CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUALIZING THE BALOCH QUESTION

The Baloch represent around fifteen million people dispersed throughout the world particularly in Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the Gulf States. But as dependent political society, they are divided among three regions of Iranian Balochistan, Pakistani Balochistan, and the southern parts of Afghanistan such as Nimrooz. Many others live and are politically active in Europe and America, holding dissenting opinions against political establishments in Iran and Pakistan. Reportedly, political conditions and developments in Balochi populated regions of Iran and Pakistan have made many Baloch dissatisfied with their respective governments, in general led them to hold an antagonistic way of thinking against their central governments of Iran and Pakistan.

Historical records show the original homeland of the Baloch used to be western Balochistan or Iranian Balochistan, as it is called today. Iranian Balochistan like many other neighboring lands such as Afghanistan attracted the attention of Western colonizers. Because of its strategic location like bordering with India, this land 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 adopted by the Safavid dynasty almost in a similar manner followed by the Qajar dynasty. The policies of Qajar dynasty did not produce any positive change in the region. It seems as if the Qajar looked upon Balochistan as an annexation, which could merely provide some economic interest in the form of tax to the central governments, and nothing beyond than that. 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.

In order to contextualize the Baloch question in Iran, it is advisable to understand their culture towards politics. Hence, focus of this part of study is first confined to the Balochi political culture. It is important to apprehend what are the ideas and attitudes of the Baloch towards authority, discipline, and governmental responsibilities and how they look upon other social institutions such as family and religion. And, then based on such particular Balochi political culture how the central Iranian modern governments of both Pahlavi and the Islamic Republic have pursued their policies to integrate the Baloch within their respective social and political systems. What have been their methods of integration, and to what extent they have been successful in developing and pursuing their policies. The chapter continues with the contextualization of Baloch question by entering into another debate of 'Baloch and politics.'

**POLITICAL CULTURE OF THE BALOCH**

The system analysis, as based on Gabriel Almond’s functional approach describes political culture to be one most important aspect of system performance and functions. The term political culture, adopted from anthropology can be regarded as a new and useful sub-discipline of political science for a closer understanding of complex human societies.

Sideny Verba holds “the political culture of a society consists of the system of empirical beliefs, expressive symbols, and values which defines the situation in which political action takes place.” Arshad Syed Karim defines political culture “as that part of culture which affects politics and behavioral changes.” Going into the details of the concepts associated with the term Syed Karim
explains (language, area, and religion), make impacts on politics, so they all are parts of political culture.”³

In this context, if one takes Almond and Verba’s famous identification of three categories of orientations of political action into account, one can simply conclude that throughout the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1979) the Baloch of Iran had a parochial orientation towards politics.

Today, the Baloch make up about 3 to 4 million of Iran’s population, ⁴ who are mostly spread within Sistan & Balochistan province which consists of over 11% of the total area of the country. Before the establishment of Pahlavi regime in Iran, there was no any sign of modern government and modern politics in Balochistan. Balochistan was lacking educational, political, and social institutions such as schools, political parties, non-governmental and even many proper governmental organizations. The existence of such a phenomenon was due to foreign and domestic exploitation, as a result of which, no time has left for the Baloch throughout their history to think of their secondary and tertiary social requirements such as cultural and political institutions, and thus all these paved the way for traditional institutions such as local prejudicial customs to strengthened their influence over the Balochi society of Iran. The Baloch tribal chiefs had dominated the society, where people knew nothing except to carry out tribal leaders’ instructions. Terms and phrases like fundamental rights and political liberty had no meaning for an overwhelming majority of the Baloch. The Baloch were neither aware of nor had opinions about the political systems as a whole but only of the surrounded traditional local community. They lacked comprehension of the actual state of political life, values in politics, and therefore had a passive and parochial orientation towards politics.
Throughout the history of the land, frequent confrontations have been erupted between Baloch and the different central governments of Iran, at times assuming the proportion of armed conflicts. Although Balochistan has been a part of Iran, different central governments had on occasions failed to control the area efficiently. On this account, many historical examples can be referred to. For instance, the history of Perso-Baloch relations under the Qajar dynasty has been characterized as a history of successive Qajar military expeditions sent for collecting taxes and pacifying the country followed by constant Balochi revolts. As observed by Naser Askari, an Iranian writer, heavy taxes were collected twice annually at gunpoint. Those Baloch not able to pay the requested tax were themselves or members of their families, seized as part of the tax, which they could not afford to pay. In 1883, Major Mockler, a British official then serving in coastal Balochistan, recorded in an official report dated March 28 that the taxes collected from the two districts of Bahu and Dashtiari were raised year by year from 5,000 rupees per annum in 1865 to 15,000 rupees in 1883, without, of course, anything whatever having being done for the welfare or improvement of Balochistan by the Persian government. Consequently, it had its own repercussions that had resulted in a state of revolt by the Baloch against the British-Qajar rule. In this respect, some major Baloch tribal chiefs involved in such political and warlike disturbances included, Mir Abdul Nabbi, the Hakom (ruler) of Byaban district, who revolted and cut the British telegraph wires in 1873, an action which brought a strong Anglo-Persian response. The tribes of Sarhad who revolted in 1888, for instance, or, the uprising of 1889 when the exasperated Baloch chiefs revolted and captured the Persian Governor of Balochistan, Abdul Fath Khan, etc., all can be taken as concrete examples. Based on such aforementioned conditions, in 1891 the Qajar Prince Farman Farma, the Governor-General of Kerman & Balochistan took a sweeping measure of arresting and executing several Balochi chiefs after having invited them to Pahra (a major Balochi town now called Iranshahr) with the solemn promise
of protection. Again, in 1896 the Baloch rose up in arms and attacked the Persian Governor Zeein-al-Abidin Khan, and in the following year swept away the Qajar troops and officials, disrupted the British telegraph lines and killed the acting British telegraph superintendent. The leader of the insurrection was Sardar Hossain Khan Narooie. Thus, during this period 'politics of violence' was dominated. Balochistan witnessed a sort of minimal political culture, where articulate public opinion did not exist. Central governments frequently ignored the real aspirations and concerns of the Baloch, and political matters were either decided by force or the threat of force.

Within the Balochi society of Iran masses were deeply influenced by their traditions and superstitious beliefs. Majority of them more or less are still living under the supremacy of primitive social institutions. For example, honor-killing even today is highly practiced among the Baloch. Or, in a city like Zahedan, for instance, majority of the Baloch admire blindly their Sunni clerics and think they cannot be criticized. Such socio-cultural structure used to be authoritarian and the attitudes of the Baloch towards politics and government were essentially either reactive or nonactive. The people in rural areas still continue to live under a deep influence of local primitive norms. Most of the rural Baloch are unable to participate in the decision making process, the urban Baloch have formal political participation at lower levels, however their participation in general elections and local elections is hardly effective. Most of Baloch masses do not hold independent views about the concerned socio-political matters such as their would-be members of Parliament, rather they are under the influence of their religious leaders who dictate to them, for instance, which candidate they should vote and to which candidate they should not vote. This scenario is particularly true with the Baloch people of Zahedan, the capital of Sistan & Balochistan province, where majority of the Baloch follow the instructions of their leading Sunni clerics. In this regard, the parliamentarian election of 2004 and the recent
parliamentarian election in the early 2008 can be referred as example. In both elections, from Baloch, one (Payman Forozesh) candidate was selected and favored by Molavi Abdol Hamid Ismaelzai, the religious leader of Sunni Baloch in Iran. Given Abdol Hamid Ismaelzai’s popular base in Zahedan, majority of Baloch people voted for Payman Forozesh who defeated other Baloch candidates and won the elections of 2004, as well as, that of 2008. However, the hold of Sunni clerics to such an extreme does not exist in the entire Balochi society of Iran. For instance, Baloch clerics of Saravan do not enjoy that much public support, as enjoyed by the Baloch clerics of Zahedan. It is because of the distinctive socio-cultural background that exists in the different Balochi communities of Iran. Recent developments indicate in Saravan who may win the election of the Islamic Consultative Assembly (parliament) cannot be predicted by the experts, whereas 'parliamentarian would be winners' of the different cities of Balochistan like Chabahar and Zahedan can be predicted by the experts. The reason is that in cities like Zahedan, for such purposes, majority of the Baloch follow the instructions of their religious leader, while in cities like Saravan the Baloch relatively do not obey the orders of their tribal chiefs, nor those of Sunni clerics. Therefore, the level of parochial attitude varies from one cultural unit to the other. Anyway, what is important in this context is that though the cultural variations have given rise to different attitudes in politics, the Balochi population of Iran, in general, has had a parochial orientation towards politics. The wakening process almost started in 1960s and onwards when a new group of the educated Baloch entered into politics. Moreover, it was, in fact, in this decade that 'Balochistan Libreation Front' (1964-1979) a highly organized nationalist organization was established. It challenged and threatened the regime of Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi in Balochistan, as shall be discussed in chapter five of this study.
The Balochi system of social beliefs, expressive symbols, and values about social traditions and religious institutions is also worthy of mention. In this respect, many Baloch particularly women suffer from their negative traditional norms and religious superstition. Women strictly follow social traditions and customs and are susceptible to orders passed by the elders. The intensity of obedience differs from community to community. This intensity is determined by the role of religious institutions, social traditions, customs, and political climate. Before the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the entire Balochi society of Iran was spiritually dominated by religious figures. Although they were not directly involved in power politics, they had played a meditative role between the masses and Baloch tribal chiefs, and had always justified the role of the tribal chiefs. In turn, the Baloch tribal chiefs too played a meditative role between the masses and the central government. Thus, tribal chiefs and Sunni clerics could be regarded as the only elites of the then Balochi society of Iran. However, after the Islamic Revolution, within the Balochi society of Iran, the power of Sunni clerics became more apparent, as shall be more elaborated in the coming chapters. Therefore, in the course of time, within the Balochi society of Iran, the power shifted from tribal chiefs to Sunni clerics. The major reason behind this change is rooted in the policies of the Islamic Republic towards the Baloch of Iran. As a result of this, the Balochi society of Iran till today continues to be a Mullah dominated society, where both religion and tradition together play a vital role in the daily lives of the people.

Based on this particular social composition, earlier on, say around 1940s and 1950s, the perception towards the female gender was terrible. Baloch girls had to get married at an early age, and had no choice of their would be spouse. Girls and boys of the same clan would be engaged to each other at birth, and girls who were to be married had no rights to air their views. Any objection could lead to severe untoward repercussion. Once a girl was married, she passed from
the authority of her father to that of her husband. Usually, girls and women were neither allowed to walk out alone nor to face any strangers, they could not even go to mosque for prayers, as this would mean violating the principles of their so-called privacy. In some parts, only husbands and the nearest kin could see women as if they were men’s private property. Usually, a woman had no right to re-marry after her husband’s death, and had to remain a widow for the rest of her life. They could get easily divorced just by husband’s irrational will who could repeat the word 'divorce' merely three times. Women were not allowed to dress according to their own choices nor allowed to take part in decision making, and were confined to taking care of the houses and raising children. In this case, there have been tribes like Mullazehi tribe of Saravan in which girls and women used to live under unfavorable circumstances. In fact, such atmosphere more or less was dominated in the entire Balochistan irrespective of its political boundaries. This is not just a glimpse of the past, the present still reflects many of these behavioral patterns. Today, despite the changes resulted from globalization, the above-mentioned issues are tangible more or less in most parts of the society especially in rural areas. Girls cannot dress according to their own tastes, and that case of divorce in many cases is still applicable in the same old manner. In some parts of the land, the freedom of facing the strangers is still an encroachment of the archaic moral principles, which the so-called modernity has not managed to break these shackles of brutality that have victimized the women for ages.

Before the Revolution of 1979, the Balochi culture together with religious fundamentalism had prevented many girls to register at educational institutions. It was partly because during the Shah’s era, girls at schools or educational institutions were not supposed to cover themselves and that was one of the major obstacles which motivated Baloch parents to not allow their daughters to attend schools and universities. But, after the Revolution, Islamic dress for
women was made compulsory and this encouraged many Baloch parents to enroll their daughters and help them to learn education. Recently, though there are still families who are not interested in sending their daughters to gain education, their number is declining. Lack of modern vision and financial problems in general are indeed among the principle factors that forbids majority of Baloch to go for education.

However, for all that, today development in technology, communication, and information has awakened many Baloch girls and women. This may be one important factor that has made religious mentors to retreat and accept willy-nilly some inevitable minor changes. For example, previously women were not allowed to go to mosque for prayers, while nowadays women in Balochistan are allowed to go to mosque for prayers especially during the month of Ramadan. Even today Baloch girls drive automobiles freely in the streets of Balochistan, yet the fanatical minded Sunni clerics are not happy with these changes. In short, all these socio-political matters as a particular distribution in a particular society, which holds like-minded concepts, values, feelings, and social norms, determines the parochial social and political culture of the Baloch in Iran.

**BALOCH & MODERN STATE**

According to the historical documents, the Baloch revolt of 1896-1898 put an effective end to Qajar pretensions in Balochistan and so weakening of the Qajar dynasty during the reign of Muzaffar-al-Din Shah played into the hands of the Baloch tribal leaders by enabling them to regain their independence for all intents and purposes by the turn of the century. Of these Balochi figures, the most powerful were Sardar (tribal chief) Said Khan the ruler of coastal Makoran, and Amir Bahram Khan Baranzai (Barakzai), the Hakum (ruler) of Dizak. Meanwhile, Eastern Balochistan (today’s Pakistani Balochistan) had
become engulfed in several anti-British uprisings that led the rebellious Baloch Sardars escape the advancing British troops and seek the protection of Bahram Khan in 1901. Alarmed by the danger perceived from the likely collaboration of the Baloch tribes of eastern and western Balochistan, the British initiated a joint Anglo-Persian expedition, which besieged Baharam Khan in his headquarters in the forts of Dizak in Iran, however they failed. Encouraged by this success, Bahram Khan began to expand his power. Yet, in 1910 another Qajar force attempted to overthrow Bahram Khan but were again defeated by him. This victory made him to manage to extent his sway over the unruly tribes of Sarhad, as well as, the former possession of the Said Khan in Makoran, and that he also turned Bampor of Iranian Balochistan into his capital.

During World War One, the Germans attempted to enter into relations with Bahram Khan with the aim of instigating him against the British, which led to several anti-British disturbances resulting in loss of life to British officials stationed in Makoran in 1916. Subsequently, however, the British could counter German designs, and thus made them withdrew. Later on, Bahram Khan was succeeded by his nephew Amir Doust Mohammad Khan Baloch Baranzai, who ruled independently until 1928. He successfully pursued the vigorous policies of his predecessor in consolidating the entire Iranian Balochistan under his rule.

In fact, Amir Doust Mohammad Khan’s successful attempt at consolidating his power in the Iranian Balochistan coincided with the rise to power of Reza Khan (Shah) in 1921. Reza Khan’s British-supported military coup established him, first, as the Minister of War, and then as the Prime Minister in 1923. By the time he abolished the Qajar dynasty and ascended the Peacock throne with the title of Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1925. Reza Shah began to subjugate the autonomous provinces of Gilan in 1921, Kurdistan in 1922, and Luristan in
1924. In 1925, he also annexed the British-protected Arab principality of Khuziztan or “Arabistan,” as it used to be called, which was ruled then by Shaikh Khazal of the Bani-ka’b tribe, and finally Reza Shah’s forces could subdue Balochistan by defeating Doust Mohammad Khan in 1928.

In fact, the design for a centralized Iran was master minded by the British. The British were looking to push Iran into a centralized form of state. One of the major reasons behind this idea was the threat from Soviet Union and its expansion towards the warm waters of Persian Gulf. The other major factor could be the presence of oil in the Persian Gulf especially those oil territories of Iranian zone, which could safeguard the interest of the British. Therefore, confrontation with Soviet Union and bargaining over oil business could be among stimulating factors for the British, who concluded dealing with a strong centralized Iran for this purpose would be more beneficial than dealing with a decentralized or federal Iran. In pursuing their policy, Reza Shah of Iran was considered a suitable choice by the British. Hence, for centralization of Iran, Reza Shah mobilized its forces and destroyed the 'states traditional federal powers' including that of Doust Mohammad Khan in Balochistan, and forced them to obey him indisputably. As a matter of fact, it was since then that modern government appeared physically in Balochistan of Iran.

Therefore, in 1928 Reza Shah’s forces led by Amanullah Jahanbani headed towards Balochistan, arrested the disobedient Baloch ruler, Doust Mohammad Khan. The campaign of 1928 was different from other campaigns in the sense that previous attacks by the Iranian governments on Balochistan resulted in minor superficial changes in the area such as replacement of some Baloch tribal chiefs by some other Baloch tribal chiefs. However, the military expedition of 1928 by Shah’s regime finally brought about a strong presence of central
government in Balochistan, that's why, the year of 1928, can be regarded as a turning point in the political history of the Iranian Balochistan.  

Most of those Baloch tribal chiefs, who did not resist against Reza Shah’s forces in Balochistan, voluntarily accepted the authority of central government in Balochistan, and subsequently received encouragement and assistance from Reza Shah (1925-1941). For instance, a number of tribal chiefs received privileges like monthly stipends. The same was also the policy of Reza Shah’s son, Mohammad Reza Shah (1941-1979), that is to say, those Baloch tribal leaders who remained faithful to Reza Shah also remained faithful to his son, Mohammad Reza Shah, and in return, they have been treated fairly e.g. appointing some of them as the members of Parliament. Indeed, during the Pahlavi era (1925-1979), the cardinal base of Shah’s regime in Balochistan was the presence of 'Balochi Sardari system' (tribalism). Except few cases, the regime of Shah had established good ties with Baloch tribal chiefs. Whenever the Baloch tribal chiefs and leaders felt the ignorant look of Shah’s administration, they created some political headaches for the regime. In this respect, tensions and fights led by Juma Khan Ismailzai and Jehind Khan Yar Ahmadzai in 1931, as well as, military clash between some tribal chiefs from Kohak of Saravan and the central government of Pahlavi can be taken as example. However, the overall relationship with Baloch tribal chiefs was satisfactory and such contacts between Baloch tribal chiefs and central government were established through some central meditative figures like Assadollah Alam, the then Minister of Court. This policy did not continue after the Islamic Revolution (1979) by central government. Instead, the role of tribal chiefs was eliminated from the political scene. With regard to the relationship between the Baloch and Pahlavi regime, General Hossain Fardoust, a very close personality of Pahlavi family writes “Assadollah Alam was one of the most important advisers to the Shah and was also regarded as Shah’s confident and
that his family was an important pillar for the British. Alam was an influential figure in Sistan & Balochistan province. A number of tribal chiefs in Khorasan, and Sistan & Balochistan were related to the British through Alam’s family. Alam used to invite Shah to Birjand for ten days each year. He arranged special tents and atmosphere as that of the old Qajar kings, like Nasser-al-Din Shah’s period. He invited the tribal chiefs of Sistan & Balochistan and Khorasan to meet the Shah… Alam tried to provoke the Baloch tribes in Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan and arranged for insecurity and robberies in the area, just to keep the tribes engaged and busy.”

With the coming of Pahlavi to power, Reza Shah first pursued to change the political climate in Balochistan by eliminating the role of tribal chiefs as a channel of communication, which used to exist between the Baloch and central governments. The plan was to substitute governmental institutions such as army and police headquarters instead. Thus, these governmental institutions were set up to look after the social and political issues of the region. However, Reza Shah failed to eliminate the influence of tribal chiefs in Balochistan. Actually, before the Pahlavi establishment, the status of Baloch tribal chiefs in Balochistan was well defined. They had a great influence over Baloch masses of Iran. The regime of Shah understood this afterwards, which is why, government subsequently concluded that without the presence of tribal chiefs, security could not be maintained in Balochistan and that no other group except tribal chiefs can be helpful in bringing about security in the region. On the other hand, one of the main policies of the regime was to safeguard the area. Hence, in order to fulfill its plans, regime began to show respect towards tribal chiefs i.e. with an allocation of insignificant budget to tribal chiefs, regime could preserve security in Balochistan. Therefore, it was not necessary to allocate huge budget for the sake of security matters in Balochistan. Although after the Islamic Revolution
the influence and power of tribal chiefs declined considerably, they still play an indirect role in preserving security in Balochistan of Iran.

In any case, it should be noted that the kind of modern government, which was established by Reza Shah (in 1928) in Balochistan failed to bring about a modern form of politics, and thus politics remained as much traditional as it used to be. But, after the Islamic Revolution, signs of modern politics gradually became visible in Balochistan of Iran. In this regard, the emergence of some Balochi political parties such as Muslim Unity Party and Balochistan People Democratic Organization can be referred to. They are discussed more in chapter five of this study.

After the establishment of modern government in Balochistan of Iran in 1928, the manner of articulation of Baloch demands did not turn up immediately. The Baloch in their approach towards politics, for years, remained in a passive state of affairs. The reason behind such a condition was the great impact left in the region as a result of both foreign and domestic exploitation that left no sign of development in Balochistan. Establishment of modern government subsequently and slowly gave rise to a subject form of politics in Balochistan of Iran e.g. the Baloch become aware of political developments yet essentially had maintained a passive role and preferred to accept the dictated decisions. Such a subject form of politics could be observed during the last decade of Pahlavi regime between the Iranian Baloch elites (tribal chiefs, Sunni clerics, and the educated group) and their connections to Pahlavi government, as shall be dealt with in chapter five of this study.

After the Revolution of 1979, the political structure of the country was transformed, namely the monarchic form was replaced by the religious one. Since the Revolution, gradually the political atmosphere made Baloch tribal
chiefs lose their historical popular bases in Balochistan. It is to be noted though the tribal authority declined, religious authority ascended, which is not only spiritually powerful but also politically empowered. However, this is not to say that in post-Islamic Revolution the tribal authority entirely faded away. Baloch tribal chiefs are still influential in certain parts especially in Sarhad region of Balochistan. Some of them are strong enough to mobilize different families of their tribes.

In recent years, under the Islamic Republic of Iran, most of Baloch masses have developed a greater awareness of the central authority. In general, the Balochi society of Iran respects its Sunni clerical authority more than other Balochi elites. Indeed, as pointed before, throughout the history of the land the Sunni clerics have always played a vital role in the Balochi society of Iran. During the Pahlavi regime, apart from their religious obligation, their role was to connect Baloch masses with the tribal leaders and to justify the role of tribal chiefs. Later on, in post-Islamic Revolution though tribal leaders lost their bases gradually, this did not happen to Sunni clerics. Under the Islamic Republic, Baloch Sunni clerics replaced the tribal chiefs and become more powerful. Their power and influence can be observed in various fields. For example, when the educated Balochi class including politicians and state employees want to make their presence notable they are usually unable to get the support of Baloch masses without the confirmation from Sunni clerics. This in fact shows the great influence of Baloch Sunni clerics over the Balochi society of Iran. And, this is applicable in Balochistan even today. From the Baloch society of Iran whosoever wants to enjoy public support first needs to satisfy Sunni clerics and comply with their rules, otherwise they cannot receive public support in their own Balochi society of Iran. The major reason behind this fact is the base of power. The source of power for the tribal chiefs was tradition and tradition was dominated in Balochistan because of lack of education and modern political
awareness. The sources of power for the educated Baloch are educational institutions and universities, which barley can penetrate the mind-set of the common masses. But, the sources of power for the Sunni clerics are stereotyped religious institutions, in which even today they play a vital role in the day-to-day lives of the Baloch. In struggle between these three sources of power, tradition is more exposed to danger and can be overwhelmed by modernity, but religion hardly can be pushed back by modernity or globalization.

**BALOCH & POLITICS**

As stated earlier, before the formation of modern government in Balochistan, articulate public opinion did not exist and if any, governments would always ignore them. Central authority decided on the economic and political issues autonomously and undemocratically, and in fact a similar state of affairs even in post 1928 (after the formation of modern government) continued to dominate Balochistan. Iran witnessed a changing political atmosphere especially during 1941-1953 when Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was the Shah of Iran. It was when that in the mid-1940s Dr. Mohammad Mosaddeq, an Iranian statesman and a Member of the Parliament, emerged as the leader of the oil nationalization movement. Throughout his political career among his major goals, Mosaddeq consistently advocated three goals: to free Iran of foreign intervention, to ensure that the Shah remained a democratic monarch and not a dictator, and to implement social reforms. During this period, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi had been overshadowed by Mosaddeq and other politicians and seemed destined to remain a passive, constitutional monarch. But, following the coup of August 1953, which was master minded by the British and implemented by the Americans against the government of Mosaddeq, Shah moved to consolidate power in his own hands. With the help of the military and later a secret police, the Savak, Shah created a centralized, authoritarian regime which tightly
controlled legislative elections, and appointed a succession of prime ministers loyal to him. However, these political developments of 1941-1953 in the center did not produce remarkable changes in Balochistan of Iran.

Historical documents demonstrate, even during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah, the Baloch have been deprived of their fundamental political rights. On this account, Dr. Mohammad Hassan Hossinbour, an Iranian Baloch lawyer based in Washington states “the collapse of Pahlavi dynasty and the victory of Islamic Republic in February 1979 led to a total breakdown of government authority in Balochistan. As a result, the Baloch began to reassert their power by ousting non-Baloch officials from their positions, occupying the offices left vacant by SAVAK in various cities… More important were political and cultural freedoms enjoyed by the Baloch in the fully open political atmosphere which prevailed in the country during the first eight months of the Islamic Republic. The Baloch found themselves free to express their national sentiments; carry out open political activities; use their national dress in school and public offices, and read, write, and publish in their language for the first time in fifty years…”

This statement is indicative of the fact that the Baloch for years had been living under the dictatorial regime of Pahlavi. The above-mentioned statement also implies Baloch had not been allowed to express their political views openly, to set up and organize political parties, to publish in their own language, and even not allowed to use their own Balochi dress, so to speak, in governmental organizations. And, once they come across an opportunity like the Islamic Revolution, they began to unleash their sentiments violently as a sign of protest. This carries no other implication except a thirst for freedom.
In the first decade of the Islamic Republic there were no well established and well defined channels of political communications between Baloch and the central government. It was due to the fact that the Islamic Republic was a new player in the politics of Balochistan, and thus was in a dilemma how to deal with the security and political matters in Balochistan in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution. All Baloch tribal chiefs including the Sardars and Khavanin (old title for the chief of a big tribe) who were associated and had a sense of belongingness to the regime of Shah (previously played the role of a channel of political communication between Baloch and the Pahlavi government), could not be trusted by Shia clerics. After the Islamic Revolution, this sense of belongingness started declining, because the previous regime was no more. Furthermore, the clerics did not appreciate such connection. Based on such concept, the policies of the Islamic Republic increasingly alienated Baloch tribal chiefs from the mainstream. But, this policy failed to work out properly. So, in the second decade, the Islamic Republic reviewed its policies and pursued the policy of 'absorption'--- making the Baloch including tribal chiefs dependent on the Islamic Republic through various methods such as amnesty or through the establishment of different structures like Office of Leadership Representative for Sunni Affairs, and so forth. Although the Islamic Republic looked upon this as a success, it seemed to be a one-sided achievement. The Islamic Republic diplomatically failed to integrate the Baloch into a unified political system, as is evident in the third decade of the Islamic Republic. The reason can be due to lack of socio-psychological understanding of the Baloch. To many of the Baloch, their hopes and aspirations even under the Islamic Republic remained mostly unfulfilled.

Through different structures the Baloch have constantly asked for some major demands from Central government, but most of them have been ignored. One of the major demands of the Baloch, for example, from central government is the
right to participate in the administration of Balochistan, as well as, a definite role in the administration of the country. Such demands are being assessed and articulated mainly by 'Maki Sunni Religious School of Zahedan', where a number of notable Baloch elite such as the intelligentsia, parliamentarians, state employees, and clerics gather to discuss social or political issues. This demand along with other demands had piled up particularly in the third decade of the Islamic Republic, making the Baloch increasingly politically sensitive. This sensitivity has made different Balochi groups find out different modes of transacting politics. Consequently, the clerics, the educated, and most importantly the insurgents have emerged as the major structures of political articulation, affecting the policy programs of the Islamic Republic in Balochistan. This has introduced a new phase in Baloch politics under the Islamic Republic. In this respect, a number of insurgent groups like Jundollah emerged out of the Balochi community of Iran, combating policies of the Islamic Republic in Balochistan by kidnapping or attacking the Iranian military and army forces.

With regard to religious liberty, Sunni clerics demand more religious freedom. Although Baloch Sunni clerics are free to practice and propagate their own version of Islam within Balochistan, they are hardly allowed to propagate Sunniism nationwide. In fact, favoring this demand by allowing a nationwide religious activity to Baloch Sunni clerics may expand the scope of Sunniism in Iran, an ideology which is different from the Shia way of thinking.

Baloch tribal chiefs who once used to play a vital meditative role between Baloch masses and the Pahlavi government, after the Revolution of 1979, gradually lost their popular bases. They are not much active in direct politics of Balochistan and whatever they wish is respect and honor. Of course, most of those tribal chiefs who gave up to the Islamic Republic and remained loyal to it
receive fair treatment from central authority. In this regard, example can be taken of some grandchildren of Baloch tribal leaders such as the Rigi tribe, who live fairly in Balochistan of Iran.

The educated Balochi group including teachers, professors, state employees, and politicians who first appeared around the last decade of Phalavi regime, expanded further under the Islamic Republic, began to ask for more provincial, as well as, central participation in politics. Some demands such as allocating administrative offices to the Baloch like positions of directorship, principalship, and executive ones were given to some educated Balochi figures, however demands like giving governorship and other sensitive offices such as ministership to the Baloch have been rejected by central government of the Islamic Republic. The inspiration, for this lack of support may come from the constitution or from the existing ideological differences between the Sunni and the ruling Shia.

Political conditions in Balochistan of Iran deteriorated especially after the presidency of Ahmadi Nejad. During the administration of the former President of Iran cleric Khatemi, people enjoyed more political liberty. For example, several notable Iranian figures like Akbar Gangi and Dr. Agajari dared to speak out and undermine the creditability of the Islamic Republic openly by criticizing a few of the most influential figures of the Islamic Republic such as cleric Hashemi Rafsenjani, the former President of Iran, or by attacking the pillars of the Islamic establishment in Iran. Although such atmosphere was perceivable in Iran, the Baloch in Balochistan did not criticize so bluntly. Their activities were confined to organizing meetings and discussing social and political matters. Usually, such meetings took place between the educated Baloch and the Sunni clerics. Why the Baloch could not air their political views so openly was due to the fact that since Balochistan is a sensitive boundary region, it is susceptible to
foreign threat, therefore the principal is to watch it carefully. In other words, state intelligence agencies keep an eye on any potential or real threat to the establishment in Balochistan, making many Baloch not to run risk by having sensitive political discussions. The relieving period under Khatemi’s administration did not last long and during the presidency of Khatemi himself things become horrible when a number of Iranian critics were assassinated one after another. In fact, the consequences of such a freedom were grave for all those who criticized the Islamic Republic and its founding members.

During Khatemi’s administration, though Baloch elite demanded the presence of some Baloch for the appointment of high governmental offices such as governorship, which their demands turned down, they were not against the selected figures appointed for offices like governorship in Balochistan. It was mainly because for the Baloch, as was the case with the entire Iran, the nature of Khatemi’s government was tolerable. But, when Ahmadi Nejad came to power things become worse. Dr. Habibollah Dahmardeh, an influential figure from Zabol city (Sistan) was appointed as the Governor General of Sistan & Balochistan Province. His appointment created dissatisfaction among the Baloch elite. The reason was because the Baloch have not been consulted for such an important development. Most of the Baloch including Sunni clerics and the educated turned against this fanatical minded Governor General and demanded his removal, however that brought no change. Actually, after the presidency of Ahmadi Nejad, the political climate changed immediately and fell into the hands of Shia hardliners. Ahmadi Nejad’s government made the Baloch stop all those meetings that once were held under Khatemi’s government. In this regard, a number of Baloch state employees and professors were secretly requested either by security officials or through unknown telephone calls not to attend any meeting of political nature. Since then the practice scaled down considerably. Besides, a number of events like beating, torturing, and killing of
several Baloch whom called criminals as claimed by security officials led to some military confrontation between the Baloch and the Iranian security or police. It was then that a new Balochi insurgent group called Jundollah leading by Abdol Malik Rigi (a young Baloch) appeared on the political scene, kidnapping and killing military and security personnel as a sign of counteraction. The main agenda of this group, as claimed by its leader, is political freedom. They demand a right to participate in politics of Balochistan, to set up political parties, and to govern Balochistan. But, the problem with such like minded groups is that due to their typical ideology i.e. Islamic Sunni fundamentalism they usually do not enjoy support from other Baloch elites such as the intelligentsia or state employees.

Today, the Baloch elite of Iran including the tribal chiefs and the educated Baloch are under the influence of their influential Sunni clerics. The strong spiritual presence of Baloch Sunni clerics in the entire Balochistan particularly in its capital Zahedan cannot be denied. Molavi Abdol Hamid Ismaelzahi, the leading Baloch Sunni cleric has turned into a charismatic figure for many of the Baloch. Via their religious institutions they play a vital and indirect role in the politics of Balochistan. The Maki Religious School in Zahedan has turned into a powerful socio-political institution. As stated earlier, neither the tribal chiefs nor the educated as the other Baloch elites can enjoy a popular base without the support and justification of the Sunni clerics. Recent parliamentarian election of 2008, especially in Zahedan can be regarded as a prime example.

From 2004 onwards, once again Balochistan of Iran attracted the attention of domestic, as well as, international media. Frequent military clashes between insurgent Baloch and the Iranian security forces on one hand, and execution of many Baloch insurgents on the other hand, can be regarded as major causes of this attraction. The Iranian officials claim that United States of America backs
the Baloch insurgency in Balochistan of Iran, whereas Baloch insurgent groups claim they do not receive any kind of support from foreign forces. Whatsoever, the 'whys and hows' of such developments shall be analyzed in chapter five and chapter six of this study.
REFERENCES & NOTES FOR CHAPTER ONE


(2) Ibid.


(4) For an analysis of Baloch population in Iran, see, chapter second of this study, The Socio-Economic Profile of the Baloch in Iran.


(6) For an analysis of Baloch struggle against the Qajar and the British, see, the different views in Iran & Its Nationalities: the Case of Baloch Nationalism, by Hosseinbor M. H., (Pakistani Adab Publication, Karachi, 2000), p.81.

(7) Ibid., p. 82.


(9) For more on Baloch struggle against the Qajar, see, Iran & Its Nationalities: the Case of Baloch Nationalism, by Hosseinbor M. H., (Pakistani Adab Publication, Karachi, 2000), p.82.

(10) Ibid., 83.

(11) Recent parliamentarian elections of 2004 and 2008 in Zahedan, Saravan, Iranshahr, Khash, and Chabahar, can be referred as an example.

(12) Such unfavorable circumstances on Baloch women more or less are also visible in other Balochi tribes or families such as Rigi, Ismaelzahi, Narooie, Gamshadzahi, Sardarzahi, Mobarak, and so on.

(13) These customs or practices are still observable in Balochistan of Iran particularly in the rural areas.

(14) Great Britain, India Army, intelligence Branch, Frontier and Overseas Expeditions from India, Selection from government records (Quetta: M/S Nisa Traders, 1979), 3: 254-62. The Leader of the Balochi rebellion against the British was Mohammad Omar Khan Nushirvani, who was assisted and protected by Bahram Khan as well as Sardar Jiand Yar Mohammadzai of Sarhad.


(20) Interview with Dr. Mohammad Reza Taheri (an Iranian Baloch History & Political Science Assistant Professor & the Head of Saravan's Agriculture & Natural Resources Faculty), on 04 July 2007. The interview was conducted by Ahmad Reza Taheri in Saravan, Balochistan, Iran. Balochi


(22) Taheri Mohammad Reza, *My Political & Social Memoirs* (unpublished, Zahedan 2007), Persian
