have some civil rights and will demand our rights persistently. We believe and expect from central administration to look upon all Iranians equally and eliminate discrimination." 40

Abdol Malek Rigi (the leader of the Baloch insurgency or Jundollah) perhaps the most wanted man in Iran, in different interviews has declared himself as an Iranian and Iran as his home. He denies harboring separatist aspirations. According to Rigi, Jundollah's goal is to improve the life of Iranian Baloch and Sunnis and not to separate from Iran or even demand autonomy. 41

Interestingly, although all foreign-based Iranian Balochi groups, unions, associations, parties, and organizations are against the policies of the Islamic Republic, majority of them do not hold secessionist views. Balochistan United Front (Federal Republican) is one of these political parties, which believes in a federal democratic republic government in Iran. This party believes the federal government (as imagined by them to set up a federal system in Iran in the future) shall have the responsibility to protect the whole country from foreign invasion and to preserve the Iran's territorial integrity, and own and regulate the foreign commerce and trade. 42

The Balochistan National Movement-Iran (Balochistan Raji Zrombesh) is another political organization which aims to pursue the national-democratic interests of the people of Balochistan in Iran. This organization believes that its aim is to increase Balochistan National Movement’s political activities and utilize the
current potentially favorable political situations in Iran. To achieve its aims, Balochistan National Movement seeks to work to support the people of Balochistan and the democratic movement in Iran. Similar kind of attitudes are adopted by Balochistan's People Front which want to establish a federal, democratic and secular regime in Iran. Radio Balochi FM is the voice of Balochistan Human Rights Watch, runs by Anjomane Taftan (Association of Balochistan Human Rights Watch) based in Sweden also supports a federal Iran.

In a question whether Baloch favor secessionism or not, Ghulam Mohammad Khanzai, an Iranian Baloch political expert believes "the Baloch of Iran are not secessionist, and if one goes back to the history, one can find that the Baloch have always fought for their rights. Different central governments of Iran have always failed to integrate the Baloch into their respective political systems. But one condition is possible i.e. if dissatisfaction continuous under such circumstances and if sometime in future Baloch feel they are politically and economically strong enough to stand against the Islamic Republic, they may go for a revolt, otherwise the present Balochi set up of Iran does not have that much capability to run a country of its own." In this context, Pir Mohammad Mollazahi, another Iranian Baloch political expert is of the opinion that "secessionism is a complex phenomenon and therefore one cannot claim whether Baloch are secessionist or not. Secessionism can be sensed within some classes of the Balochi society like the tribal chiefs, but not among all the Baloch. However, in regard with those Baloch who have been influenced by regional developments and possess a better degree of political awareness a system of federalism is more favored. Of course, political developments in the Balochi populated region of Afghanistan such as Nimrooz and especially in Pakistani Balochistan may influence the mindset of the Iranian Baloch in this regard." Dr. Mohammad Reza Taheri, a faculty member of Sistan & Balochistan University, holds "due to number of reasons secessionism is not for
the interest of Baloch. First, the entire population of the Baloch is around 3% in Iran and that Balochistan is the poorest region of Iran. Secondly, the number of the educated Baloch is insignificant and majority of Baloch are not matured politically. Thirdly, majority of Baloch are fundamental traditional religious minded people who cannot stand on their own feet in the competitive contemporary world without foreign support. Despite that majority of those Baloch who are in Europe and America want a federal system, where major issues such as foreign policy, national defense and national projects should be undertaken by central government, but administration of Balochistan should be in the hands of the local people. Baloch clerics and the educated Baloch demand more participation both in the provincial administration, as well as, in the central administration. Baloch tribal chiefs want respect in the sense that government should consult them in social, political, and security matters of Balochistan."

As a matter of fact, secessionism can be felt more or less in some sections of the Balochi society of Iran. It is mainly because of central government’s poor and unsatisfactory policies in the region. If government revises its policies and treats the marginalized Baloch equally, the Baloch may not lean towards secessionist tendency. Government’s policy of discrimination in Balochistan between Shia and Sunni have made Baloch feel as if they do not belong to Iran and so usually they consider themselves unimportant and marginalized within the Iranian society. In fact, Baloch nationalism as an ideology can crop up in the mindset of the Iranian Baloch only when they consider themselves culturally and politically deprived.

On the other hand, poverty and unemployment in Balochistan have its own side effects, which can stir up the matter, though it might not be true with the rest of the country. Reportedly, according to Mohammad Reza Sarawani, deputy of
Social Affairs of the Province, 76 percent of the Baloch people live under the poverty line (the official news agency of Shana reported on 31 December 2007). The official average figure for people who are living under poverty line in Iran is 11 percent. 49 In a 2008 interview with ISNA a state news agency, Dr. Shahryari has asserted, "according to the statistics, 196,000 people in Sistan & Balochistan are either unemployed or jobless. Considerable number of these people hold university degree." 50 Many poor Baloch become directionless especially when government authorities prevent them from illegal business of export or import of materials such as petrol, without prescribing an alternative way for them. In this case, many would be absorbed into mafia groups dealing in illegal business including drug-trafficking in Balochistan, where the smuggling of opium has become a major industry. A dire consequence of this trend has led to the formation of opposition such as military political groups like Jundollah. These groups may fall into the hands of foreign opportunists, who can politicize matters for their own interests.

In any case, it must be noted that Baloch of Iran unlike the Baloch of Pakistan cannot be regarded as secessionist people. Baloch of Pakistan do have a strong desire for independence. The reason lies in the history, when on 15th August 1947 the Kalat government of Balochistan (Eastern Balochistan) made a formal declaration of its independence, one day after Pakistan came into being on the map of the subcontinent. Eastern Baloch enjoyed independence for around one year and afterwards as historical records show Pakistan annexed Eastern Balochistan and took control of it. 51 In the course of time, this has made a great number of Pakistani Baloch to talk about independence of Balochistan or considering reestablishment of their political independence. Whereas, as far as the Iranian Baloch are concerned, they have not encountered with such experience and so today majority of them consider themselves as true Iranian
who originally belong to Iran. But, what they expect is a limited political autonomy or decentralization of power and politics in Iran.

GLOBALIZATION & THE BALOCH

In a world, which is growing increasingly smaller, many issues can be considered at global level and not only at local or national level. One aspect of the globalization has been the spread of communication and information technology which is sometimes viewed as a threat to the political as well as cultural integrity of a society. To what extent does this threaten the national sovereignty, is in fact a matter of great concern for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Globalization has reduced the legitimate and absolute power of the state over its subjects and has persuaded government structures to be more transparent. Iran’s recent nuclear issue can be taken as a prime example. Like many of the developing states, Iran is also vulnerable to threat --- both domestic and international forces threaten its sovereignty. Internally, the Islamic Republic faces problems within its own territory. These problems may fall into the following three major categories: political, social, and economic.

As far as the political issues are concerned, considerable number of the Iranian people do not participate or participate less in politics. Certain dissatisfied sections of the population such as Arabs, Kurds, and Baloch demand for more political rights, etc. With respect to social matters, religious differences are notable. Religion is an emotive issue, which can trigger conflicts between Sunni and Shia. The major economic problems are unemployment, low production, and high rate of inflation.

When the state is internally weak, it also becomes internationally weak. Global media, communication, and technology easily are capable of penetrating the
boundaries of the country. Thus, global forces play a strong role in threatening the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic especially when it is unstable from within. Hence, the chance of instability become brighter and the more the country is unstable the more it can lose its sovereignty.

Advances in communication and information technologies such as the emergence of internet and satellite have left a great impact over Balochistan of Iran. Political events often have an immediate impact and cultural events quickly come to have significance for people. Opposition groups have immediate access to worldwide media such as radio, television, and internet, and are capable of influencing, directing, and leading insurgent groups or different sections of the society such as the students against the central government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This has become a major problem for the government of the Islamic Republic in Iran, because, supervising and controlling all such technological devices has become almost impossible in Iran. Many of the Iranians watch programs and listen to the news, which are officially prohibited. These news and programs are being broadcasted by the opposition organizations, and government cannot prevent its subjects from accessing them, simply because, combating this trend means combating the global technology in which has already been rooted in and deeply penetrated every Iranian family. Global communications have made many Iranians including the Baloch to enhance their general knowledge of on going political developments in the region. Via internet and satellite many of Baloch would come to know about the latest developments in Balochistan. News immediately reaches to the Iranian foreign-based media, which can be broadcasted by them on radio, television, and internet immediately.

Apart from politics, there is a widespread concern over the influence of global culture, which continuous to threaten the traditional Balochi culture. Such
affects in the long term can undermine the system of Balochi social structure including their fate and belief. Baloch people particularly the youth are culturally and psychologically engaged with the entertainment business of globalization such as those of Hollywood and Bollywood. Among the Baloch, mostly students transmit information to each other almost instantaneously through the use of computers and satellite communications. These exchanges can be against the Islamic code of life or culture. As a result of these developments, the traditional minded Baloch particularly clerics are scared of the emergence of a cultural diversity in the society. There are no doubts that if state and society do not go for reforms and do not make necessary changes or fail to update their social and political institutions, then the unavoidable effects of globalization willy-nilly would smash the status quo.

**HYOPTHESIS ON FUTURE OF BALOCH POLITICS**

Two major points require to be looked at before this study proceeds to the hypothesis. The future of Baloch politics in Iran heavily depends on the policies of the central government on one hand, and the fate of the Islamic Republic itself on the other hand. Definitely, unsuitable policies can produce bad outcomes, leading foreign powers to interfere in the internal political affairs of the country, while suitable policies may result in an internal stable situation, cutting foreign intervention. Therefore, there can be two kinds of hypothetical theories based on the following probable situations.

Firstly, the recent political developments such as debate over Iran’s nuclear issue or Iran's human rights violation (as has been claimed by Western powers) as well as, the recent economic sanctions on the Islamic Republic of Iran as a result of Iran's defiance, have caused the relations between Iran and the West particularly the United States increasingly strained. In order to punish the ruling
Shia clerics for their disobedience, the United States of America has been working on the weak points of the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a matter of fact the hostility between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the United States of America is not a new issue. From the very beginning, the United States publicly denounced the Islamic Republic while it had no formal relations, and continued to impose sanctions such as limited flow of arms to Iran. The US actively engaged the Iranian opposition, especially the monarchist exiles and the son of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi (Reza Pahlavi who is based in Washington). The US also attacked the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in Iran, while supporting it is Afghanistan against the Soviets. One of the major weak points of the Islamic state is the presence of some dissatisfied sections of the Iranian minorities such as the Baloch. Thus, as far as the case of Baloch is concerned, to provoke this group against the central government of Iran, the focus of the United States’ intelligence organizations has turned on them in the Iranian Balochistan. In this regard, Professor William O. Beeman writes, "all attempts to justify a military attack on Iran have failed and the US is now looking at supporting fringe and terrorist groups to destabilize the country. It won’t work, but it will destabilize the region for years to come. The Jundollah based in Sunni Muslim Balochistan is supported by extreme conservative Salafi groups in Saudi Arabia. The Salafi movement also forms the religious philosophy of the Taliban of Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda. Claims of U.S. support for Jundallah are now several years old. In April 2007, Brian Ross and Christopher Isham of ABC News reported that the United States had been aiding Jundollah to attack Iranian targets." Therefore, Balochistan of Iran can be helpful for the United States of America to perform a great deal of political intrigue. For this purpose, the United States uses both neighbors of Iran such as Pakistan and Afghanistan. The United States has started its campaign in the region through a number of groups such as Jundollah whose major aim is to overthrow the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the Baloch Society of North America, a political organization based
in America heading by a Pakistani Baloch and run under the supervision of Americans.

A similar strategy more or less has been applied in other boundary regions of Iran such as Kurdistan, Khoziztan, and Azarbaijan. In Kurdistan, PJAK, the 'Party for a Free Life in Kurdistan,' is a trans-national Kurdish militant organization dedicated to an independent Kurdistan. They are supported by the United States when they launch attacks against Iranian forces. In Khoziztan, Sunni Arab separatists have been active since the time of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi. The Iranian security forces claim that the current round of violence, which includes the assassination of an Iranian Shia cleric, *hojatolislam* Hesham Seymari on June 26, 2007, were trained under the umbrella of the Americans in Iraq. The militants have also been linked with the London-based Ahvaz Arab People's Democratic-Popular Front. In Azarbaijan, National Awakening Movement, SANAM or GAMOH, led by Mahmudali Chehregani was founded in 1995, and is perhaps the weakest of the ethnic separatist movements today. Nevertheless, Chehregani was hosted in Washington by the U.S. Department of Defense in June 2003. These movements continue to have support in some legislative circles. Two of the most avid supporters are Senator Sam Brownback of Kansas and Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida, both Republicans. 54

Iran has been surrounded by American forces. There are American military bases in Afghanistan (east of Iran) nearby Iranian border, in Pakistan (southeast of Iran) close to the Iranian Balochistan, in Iraq (west of Iran) which also shares a land border with Iran, and so forth. The Islamic Republic has to be very careful and must follow a well-calculated diplomatic approach to confront the problems, otherwise different insurgent ethnic groups like that of the Baloch
supported by foreign forces may cause dire consequences and ultimately may break the pillars of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Based on the aforementioned scenario, if the current internal crisis goes by as usual, that is to say, in cases central government failed to integrate peacefully its different ethnic groups and failed to comply with the Western powers’ regulations, the state otherwise may reluctantly move towards its downfall. The downfall of the Islamic Republic may open a new chapter in Baloch politics. But after the overthrow of the Islamic Republic, Iran may face with critical political unrest. It is quite possible that similar developments which are happening today in Afghanistan and Iraq may happen in Iran as well, and may lead the country into a chaos, a situation in which may make many Iranians wishing the return of the very Islamic Republic, though it might be too late then. It is also likely after the downfall of the Islamic Republic, although not immediately, a new formal secular government may appear in Iran, as has been the story with Afghanistan and Iraq. A centralized Iran may turn into a decentralized Iran where different provinces may enjoy some degree of autonomy within their respective regions. In this respect, the local people in Balochistan of Iran may run the administration of Balochistan. However, it is also quite possible that Iran may emerge as a centralized state again with some flexibility of federal inclination. Whatever may come, in fact, to a great extent depends on the calculated strategies of the Western powers such as US and Britain: whether a centralized secular Iran is beneficial for the region or a decentralized Iran. Each of these two systems may bring about their different effects over Balochistan of Iran. Thus, the fate of the Iranian Balochistan lies in the hands of international decision makers.

If Western powers such as US and Britain take interest out of an independent Balochistan, they may support an independent Balochistan, and vice versa. In
order to support our statement of the crucial role of the Americans or British in Iran, we can refer to some historical records. These records indicate that in Qajar period, Iran has been deeply influence by the British policies. The British influence has also been extended into Pahlavi family and its foundation. In this respect, General Fardoust, one of the most important political and intelligence figures of Pahlavi regime says "Pahlavi dynasty was master-minded and established by the British intelligence. In the MI-6 Documents Center, one could see different files of different countries. Besides, films and documents about Reza Shah since his childhood right up to his getting to power were available. Shapoor J.’s father, Ardeshir, had introduced Reza Shah to the British and subsequently the British role in foundation of Pahlavi dynasty would be officially acknowledged. Over the administration of the country, British and Americans directly had been involved. They imposed their plans on the regime to preserve their own interests and Reza Shah and his son (Mohammad Reza) simply carried out these plans. Reza Shah had no problems with his foreign policy. The British, the most powerful force in the region, had brought him to power and supported his regime, and national security did not pose problem for Reza Shah’s government from the point of view of foreign threats because information could be also provided by the agents of the British Embassy and that was enough to handle the affairs. 55 After the 1979 Revolution, though things changed in Iran, Western influence has not been cut off completely. For example, there are internal, as well as, external figures or agents in Iran who manipulate and take advantage of religious differences between Sunni and Shia in Balochistan. Such people or groups may be referred to as 'ignorant friends of the Islamic Republic', or 'agents of foreign intelligence.' Otherwise, when it comes to Iranian top position holders like leadership, they don’t encourage differences between Sunni and Shia e.g. in 2007 on the first day of Noroz (the Iranian new year) Ayatollah Khamenehi, the leader of the Islamic Republic, in a televised message addressed to the Iranian nation and marked the year of 1386
(2007) a year of "national unity and Islamic integrity" and urged the Iranians to work on the issue and forget about the differences. Given such gestures into account, it seems that a number of religious disputes, which take place often in Iran, are beyond the control of the Iranian leadership. Or, for that matter, there are different kinds of security organizations in Iran such as army, intelligence, revolutionary guards, and disciplinary forces, which hold different interests, leading them not to be united under the Islamic Republic of Iran. Lack of security in Balochistan, can be resulted from this lack of cooperation. Quite often Iranian ruling clergy has warned the nation of foreign intelligence services and has considered many of the antagonistic incidents between Sunni and Shia as the products of Western powers.

However, back to the question, it should be noted that Baloch may be benefited or may not be benefited from the calculated policies of the West. In case of an independent Balochistan, where there is a lack of democratic culture, Baloch may come across political unrest from within, grappling and fighting for power politics among themselves.

In the continuation of the former theory (a Federal Iran or a new centralized Iran after the Islamic Republic, as elaborated above) cited above, a second phase of development may occur in the region. The modern strategy of Western powers gives the impression that those countries with huge population and vast geographical areas which do not comply with the Western rules or are likely to follow such policy can be regarded as future rivals of the West in a particular region like the Middle East. Therefore, in order to combat and weaken them they have to undergo some political operation. The trend is to minify or disintegrate them. In this respect, wherever ethnic minorities or national groups are deprived from their rights, the integrity of concerned states can be subject to immediate foreign threat. Thus, under the pretext of liberty and democracy,
finally new small states may emerge on the political map of the world. Such small states can emerge out of different ethnic or national groups with the help of global powers. It goes without saying, Western powers especially the Americans are working on a huge political project in the Middle East and South Asia, a campaign that under the cover of democracy began in post 9/11 when they attacked first Taliban in Afghanistan and then Saddam Hossain in Iraq. The situation, in general, indicates that Western powers are searching for liberal minded leaders or puppets. In the long term, the project may lead to disintegration of countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and Pakistan. It is quite possible that such policy may finally form a united democratic Balochistan under an indirect Western role. Based on this hypothesis, however, an autonomous Balochistan for a while can create a dire situation in Balochistan, simply because, Balochistan does not have that much political and economic capability to stand on its own feet. In this case, animosity and mutiny for power politics may crop up between and among different Baloch elites such as the clerics and technocrats. Again, whether an independent new Balochistan can flourish or not, heavily depends upon foreign strategies.

However, the priority goes to the first hypothesis, because second hypothesis cannot occur without crossing the first one. The second theory needs longer time, more efforts, more budget and stronger strategy, whereas executing the first strategy seems more feasible.

In an unstable Iran, powers like US can penetrate easier in Sunni dominated regions such as Balochistan. As noted earlier, American forces have already surrounded Iran by having forces in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Pakistan, and in Turkey. In case of intense dissatisfaction with central government, different Iranian ethnic or national groups like the Kurds and the Baloch may fall into the hands of the foreign powers. Dissatisfaction from within can help in worsening
the situation, which this may in turn facilitate the way for international powers to play the final role by pushing the establishment towards its overthrow.

**A PROPOSAL TO THE PROBLEM**

The Baloch especially nationalists should understand that every thing might not be achieved according to their desires and expectations when they are not qualified for the purpose. They are living in a sovereign state under the umbrella of the Islamic Republic, which like any other state hold its respective legal framework. Its constitution is based on the Islamic ideology, which may not meet and satisfy the international requirements set up by democratic states of the West. The Islamic Republic may consider many of the issues (which are not being favored or are not carried out by the state) expediential.

The Iranian Baloch foreign-based opposition groups claim that Baloch inside Iran do not enjoy full liberty and equality and they are not being treated justly. Such claims to some extent are mere exaggerations. For example, in 2008 Dr. Azim Shahbakhsh (an Iranian Baloch) the previous Head of Iranshahr's High Educational Center was asked to resign from his position. Although at the beginning he resisted, finally he left the office. Immediately, the news was spread via SMS to a number of the Baloch elite of Iran. Messages sent trying to project the discriminative policies of the Islamic Republic in Balochistan. Likewise, a number of Balochi websites published the news and exaggerated the issue. In this respect, Balochistan National Movement-Iran on its website has referred to the issue as, "the anti-Baloch regime (Islamic Republic of Iran) has dismissed Azim Shahbaksh, the only Baloch doctor and high ranking position holder in Balochistan… The regime demonstrated again its discriminative policies in Balochistan…” 56 It must be noted that the number of the Baloch doctors holding public positions equal to the post occupied by Dr. Azim
Shahbakhsh are more than one. The previous Head of the Iranshahr's High Educational Center was also a Baloch Ph.D. holder, Dr. Mousa Mahmoudzahi. Besides, the heads of all four universities or faculties in Saravan are also Baloch, they are --- Dr. Nooraee (the Head of Azad university), Dr. Taheri (the Head of Agricultural & Natural Resources Faculty), Mohammadi (the Head of Payamnoor University in Sooran), and Rahmati (the Head of Payamnoor University Saravan). Therefore, exaggeration exists in the nature of these Balochi associations. Most of these Balochi foreign based individuals have left Iran since the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and therefore are not well familiar with the real facts or circumstances. They are usually in contact with their own people in Balochistan, who can provide them with such news via internet, and so they publish news accordingly. Similarly, a number of the Baloch clerics claim that they are not allowed to pursue their religious activities freely. Contrary to this claim, records show a development of religious activities of the Sunni Baloch in Balochistan of Iran. In this context, Hassan Mohammadzadeh Farahani, Assistant Director of the Governor Office in social and political affairs, has remarked "available statistics show that at present the number of Sunni religious schools and mosques in the province has increased four to five times more than the pre Revolution period. Religious activities of the Sunni Baloch are to be appreciated. But, let us not forget that such increase could have not been achieved without government’s cooperation." According to the reports of the Leadership Office of Zahedan, there are around 12000 Sunni religious students only in Sistan & Balochistan, as well as, there are approximately 200 Sunni religious schools in the province which all are free in their activities under the law. However, government has prevented a number of religious activities, which have been considered politically sensitive. For example, Baloch clerics had a plan to organize a congress for the late Molana Abdol Aziz (the former religious leader of the Baloch in Balochistan of Iran) in Zahedan. Concerned authorities, however, rejected this plan. Apart from that, influential Baloch
clerics such as Abdol Hamid Ismaelzahi practically are not allowed to travel, propagate and meet with other influential Sunnis of Iran. This is because of two major reasons. First, the structure of the Islamic Republic does not equally treat Sunnism as treats Shiaism, because the official faith of the Islamic Republic is Shia Jafari Athna Ashari, and it has been justified in the constitution. Second, Abdol Hamid Ismaelzahi has already turned into a hero for many of Baloch in Iran. Allowing him to meet different Sunni leaders freely may make him stronger beyond Balochistan, which ultimately he may turn up as a national leader for the Sunnis of Iran. Thus, the 'establishment' cannot tolerate presence of a political force, especially a force with a different ideology. Another conflicting matter between Baloch and the central government is the issue of execution. Many Baloch believe government is executing the innocent Baloch who mostly are regarded as freedom fighter by the Baloch, but government considers such people as insurgents who pose a threat to the national security.

Besides, it should not be forgotten that Balochistan does not belong only to the Baloch. Therefore, the administration of the entire region cannot fall only into the hands of Baloch, particularly when majority of them are not qualified. For the Baloch, the first and foremost thing is education. Every Baloch family should concern itself with this shortage and take the necessary steps. Throughout the history of the land, education has failed to play its due role. Only it is from the last decade onwards that a considerable number of the Baloch have begun to make their presence in educational fields. In other words, Baloch in general are in their early stage of development and should not expect to be given highly sensitive and political offices even in their own province, let alone the country, when there are other educated Iranians with better qualifications.
Sunni clerics should make some reforms in their methods of teachings and propagating Islam in a way that their teachings should become more up to date and more helpful in resolving social matters such as divorce and its affects. They should not be authoritarian minded people. The philosophy of the presence of religion is to bring peace and not hatred, is to bring about altruism, to develop society, to regard for ethics, and respect humanity. Majority of the Sunni clerics in Balochistan of Iran still hold outdated ideas, which cannot be applicable in the contemporary world.

The Baloch, in general, should make their presence active and meaningful in political, social, cultural, and economic fields of the society to the extent that government officials should feel and realize their significant presence. The Baloch of Iran should not hold central government responsible for every thing. In other words, they should first read and analyze themselves critically and then criticize their government.

On the other hand, however, the Islamic Republic of Iran also holds certain responsibilities to tackle the internal crisis peacefully and diplomatically especially when it highly believes in the intellectual power of its Shia clerics such as the leadership who must possess a proper political and social insight and power of management to lead the country, as stipulated in Article 109 of the constitution.

The problem with government is that it cannot eradicate the problems in Balochistan. Government’s appointed officials in Balochistan cannot diagnose the problems and therefore based on their wrong interpretations and reports to the central government, central government reacts accordingly. In most of the cases, problems are tackled provisionally and not permanently. Since problems such as political and religious matters are not eradicated in Balochistan they
grow more and more between Baloch and government. Unfortunately, in order to deal with critical situations in Balochistan, provincial authorities in Balochistan demand more budget and more forces from central government, and such demands are usually granted to the provincial administration, but then there would be no supervision and control over the activities of key provincial administrators and thus they enjoy more power and naturally unchecked power produces corruption both within the system and the society. In this regard, Jundollah’s tactic can be taken as an example, when its leader Abdol Malek Rigi reportedly bribed a number of Iranian security forces to let him and his team enter Iran, where in one incident his group killed 22 Iranians including intelligence personnel, police forces and a few ordinary Iranians at Tasooki in 2006. 62

Taking into consideration the probable domestic as well as foreign threats, the Islamic Republic requires standing flexible, realizing and cashing the flexibility of its constitution.

Fortunately, the Islamic Republic under its legal framework namely its constitution can bring about positive political and cultural developments in Sunni dominated regions such as Balochistan. In this respect, Article 19 of the Iranian Islamic constitution states, “the people of Iran, of whatever tribe and clan, shall enjoy equal rights, and color, race, language and the like shall not be a privilege.” 63

The central government must first diagnose the problems in Balochistan and then understand the socio-political psychology of the Iranian Baloch. In order to eradicate political tensions in Balochistan of Iran, there is no need for central government to allocate millions of dollars in the region for security purpose. The central government can enter into negotiation with influential and faithful
Baloch, respect them and empower them with a limited authority to tackle the security matters in the province. Government should appointed reliable and experienced people to look after the matters justly. In this regard, an influential Baloch tribal chief (who did not want to disclose his identity) says, "we don’t want government to assist us financially. But, what we need is respect and honor. We, as a huge tribe in Balochistan, at least can bring about security in our own area without the cooperation of intelligence organs or government. We are Baloch, and we know the psychology of the Baloch. Unfortunately, the problem with state is that our central government is not united within its own system. The Etellaat (intelligence) looks after its own interest, Sepah (revolutionary guards) looks after its own interest, and Nirooye Entezami (disciplinary force) looks after its own interest. In this case, each of them instead of unity, develop disunity, and that is what which they cannot stand united for common good." 64

Under constitutional code, the Islamic Republic may allow the Baloch to have a vital role in the political administration of Balochistan. On this account, Article 3 of the constitution says “the Islamic Republic is required to provide political and civil liberties within the framework of law and to eliminate undesirable discrimination and to create equal opportunities for all in all material fields or otherwise.” 65 In a sensitive Sunni populated area like Balochistan, for key offices such as governorship, government should neither appoint dogmatic Shia nor fanatical Sunni, rather it should go for moderate experienced and trustworthy local figures, because fanatical people look upon the matters through their own narrow-minded visions. In Balochistan of Iran all those religious issues, which have potential of threat to national security, should not be encouraged. For example, instead of arranging conflicting programs like encouraging the Sunni to become Shia, government should work on unified programs, focusing on those religious issues that may not create dispute and
conflict between Shia and Sunni. For doing so government does not need to allocate huge funds, rather needs diplomacy.

The administration of Iran should better lean towards a federalist system of governance rather than a total centralized one, because under a federalist system the burden and responsibility of central government would decrease to a great extent. The administration of Balochistan though not totally, partly should be handed over to the loyal, enlightened, capable and qualified Baloch. This policy will be helpful for the Islamic Republic itself in which can minimize the concerns of the state over the security of Balochistan.

Under the legal framework, the Islamic government can allow and encourage Baloch to organize their cultural and social activities such as establishment of Balochi academic and cultural institutions. In this regard, this freedom has been given to the Baloch in the constitution where it says, “the common and official language and script of the people of Iran is Farsi. Official documents, correspondence and texts as well as textbooks must be in this language and script. However, the use of local and ethnic languages in the press and mass media or the teaching of their literatures in schools, along with Farsi, shall be free.”

Within the legal framework, the Islamic Republic can allow the Baloch of Iran to set up their own praying sites such as mosque in various cities of the country without any financial burden upon the government. In this regard, the constitution refers to other Islamic faiths in the following way, “the official religion of Iran shall be Islam and faith Jafari Athna Ashari, and this article shall be eternal and immutable. But, other Islamic faiths such as the Hanafi, Shafei, Maleki, Hanbali, and Zaidi, shall enjoy full respect. The followers of these faiths are free to carry out their religious rites according to their own
religious jurisprudence. Their religious education and training, personal status (marriage, divorce, inheritance, and will) and lawsuits related thereto shall be officially recognized by courts of law…” 67 Government can look upon Sunni and Shia equally without making discrimination in employment e.g. Article 23 states, “investigation of one’s beliefs shall be prohibited and no one may be offended or reprimanded simply because of having a certain belief.” 68

Balochistan of Iran is situated in a highly sensitive zone. Ideological differences can explode any time, if not controlled. Politics of violence can trigger counteract and thus cannot be considered a suitable prescription. Thus, in order to postponed or fight Western strategies, it is for the interest of the Islamic Republic of Iran to revise her politics towards the Iranian minorities and adopt a better flexible relationship with the Iranian minorities including the Baloch. A history of the land teaches us the lesson that politics of violence does not work in the Iranian Balochistan, and if it works, it works temporarily. If the Islamic government brings about some favorable constitutional developments in Balochistan for the Baloch, then the presence of its opposition such as various Balochi groups like Jundollah and the like which are based in abroad no longer can find reasonable grounds to fight the policies of the Islamic Republic or create disturbance in Balochistan, especially if government absorbs the Baloch of Iran into its political system. And, when the people of Balochistan feel the warm hands of the administration, they may not follow and may not come under the influence of opposition, rather may cooperate with a friendly government of the Islamic Republic and preserve security in Balochistan for their own interest, as well as, the interest of the nation. Furthermore, such policy can undermine the influence of Baloch clerics and thus may eliminate the mediation, which exist between Baloch and central government. The history of the social psychology of the Iranian Baloch shows that the Baloch are not aggressive people. They respect government if government respects them. They fight
government if government fights with them. They remain faithful if government remains faithful. They protect their land and fight for the common interest of the Iranian nation if they feel that they are recognized, regarded and treated equally and justly.
REFERENCES & NOTES FOR CHAPTER SIX

(1) In 2008 or on 18/03/1387 Saturday, a street clash took place between some Baloch and Basiji groups (Basiji people can be referred to a group of disciplinary forces who are mostly young Shia) in Zahedan. The conflict broke out as a result of accusing Sunni’s belief. The issue was also broadcasted by the official website of the Iranian Baloch Sunni sunnionline.com, Persian

(2) See, the official website of the Iranian Baloch Sunni sunnionline.com, (2007 or Aval Bahman-e 1386), cleric Abdol Hamid, imam Jomae Aahl-e Sunnat-e Zahedan.

(3) In 2003, in one of the main streets of Zahedan i.e. University Road (Se Rah-e Danesh), for a while a religious banner was fixed on the crossroad. On the banner it was written, “the key of the heaven is in the hands of imam Ali.”


(5) Peman Forozesh (an Iranian Baloch Member of Parliament representing people of Zahedan), SunniOnline.Net, 2007 (27 Day Mah-e 1386). Persian

(6) Voice of America/Persian (VOA), a Television Network based in Washington runs by a group of Iranian exiles in U.S. with the support of U.S. government, interviewed Mahmoud Berahoeinejad (a Baloch journalist based in Zahedan) and Dr. Abdolsatar Doshoki (a Baloch political activist based in London). In that interview, Abdol Satar Doshoki has pointed out about the discrimination and lack of Sunni mosque in Tehran. The interview was conducted in 2006. Persian

(7) The meeting was organized on 16/04/2008. It was between Baloch Sunni students and Leadership Office in Zahedan. It was the first annual session held in Zahedan, Balochistan of Iran, in Leadership Office.

(8) This statement was made while he was talking to hundreds of Sunni religious students as well as university students. The report has been published on sunnionline.com, "sokhanrani-e hazrateh shaikholeslam dar jam-ye daneshjooyan-e aahlae sunat," (2008 or 15 esfand-e 1387). Persian

(9) The meeting was organized on 16/04/2008. It was between Baloch Sunni students and Leadership Office in Zahedan. It was the first annual session held in Zahedan, Balochistan of Iran, in Leadership Office.

(10) In Saravan city of Iranian Balochistan (2008), most of the students of Azad University and Payamnoor University are Baloch who estimated to be around 2000, study at B.A. levels in disciplines such as Accounting and Education, 06-03-2008.

(11) The meeting was organized on 16/04/2008. It was between Baloch Sunni students and Leadership Office in Zahedan. It was the first annual session held in Zahedan, Balochistan of Iran, in Leadership Office.
(12) Ibid.

(13) Ibid.


(15) Jundollah, an Iranian Balochi Sunni insurgent group, kidnapped Colonel Kaveh in 2006. Under detention, he confessed about issues such as the way of torturing and murdering many Baloch detainees and prisoners detained under his supervision, and other related issues. His interview by Jundollah was released on video CDs and distributed in the province. Later on, according to Jundollah, they killed him. Some people especially non-Baloch officials claim that colonel Kaveh was forced to talk about this while such a confession cannot be true.


(17) Culture & International Relations Organization (Sazman-e Farhang va Ertebatat-e Bainolmelali) organized an official meeting in Tehran on “gathering of Shia and Sunni.” At the meeting, cleric (Sunni) Abdol Hamid Ismaelzahi, the religious leader of the Iranian Baloch was among the people who addressed the audience. This was published on sunnionlin.net in 2007 or on 23 Day Mah 1386. Persian


(21) Asia Times, attimes.com (20 July 2004), Shahzad Syed Saleem, "PART 1: The legacy of Nek Mohammed."

(22) Rooz (a Persian & English news website), May 2007; The report is also published on Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jundallah

(23) Jundollah or 'People Resistance Movement of Iran' holds its respective web log jonbeshmardomiran.blogspot.com they also report and publish their activities on internet on various Balochi websites.

(24) In 2005-2006 or on 24 esfandeh 1384, the attack of Tasooki (a place between Zabol of Sistan and Zahedan of Balochistan) took place.

(25) Abdol Malek Rigi's full speech minutes before his attack on Iranian security forces at Tasoki is available on youtube.com/watch?v=417-DyjWWdM
(26) In 2006 (13 bahman-e 1385), four Iranian security forces were killed in Bozorgmehr Street of Zahedan, Balochistan of Iran.

(27) In 2006 (25 bahman-e 1385), eleven Iranian guards were killed and 18 were injured by Jundollah's bombing in Zahedan, Balochistan of Iran.

(28) Shahryari (a Member of Parliament in Zahedan), *Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA)*, a state news agency for the region of Sistan & Balochistan. The text has been published in 2008 (28/11/1387) on *sb.isna.ir/mainnews.php?ID=Main-21492 Persian*.

(29) For more, see, the Persian electronic media of *Mehr News Agency* or *Payvand's Iran News*, 07/03/2007; on the issue "if Pakistan supports the Balochi Jundollah of Iran," a Pakistani diplomat strongly rejected such a support: Interview with Sardar Abdul Waheedi (Counsellor of Pakistani Consulate in Zahedan, Sistan & Balochistan, Iran), on 06 August 2008. The interview was conducted by Ahmad Reza Taheri at the Pakistani Consulate in Zahedan, Balochistan, Iran.

(30) Shahryari (a Member of Parliament who represents the people of Zahedan), *Ayaaran*, a local newspaper in Zahedan, 2007. Persian


(32) Stated by Alexis Debat, a senior fellow on Counter-Terrorism at the Nixon Center and an ABC News consultant, *The Times of India*, Pune, Thursday, April 5, 2007, p.16.

(33) The news was published by the official website of the *Iranian Baloch Sunni* in 2008 (15 esfandeh 1387), *sunnionline.com* Persian.


(35) In June 2008, two important incidents happened in Saravan, Balochistan of Iran. Jundollah kidnapped 16 government forces and executed all of them one after another. In the same month, Ebrahim Karimi, a Persian judge was assassinated in Saravan. For both cases Jundollah claimed the responsibility.

(36) Each of these Baloch political activists has his own website/blog and they publish such reports or articles mostly on these sites. For more see, *balochistanpeoplesfront.blogspot.com* and *balochunitedfront.org/*.

(37) The demonstration was addressed by Abdullah Baloch of BAC, by Hasel Bezanjo, General Secretary of National Party (East Balochistan), Mrs. Shama Is’haq of NP (East Balochistan), etc. In this demonstration Baloch people from both Iran and Pakistan protested against the Islamic Republic on 21 May 2006 outside UK Prime Minister House in London. For more, see *radiobalochi.org*.

(38) Reportedly, a number of such letters were sent when the Iranian authorities amputated the hands and legs of five Baloch in Zahedan. Letters were send by some exile political groups such as Balochistan Peoples Front, Balochistan Peoples Party, Balochistan United Front (Federal Republicans), Balochistan National movement-Iran, and Balochistan...
Mobarizeen Movement, to Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, United Nations Commissions for Human Rights and the European Parliament, Journalists, Think Tanks and international community. For more, see radiobalochi.org


(40) This speech was published by the official website of the Iranian Baloch Sunni, in 2008 (15 esfandeh 1387), sunnionline.com Persian

(41) Rooz (a Persian & English news website), May 2007; The report is also published on Wikipedia: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jundallah

(42) For more see, Balochistan United Front (Federal Republican) balochunitedfront.org/aboutus/aboutus.htm

(43) For more see, Balochistan National Movement-Iran (Balochistan Raji Zrombesh), zrombesh.org/

(44) For more see, the blog of this party, balochistanpeoplesfront.blogspot.com/

(45) Radio Balochi FM, News Agency of Balochistan Human Rights Activists Association, broadcasting from Sweden, radiobalochi.org

(46) Interview with Ghulam Mohammad Khanzai (an Iranian Baloch political expert), on 12 February 2008. The interview was conducted by Ahmad Reza Taheri in Zahedan, Balochistan, Iran. Balochi

(47) Interview with Pir Mohammad Mollazehi (a political expert on Middle East & Balochistan), on 07 August 2006. The interview was conducted by Ahmad Reza Taheri at Shahrak-e Gharb, Tehran, Iran. Balochi

(48) Interview with Dr. Mohammad Reza Taheri (an Iranian Baloch History & Political Science Assistant Professor & the Head of Saravan's Agriculture & Natural Resources Faculty), on 09 July 2008. The interview was conducted by Ahmad Reza Taheri in Saravan, Balochistan, Iran. Balochi

(49) The Iranian authorities amputated the hands and legs of five Baloch in Zahedan. As a reaction to this act, some exile Balochi groups (Baluchistan Peoples Front, Baluchistan Peoples Party, Baluchistan United Front, Federal Republicans, Baluchistan National movement-Iran, and Balochistan Mobarizeen Movement) wrote an appeal for international help to stop executions in Baluchistan, for the attention of: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, United Nations Commissions for Human Rights and the European Parliament, Journalists, Think Tanks and international community. The report is available on Balochi
websites of the abovementioned parties including radiobalochi.org. In this report, it was written that according to Mohammad Reza Sarawani, deputy of Social Affairs of the province, 76 percent of the Baloch people live under the poverty line, the official news agency of Shana reported on 31 December 2007. The official average figure for people who are living under poverty line in Iran is 11 percent, Tehran, Iran, (07 Jan, Iran Focus). Persian

(50) Shahryari (a Member of Parliament in Zahedan), Iranian Students News Agency (ISNA), a state news agency for the region of Sistan & Balochistan. The text has been published in 2008 (28/11/1387) on sb.isna.ir/mainnews.php?ID=Main-21492 Persian

(51) For more on the issue see, Taheri Mohammad Reza, Political Views of Balochi Tribes of Pakistan, (2008) Department of Political Science, University of Sindh, Pakistan, (Ph.D. Thesis), pp. 82-120.


(53) Beeman Bill, "Will the U.S. Support Terrorists to Destabilize Iran?" (Online: New America Media, News Analysis, 07 Jul 2008); It has been claimed by Iranian officials that America is supporting insurgency in Balochistan of Iran. In this regard, the Times of India (Pune, Thursday, April 5, 2007, p.16.) has also published an article in which it says that America is supporting Baloch insurgency such as Jundollah against the Iranian government in Balochistan of Iran.

(54) Beeman Bill, "Will the U.S. Support Terrorists to Destabilize Iran?" (Online: New America Media, News Analysis, 07 Jul 2008).


(56) The news was published by Balochistan National Movement-Iran, zrombesh.org/ on 11/10/2008 (21 mehr 1387).

(57) An interview with Hassan Mohammadzadeh Farahani, Assistant Director of the Governor Office in Social & Political Affairs. The interview was conducted by Seda va Simaye Markaz-e Sistan va Balochistan, published on the website of the Sistan & Balochistan Governor House in 2008, abportal.ir Persian

(58) For more information about the issue, see, the same chapter (chapter six of this study): 'Demands of Baloch.'

(59) For this purpose, a meeting was organized among the Baloch including, clerics, professors, and politicians. Different people opined on the matter. This meeting took place on 17/03/2008 in the residence of cleric Abdol Hamid Ismaelzahi, religious leader of the Iranian Baloch, Zahedan, Balochistan of Iran. I (Ahmad Reza Taheri) attended the meeting.

(60) For more about the status of Baloch in Iran, see, the second chapter of this research: 'Socio-Economic Profile of the Baloch in Iran.'
(61) There was probably in 2004 that a big seminar arranged by Maki Mosque/Sunni Religious School of Zahedan (in Zahedan), where around thousands of Baloch including students, religious students, professors, Sunni clergics, as well as, a number of foreign guests from Pakistan and Afghanistan participated. Among several questions asked by students, one was, whether people like Edison would go to heaven? An influential and leading Baloch cleric responded to this question by saying that, "though people like Edison contributed a lot for the development of humanity, they cannot go to heaven, because they are not Muslim"…!
The point of referring to such incidents is to note that so long as Baloch clergics as influential Baloch hold such dogmatic and stereotype way of thinking, development is not going to take place in the Balochi society of Iran.

(62) It was claimed that in 2006 Jundollah has bribed a number of Iranian security forces at the border between Iran and Afghanistan to allow the group to enter Iran. These security forces have been executed later on by the Iranian concerned authorities.

(63) Article 19, chapter three, rights of the nation, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (with all amendments up to 1989), edited by directorate-general of International Agreements 1995, translated by M.Z. Samimi Kia, Office of Print & Distribution of D.G.S.L.R., p. 15.

(64) Interview with an influential Baloch tribal chief (whom did not want to disclose his identity), on 09 April 2008. The interview was conducted by Ahmad Reza Taheri in Saravan, Balochistan, Iran. Balochi

(65) Article 3, section 7 and section 9, chapter one, generalities, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (with all amendments up to 1989), edited by directorate-general of International Agreements 1995, translated by M.Z. Samimi Kia, Office of Print & Distribution of D.G.S.L.R., p. 11.


(68) Article 23, chapter three, rights of the nation, the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran (with all amendments up to 1989), edited by directorate-general of International Agreements 1995, translated by M.Z. Samimi Kia, Office of Print & Distribution of D.G.S.L.R., p.15.
CONCLUSION

In this concluding part, the attempt is to briefly review the question of Baloch from a political point of view in post Islamic Revolution Iran. What have been the consequences of politics of the Islamic Republic towards the Baloch, and what are the manifestations, characteristics, and problems with the Baloch as far as the Islamic Republic of Iran is concerned.

Therefore, to begin with, our case study has first demonstrated that within the Balochi society of Iran majority of the Baloch still live under the supremacy of their Sunni religious elders whose dogmatic ideas has dominated the Balochi society, where the socio-cultural structure remained to be as authoritarian without major changes, as discussed in chapter one.

The study presents that the overwhelming majority of Baloch, in pre-Islamic Revolution lacked comprehension of the actual state of political life and values in politics. In their approach towards politics, Baloch for years has had a parochial orientation. Though modern government forcibly appeared in the year of 1928, it failed to bring about a modern form of politics. It is only in post-Islamic 1979 Revolution that Baloch gradually began to participate in politics though formally. Why Baloch in the history of Iranian Balochistan have been lagging behind politically is because of several reasons. Both external, as well as, internal factors have been responsible for such state of affairs. Due to its historical strategic location such as bordering with India, Balochistan has been under political exploitation especially by the British. On the other hand, the different central governments of Iran like that of Safavid dynasty (1501-1736) and Qajar dynasty (1794-1925) did not act better. The aggressive policies that adopted by the Safavid dynasty almost in a similar manner followed by the Qajar dynasty. History unfolds that the Qajar looked upon Balochistan as an
annexation, which could merely provide some economic interest in the form of
tax to the central government. Thus, as a result of these foreign policies of the
West and domestic policies of the Iranian governments, nothing except political
immaturity and poverty left behind in this part of Iran. These developments can
be regarded as the major factors of why the Baloch throughout the history has
remained so deprived and backward in Iran.

Secondly, as far as the educational and occupational status of Baloch in Iran is
concerned, this study reveals that in comparison with the pre Islamic Revolution
of 1979, in post Islamic Revolution Baloch developed themselves relatively. In
1970s there were only two institutions of higher education in Balochistan,
Teacher Training College of Zahedan and University of Balochistan, which
established in 1972 and 1973 respectively, whereas in 2004 the number of the
higher educational institutions including universities in Sistan & Balochistan
has been reported to be seventeen. In the early decade of 1960s, the number of
Baloch students at graduation level was about twenty, and in the early decade of
1970s this number increased to sixty persons. Whereas, reports show in 2008
the total number of Baloch university students in Iran are around 6000 to 10000
who study in different disciplines at different levels. However, in comparison
with other communities of Iran such as the Kurds and Turks, Balochi
community educationally is lagging much behind. These facts more or less have
had far reaching effects on the political culture and political development of
Balochistan especially in terms of political participation of the Baloch in the
decision-making process.

In the Pahlavi dynasty, Baloch mostly have been engaged in agriculture and
husbandry and had earned their living hood out of this occupation, whereas in
post-Islamic Revolution considerable number of the Iranian Baloch gradually
entered into various public organizations such as schools, financial institutions,
administrative organs, etc. The Baloch have been also occupying satisfactory offices such as higher educational institutions and municipalities within Balochistan.

As far as the Balochi culture is concerned, this study suggests the Baloch in Iran especially after the Islamic Revolution increasingly have grown under the influence of the Persian culture e.g. considerable number of Baloch families have adopted a Farsi life style or communicating with their children in Farsi language, etc. This phenomenon has become a matter of great concern for many of Baloch particularly those with nationalist inclinations. Unawareness of Balochi literature and history, lack of Balochi education, as well as, the use of official communication (Farsi) as a medium of instruction, can be regarded as three major reasons for this case.

Thirdly, as far as the constitutional status of Baloch in Iran under the Islamic Republic is concerned, the Baloch cannot seek high ranking offices such as leadership and presidency. It is because according to the constitution of the Islamic Republic, candidates for presidency and leadership must have a convinced belief in the fundamental principles of the Islamic Republic of Iran and the official religion (Shia Jafari Athna Ashari) of the country, or be a Muslim of the Twelver Shia sect, whereas the Baloch in Iran believe and follow the Sunni sect of Islam which is different from the official faith of the Islamic Republic of Iran. As a matter of fact, for the last 29 years (1979-2008) since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, no Baloch so far have been able to occupy a sensitive office such as ambassadorship or ministership in Iran. This can be inspired by the constitution, though constitution does not clearly specify it. This has become one of the major issues in Baloch politics. Many Baloch political activists residing in Europe and America quite often criticize the Islamic Republic of Iran on such and such issues.
So far as the party politics in Balochistan is concerned, political parties do not exist in Balochistan. Baloch like other groups of the Iranian society such as the Kurds, practically are not allowed forming political associations. It is because establishment of political parties by the Baloch may be considered a potential threat to the essentials of the Islamic Republic. Though Article 26th of the constitution states “it shall be allowed (for Iranian people) to form parties, societies, political or professional associations and Islamic or other religious societies of the recognized minorities, provided that they do not violate the principles of freedom, independence, national unity, Islamic standards, and essentials of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and no one may be stopped from participating in them or forced to participate in one of them,” nevertheless Baloch practically cannot form political parties. The first and foremost reason is the lack of belief in the official faith of the Islamic Republic of Iran i.e. Shia Jafari Athna Ashari, which is eternal, while overwhelming majority of Baloch are Sunni Muslims. Second, the ruling Shia believes in perpetual imamat or leadership and its fundamental role in the perpetuation of the Islamic Revolution, which this cannot be accepted by the Baloch due to their ideological differences --- Sunni versus Shia.

However, the Islamic Consultative Assembly can be regarded as the only major form of participation for the Iranian Baloch. In this regard, after the official approval of Baloch candidates by Guardian Council, they can compete and contest elections and represent Balochistan in Tehran. But such representation is not truly democratic. Because overwhelming majority of Baloch are under the influence of their leading Sunni clerics, who decide and dictate, to whom Baloch should vote and to whom they should not vote. This is especially evident in Zahedan.
The study also has reasoned that after the Islamic Revolution, among the Baloch elite of Iran, Sunni clerics have fully dominated the Balochi society of Iran. Tribal chief's power declined considerably. The educated group is not organized rather is under the influence of its Sunni clerics. The philosophy behind the power of the Sunni clerics is the fact that they enjoy a popular base in Balochistan. The roots go back to the history, as well as, to the policies of the Islamic Republic, as discussed in chapters five and six of this study. The source of power for Sunni clerics is religion. The source of power for tribal chiefs is tradition. The source of power for Baloch intelligentsia is education. Among these three sources of power religion (Islam) plays a vital role. Today, it is 'education' that Balochistan needs most. Globalization and modernity has so far been able to push tradition back, but have been less successful to push back fundamentalism in religion. However, due to some awareness on the side of the Baloch youth, it can be predicted that in the coming years the educated Baloch may lead Balochistan. Tribal chiefs' present generation has already turned into the educated class; it is because of the importance given to the education, as a result of global development. It is quite possible that the next generations of Sunni clerics may follow the footsteps of Baloch intelligentsia, as education and knowledge becoming more and more important in the contemporary Balochistan.

Fourthly, the study has examined those developmental plans and projects undertaken by the Islamic Republic towards the Baloch. It compares Balochistan of pre-1979 with the Balochistan of post-1979. The entire composition of Balochi cities relatively changed for good in post-Islamic Revolution Iran. Balochistan has been also compared within Iran itself which has failed to keep up with the rest of the country in agricultural, industrial, and commercial developments. Though Iran is naturally a rich country, lack of efficient economic administration has led the economy to a fatal path. The
inflation in Iran can be referred as a ‘run away inflation,’ which almost is uncontrollable. Within this rich country, Balochistan of Iran is the least developed economy. This has been demonstrated by government’s own reports, as has been referred to in chapter four of this study.

Agriculture in Balochistan has been of traditional form and not modern. Balochistan does not possess specialized knowledge in agriculture, engineering and technology, which are important for successful farming. As far as employment in agriculture is concerned, this sector has failed to play its due role and create employment opportunities for the Baloch in Iran. For example, according to the official reports, from 1986 onwards the role and importance of agricultural sector in employment has been reduced considerably. The share of this sector in employment of the entire province has reduced to around 33 percent. So far as industrial sector is concerned, Balochistan of Iran does not have a concrete industrial base. It is because this part of Iran faces problems such as shortage of water, absence of industrial proficient experts, as well as, lack of innovational motivations, and more importantly negligence of the concerned officials. Naturally, when there is an absence of large-scale production, commerce and trade hardly can find a role to play. Hence, in Balochistan, industry, trade and commerce, as interrelated sectors have failed to establish a useful link with each other. For instance, Chabahar Free Trade Zone has become a mere importer of various low-grade goods from countries such as China. This market even has been unable to absorb local or regional investors.

Despite the social security programs (such as low-cost health care in governmental hospitals and rural clinics) carried out by government for the benefit of Baloch, many of the illiterate Baloch families suffer greatly. Two major reasons can be responsible, first the poor quality of medical services, and second lack of awareness on the part of Baloch in general. Growth of population rate, low
literacy rate, and poverty, are among the factors making sanitary programs difficult in Balochistan.

In art and culture, Balochistan is one of the least developed societies in Iran. Although many Baloch criticize government of being weak in developing Balochi culture, cultural development must be initiated and developed by Baloch themselves. Though there are some limitations in the Islamic constitution, elements of flexibility does exist, which allows Baloch to work on this area. In this respect, constitution states “… the use of local and ethnic languages in the press and mass media or the teaching of their literatures in schools, along with Farsi, shall be free…” Thus, there is a possibility for Baloch to use Balochi language in the press and mass media and teach Balochi literature in schools, because legally they are allowed to do so.

With regard to political schemes, after the 1979 Revolution two major developments took place in Balochistan of Iran. 1. Establishment of Leadership Office. 2. Gradual expansion of Shiaism in Balochistan. The Office of Leadership in Balochistan has become one of the major channels of communication between Baloch and the representatives of Leadership. Every year, Leadership Office calls for a number of important meetings with the influential Baloch figures such as leading Sunni clerics, key tribal chiefs, the influential wealthy, and sometimes with the prestigious intelligentsia, to deal with security and socio-political matters in Balochistan.

Fifthly, the nature of Baloch politics in Iran has been discussed decade-wise into four phases. From 1928 till the last decade of Pahlavi dynasty, Baloch has had a traditional approach towards politics and had remained in the margin of political life. Although modern government appeared in 1928, modern politics did not emerged immediately in Balochistan. Baloch gradually developed some
primary awareness of the system yet essentially remained passive and inactive towards government’s decision-making process. Such orientation towards political participation more or less remained till the victory of the Islamic Republic. Anyway, today, after 29 years (since the Revolution of 1979) although Baloch turned into semi-active members in political activities, modern politics failed to alter the authoritarian structure of the Balochi society. Therefore, this study concludes that the kind of political participation practiced by Baloch of Iran under the Islamic Republic simply can be considered a formal form of participation.

Sixthly, the concept of 'national unity and Islamic integrity' failed to unite the followers of the two sects of Islam in Iran namely Shia and Sunni. For the first time in 29 years of rule, in 2007 on the first day of Noroz, Ayatollah Khamenehi, the leader of the country, addressed the Iranian nation and marked the year 2007 a year of "national unity and Islamic integrity." But, the concept is not followed as has been expected.

The study also concludes, though a number of demands articulated by Baloch have been fulfilled by central government, the major political demands such as right of occupying sensitive offices like governorship and ministership have not been fulfilled so far. In fact, the consequences of politics between Baloch and the central government of the Islamic Republic of Iran (as has been discussed in chapters five and six of this study) have led to the emergence of highly organized Baloch insurgency, which believes mainly in politics of violence vis-à-vis the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Finally, the study concludes that the inevitable effects of globalization which has resulted in removal of boundaries and emergence of global virtual community have left a deep impact on political developments in Balochistan of
Iran, which is threatening and minimizing the sovereignty of the Islamic Republic of Iran over Balochistan.

Interestingly, unlike the Baloch of Pakistan, overwhelming majority of the Iranian Baloch do not search for an independent state. What they look for is a degree of autonomy or federalism, as has been elaborated in chapter six of this study. Well, taking into consideration the recent (2004 till present i.e. 2008) domestic disturbances such as Baloch insurgency, as well as, foreign threats like that of the United States of America, the Islamic Republic of Iran has faced with one option. It requires standing flexible and realizing and cashing the flexibility of its constitution. A soft and diplomatic approach can be beneficial for both the Islamic Republic and the Baloch of Iran. Otherwise, others such as Western powers are always ready to interfere in the internal affairs of the country. They (United States of America and Britain) are powerful enough to strategically design and support the masses for the purpose of bringing in changes, either revolutionary or evolutionary. Therefore, both the Islamic Republic and the Baloch must stand united and go for some changes based on mutual interest, before the state is forced to do so.

So far as the state (Islamic Republic of Iran) and society (Balochi society of Iran) are not in good terms or do not have trust in each other, internal instability would continue threatening the territorial integrity of the country. Military solutions have failed to settle internal security problems. It seems that the state has to decentralize the power and take some diplomatic measures, after all, diplomacy is the art of possible. If state does not wake up in time, faced with an unstable and insecure environment in the country including Balochistan, consequences can be devastating. It is, therefore, up to the policies of the Islamic Republic of Iran, how to act internally and internationally.