

## **ПОЛІТИЧНІ ПРОБЛЕМИ МІЖНАРОДНИХ ВІДНОСИН**

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### **BIG GAME IN BALUCHISTAN**

### **ВЕЛИКА ГРА У БЕЛУДЖІСТАНІ**

### **БОЛЬШАЯ ИГРА В БЕЛУДЖИСТАНЕ**

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**Abstract.** *The peculiarities of political and economic situation in the historical region of Balochistan that is divided between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran are analyzed in this article. Due to specifics of its geographical position, poor soils and water scarcity, lands of Baloch people remain the least populated and the poorest in all aforementioned countries. This leads to insufficient attention of all three respective governments to the development of local communities that creates a basis for radicalism and separatism supported by ethnic and confessional differences. On the other hand, the area of Balochistan still holds a promise of development due to its strategic location between borders of different countries, long stretches of coastline in Pakistan and Iran, considerable mineral resources of coal, natural gas, iron ore and marble. It is argued that three states should provide Baloch minorities with a just share of profits after sale of their commodities, limit migration of impoverished people from other regions and respect human rights. It is proved in the article that the implementation of those recommendations will put to rest the issue of separatism.*

**Key words:** *Balochistan, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, contraband trade, drugs, transport corridors, insurgency, separatism.*

**Анотація.** У статті проаналізовані особливості політичної та економічної ситуації у історичному регіоні під назвою Белуджістан, який нині контролюється Пакистаном, Афганістаном та Іраном. У зв'язку з особливостями географічного розташування, бідністю ґрунтів і дефіцитом водних ресурсів, території компактного помешкання белуджів є найменш заселеними і найбільш відсталими в економічному відношенні. Це зменшує інтерес урядів трьох країн до їх розвитку та створює передумови для радикалізації белуджів і сепаратизму, вияви якого поглиблюються етнічними та конфесійними відмінностями між ними і представниками інших етно-релігійних груп. З іншого боку, території історичного Белуджістану мають належні передумови для економічного зростання завдяки вигідному прикордонному розташуванню, протяжній береговій смугі у Пакистані та Ірані, значним природним ресурсам на кшталт вугілля, природного газу, залізної руди та мармуру. Зазначається, що політична еліта трьох країн має забезпечити представників народу белуджів справедливою часткою прибутків від продажу місцевої продукції, обмежити міграцію зубожілого населення з інших регіонів, а також поважати права людини. У статті доведено, що виконання таких рекомендацій дозволить звести нанівець проблему белуджістанського сепаратизму.

**Ключові слова:** Белуджістан, Іран, Пакистан, Афганістан, контрабандна торгівля, транспортні коридори, партизанська війна, сепаратизм.

**Аннотация.** Статья анализирует особенности политической и экономической ситуации в историческом регионе, известном как Белуджистан, который находится под контролем Пакистана, Афганистана и Ирана. В связи с особенностями географического расположения, бедностью почв и дефицитом водных ресурсов, территории компактного проживания белуджей имеют незначительное население и являются отсталыми в экономическом развитии. Это уменьшает интерес правительств трех стран к их развитию и создает предпосылки для радикализации и сепаратизма, проявление которых углубляется благодаря этническим и конфессиональным различиям между ними и представителями других этно-религиозных групп. С другой стороны, территории исторического Белуджистана имеют предпосылки для развития благодаря выгодному приграничному расположению, значительному по протяженности побережью в Пакистане и Иране, а также таким полезным ископаемым как уголь, природный газ, железная руда и мрамор. В статье подчеркнута, что политическая элита трех стран должна обеспечить представителей народа белуджей справедливой долей прибылей от продажи местной продукции, ограничить миграцию на земли белуджей бедных жителей других регионов, уважать права человека. Доказано, что выполнение таких рекомендаций позволит решить проблему белуджистанского сепаратизма.

**Ключевые слова:** Белуджистан, Иран, Пакистан, Афганистан, контрабанда, транспортные коридоры, партизанская война, сепаратизм.

**The current problem.** Many scientists discuss the necessity of proclamation of independent Palestine or Kurdistan in the Middle East omitting an important issue of Balochistan in South Asia. At the same time, the Baloch live in strategic and resource-rich areas in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan occupying the land to have the size of France and striving to create their own state or, at least, to attain considerable autonomy. Simultaneously they are facing the hostility of authorities and exclusion from political and economic life in three respective countries whose governments exploit local natural resources but give back virtually nothing. Taking into consideration the chronic instability of this region, the problem of separatism in Balochistan remains one of the most important and demands immediate attention of the scientists.

**The aim of the article** is to compare the peculiarities of life and economic development of the Baloch communities in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, simultaneously analyzing the policy of their respective governments towards this impoverished ethnic minority.

**Analysis of the latest publications.** The sources of information used in this article are taken from the main regional mass-media outlets namely 'Express Tribune', 'The Nation', 'Dawn', and 'Hindustan Times'. It is important to point out the contribution of the Russian author Anton Evstratov [Евстратов, 2014] who wrote about insurgency in Sistan and Balochistan, as well as his compatriot Vyacheslav Belokrinitskii [Белокреницкий, 2009] who analyzed the turning of Pakistan into failed state due to insurgency in provinces and demographic explosion, and, finally, Mansoor Akbar Kundi whose scientific mission is to find out the cross-border interaction between the Baloch people in Pakistan and Iran [Kundi, 2009: 95]. However, in Ukraine no works were devoted to the problem of Balochistan.

**The important research results.** Along with Palestinians and Kurds, 12 million of the Baloch people are stateless despite they are occupying the area compared to a big European country. The historic Balochistan covers South-East Iran and South-West Pakistan together with adjacent areas of Nimruz, Helmand and Kandahar in Afghanistan. The Baloch use their own language that belongs to the Indo-Iranian group of Indo-European languages and their predecessors probably settled in the region around the 12<sup>th</sup> century after a long migration from the Middle East. Researchers link their language to Kurdish, which is considered to be the closest relative. Baloch are Sunni Muslims and live in a tribal society with chiefs – *sardars*, who govern them and usually execute justice. However, the religion does not play an important role in their lives because many of them are nomadic herders [Ghosh, 2013]. The bulk of the region is arid and rigid, prone to severe sandstorms and earthquakes. The districts near the Arabian Sea are situated within the belt of powerful cyclones that heavily affect the fishery.

The largest Baloch community with six million people resides in the Pakistani part of Balochistan in the province with the same name. This administrative unit occupies 42 per cent of Pakistan's total area (347,190 km<sup>2</sup>) but hosts only 13 million of the Pakistanis (6.85 per cent of general population), with ethnic Pukhtuns inhabiting northern parts and Baloch together with Dravidian Brahui tribes residing in central and southern districts. Amongst the other important minorities are Hazara people, who are predominantly Shia and distinguishable by their Mongolian features. There are also thousands of Hindus who are petty traders and money lenders in towns. The huge province is situated along vital shipping lanes from the Gulf to South Asia and occupies 75 percent of entire Pakistani coast (around 770 km). Its strategic importance is underlined by the long borders with Iran and Afghanistan and mountainous road link to China via Karakorum highway in adjacent Northern territories. Local soil has considerable deposits of natural gas, coal, copper, iron and uranium ores, marble, sulphur, limestone and granite, with local gas playing crucial role in the economic development of whole Pakistan [17]. Balochistan is also famous for animal husbandry and developed horticulture in mountainous valleys. For example, the province produces around 90 per cent of grapes and almonds, 60 per cent of peaches, pomegranates and apricots, 34 per cent of apples and 70 per cent of dates of Pakistan [6].

Despite considerable resources, the concentration of population in this area is extremely low due to scarcity of water, dominance of jagged mountainous ranges with narrow valleys, lack of fertile soil and largely desert terrain. Today the average density in Pakistani Balochistan stands at 19 persons per sq. km and registered labour force does not exceed 1,5 million people. This dire situation is caused by the nomadic way of life of locals and apprehension of settlers from other provinces to move here on the permanent basis due to security threat. Media access in rural

Balochistan is limited with many people in the countryside relying on radio only [31]. Because of frequent insurgencies the Pakistani state is unable to build modern roads and telecommunication infrastructure. Moreover, the province receives the smallest number of tourists in the whole country due to insignificant attractions such as a juniper hills of Ziarat with a moderate weather and several state-protected national parks. The provincial capital Quetta is known as the 'Fruit Garden of Balochistan' thanks to surrounding mountains, which easily catch aerial moisture. This is an old British border town with two-storey houses [10].

The borders of Balochistan were defined in colonial times. In 1839, the British rule began with creation of several military establishments in Quetta and railroads in border areas near Afghanistan. Almost all levers of power continued to reside in hands of tribal chiefs (*sardars*), which acted on behalf of the British administration for a fixed stipend. The division of Greater Balochistan between Persia and the British Raj took place in 1871. The new 909-kilometer-long border was called Goldsmid's Line after Sir Frederick Goldsmid who was responsible for its demarcation. On 27 March 1947, Balochistan became independent but the ruler of Kalat Mir Ahmed Yar Khan (the Khanate's population constituted 23 per cent of that of Balochistan) was forced to unite the territory with Pakistan under direct military pressure from the Pakistani generals [24]. Other areas reluctantly had to follow this example. The 1952-year discovery of natural gas near Sui located 650 km away from Karachi in the Dera Bugti region did not bring considerable benefits to locals. Today only 17 per cent of the Baloch people enjoy access to gas, and almost all of them reside in province's capital. Another problem is related to a small population of Balochistan since funds for state-supported projects are allocated in Pakistan on the demographical basis. The same cause defines province's weak political representation on the national level as it sends only 17 members to the Federal Parliament out of 335 [30]. So, there are not so many incentives for political elite to invest public funds in Balochistan where population has little or no influence over political process in the country. Moreover, Pakistan follows Indian militarization pattern and provides state funds mainly to the overpopulated Eastern regions near borders India at expense of the Western provinces. "Our children walk barefoot on a golden soil" – accurately says an eloquent Balochi proverb [16].

The state also ignores the public opinion in other matters. For example, in May 1998 the Chagai district of Balochistan became the principal site of nuclear tests. This area is situated 270 km to the West from capital Quetta. Therefore, 28 May is marked as a 'Black Day' in many parts of the province. All shops are closed at the daytime and people do not show up at their workplaces. Baloch believe that the decision of the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to go ahead with nuclear explosions undermined their health. Mass media coverage here is minimal as well as the network of health facilities, except for military hospitals in Quetta. That is why it is not easy to verify with accuracy this claim. But locals point out that nuclear explosions resulted in mysterious deaths of countless animals in Chagai area. Moreover, many residents of the area depend on wells and are afraid of consuming drinking water because of possible underground contamination [26].

Iran is another country with a numerous Baloch population as it controls Western Balochistan. The province of *Sistan and Baluchistan* with the area of 178,431 sq. km is situated in the wild and undeveloped South-East corner of Iranian territory close to Pakistan and Afghanistan. It consists of two parts: Sistan in the North and Balochistan in the South. Local population does not exceed 2,5 million people and provincial capital is situated in the city of Zahedan. It is one of the driest regions with severe sandstorms and local land in many cases is not suitable for agriculture. Wind seasons in the area can last for a half of a year, thus isolating local villages from the rest of Iran [21]. On the other hand, this province is the only one with the longest access to

the sea due to 300-kilometer coastline along the Gulf of Oman; it also has a border with Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moreover, Sistan and Baluchistan is well-endowed with mineral resources like golden ore, chromites and copper.

Iran brought this scarcely populated region under complete control in 1928 during the rule of the Pahlavi dynasty. Many Baloch place names were substituted with Persian ones and the biggest regional town Duzzap was renamed as Zahedan. Not only Sistan and Baluchistan is a home for Baloch people, but also it is so for a nearby province of Kerman. In general the members of their tribes represent around 2,2 per cent of the Iranian population [Kundi, 2009: 95]. During the Iran-Iraq war Baloch lands were very poor and in aftermath of it they never received considerable assistance from the state as all successive governments tried to rebuild mainly Western districts within Khuzestan oil belt. The scarce employment perspectives forced Baloch into smuggling of gasoline and foodstuff, trafficking of drugs and humans. Another important problem of Iranian Baloch people is found in confessional area as they are Sunni Muslims in predominantly Shiite nation that competes with Saudi Arabia for the influence. There are also some ethnic tensions, taking into consideration that Baloch are not closely related to the Persian majority. That's why it is extremely hard for them to find jobs in depressed barren land where private foreign investors are almost absent, so the sole employers are either families of hereditary merchants or state institutions. Moreover, numerous Afghan refugees propose their unqualified services to employers at half-price in order just to survive.

The exact number of Baloch living in Afghanistan is unknown as the last census there was held several decades ago. According to some estimations, the strength of this minority doesn't exceed 2 million people. They can be found in all of country's 24 provinces, but mainly reside in Nimruz, Helmand and Farrah. Afghan Baloch are strictly divided between clans and sub-clans and lack prominent community leaders. Political inactivity and purely tribal character of population collectively contributed to their exclusion from the political life in Afghanistan. The provinces, inhabited by Baloch, except of Helmand, are governed mainly by Pukhtuns, the same situation is observed in ministries of Afghanistan. There are all signs that Baloch are being slowly marginalized in favour of other ethnic groups. This is much in contrast with 1980-1990s during the rule of Najeebullah, when they enjoyed considerable representation in political and cultural life of the country as the counterweight to more numerous Pukhtuns [22].

Under the influence of economic and political marginalization *Pakistani Baloch* have organized several rebellions. The province experienced four major insurgencies – in 1948, 1958, 1962 and 1973. Despite many attempts, only two of them (1973-1977 and 2005 – till present time) were destabilizing for a Pakistani state. The first took place after the successful creation of Bangladesh, when the spirit of Pakistani military was low. But the new political leader Zulfikar Ali Bhutto decided to subdue insurgents without mercy, because he regarded it as another Indian attempt to destroy Pakistan and leave it without considerable gas and mineral resources in the West. As a result, the armed forces got a permission to conduct sweeping counter-insurgency operations with 80 thousand soldiers and to use the firepower indiscriminately. The Shah of Iran Mohammad Reza Pehlevi also provided military assistance to Pakistan with 30 helicopters AH-1 'Cobra', but Afghanistan, which was hostile towards official Islamabad, opened several safe-havens for insurgents under disguise of refugee camps. Most of the Baloch leaders fled to Europe or the United Arab Emirates and got political asylum there, but ordinary rebels died or were imprisoned. Later, in the 1980-90-s Balochistan felt impact of a civil war in Afghanistan with Pukhtun population of Quetta and northern districts growing considerably. The state did not trust Baloch locals and Pukhtun tribesmen from Frontier Corps «protected» order in the province and patrolled all border areas. However, their close affinity with tribal residents of Afghanistan

made frontier zone completely transparent and smuggling rampant. Finally, because of frequent terrorist acts and huge distances between urbanized centres, Balochistan experienced acute shortages of electricity, which added to lawlessness. The current power capacity of province is 700 megawatt against demand of 1,620 megawatt. The absence of electricity takes a heavy toll on local industries, agriculture and tourism, leading to poverty [25].

The 1980-s and 1990-s were relatively peaceful for the province. Military dictator Zia ul-Haq ordered to withdraw most of troops out of Balochistan and to connect a gas pipeline to Quetta. Such shift in a policy was related to his preoccupation with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. On the other hand, during the war many refugees fled to province's Northern part and Saudi Arabian donors opened for them a net of free schools with Koran and Arabic language studies. Because of this the restive region became one of the hotbeds of Islamization, supported by military elite of Pakistan, which considered political Islam as an efficient remedy against regional separatism. The process continued well into the 1990-s, when the civil war engulfed Afghanistan. During this period over 900 thousand refugees entered Balochistan and settled there in tents [19].

The latest rebellion started in 2005, when soldiers raped a local woman Shazia Khalid, who worked as a doctor in town of Sui. It gained further strength after the death of Nawab Akbar Bugti – former high-ranking official, Baloch nationalist leader and the main mediator between the government and rebels. He died in August 2006 in Kohlu cave after the bombing of this area by military helicopters. But it was the last straw in the chain of many other events leading to the new uprising. Earlier, in 2001, when military ruler of the country Pervez Musharraf decided to join the global antiterrorist campaign under the pressure from US President George Bush (Jr.), Pakistan's Western partners turned a blind eye towards events in Balochistan and security forces here became increasingly brutal. The country received substantial military assistance from the United States under the auspices of global war with terrorism and military hardware was partly provided for operations against rebels. Moreover, in 2001 the government allowed the CIA to use Shamsi airport (about 325 km southwest of Quetta) as a base for «Predator» and «Reaper» drones. This spot was frequented before by light planes of princes from the UAE and Qatar, who hunted famous Pakistani birds – Houbara Bustards (local name Taloor). The drones not only targeted members of Taliban and Al-Qaeda with «Hellfire» rockets, but also indiscriminately killed civilians in the Northern Balochistan [33].

Even today the representation of Baloch people in Pakistani army does not exceed 3,5 per cent. Some local leaders complain that Frontier Corps are not accountable to the province's chief minister or governor and completely out of civil control. As a result, Pakistani security forces regularly detain, torture and assassinate hundreds of political activists and simply young people of Baloch origin, whom they deem potentially dangerous or nationalistic. Many of them simply disappear. The missing persons of middle age are usually arrested during the day near the roadblocks or in areas around bazaars. Since 2005, number of such people in the province exceeded 2,200 and nobody has been yet persecuted for those crimes [14].

From their part, the rebels use «hit and run» tactics by ambushing military convoys, bombing gas pipelines, launching home-made rockets and mortars against infrastructure of Quetta city and Sui gas plant. Apart from members of security services they usually single out and target teachers, lecturers and doctors from other provinces (especially those, hailing from Punjab), settlers near mining projects, Chinese engineers and representatives of administrative apparatus.

The situation is complicated by constant sectarian violence against representatives of religious minorities – Hazara and Hindu people, who are also targeted by kidnappers. Usually abductors demand a modest ransom and let Hindu traders go free, while killing some of them when

money is not transferred [32]. But impoverished Hazara people, who are Shia by belief, almost always die at hands of terrorists. Around 400 of them have been assassinated only in 2013 by Sunni jihadist groups and this puts a strain on 500 thousand-strong community in Quetta and suburbs. Many observers believe that local Talibs not only consider representatives of this minority impure and alien to Sunni values, but also try to avenge the military victory of the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan in 2001, supported by Hazara's ethnic relatives in this mountainous country. Moreover, the violence against Shia minority worsens relations between Pakistan and Iran, whose rulers considers themselves as guardians of Hasara people [13].

Baloch people in *Iran* live in dangerous border areas, where drug trafficking became the only way to survive for impoverished local communities. Accordingly, together with Afghan refugees they remain a principal target of law-enforcing agencies. «Amnesty International» reports that representatives of this minority account for 55 per cent of hanging victims, because Iranian state frequently executes insurgents or traffickers in prisons as a reprisal for a border shoot-outs, even if those people have no relation to such events [Kessler, 2013]. The drug trafficking across Sistan and Baluchistan's ill-protected borders with Pakistan and Afghanistan is a big social issue, but official Tehran widely uses anti-smuggling measures as the main pretext for fighting independence movement. To this end the Iranian government sent thousands of highly trained Revolutionary Guards to the province to assist local soldiers. They use live ammunition on local people and behave with increased brutality.

Those events led to the creation of «Jundallah» (the Soldiers of God) – a clandestine organisation established in 2002 to protect rights of the local Baloch, but mostly destroyed by the Iranian state eight years later. At the same time, «Jundallah» cannot be considered as a purely national liberation movement, because it has a religious bias. The range of terrorist methods used included attacks on infrastructure, assassinations of public officials, Revolutionary Guards and local Shiites. Moreover, one of the main aims was to weaken the security belt around Iranian border with Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to facilitate drug trafficking. After destruction of «Jundallah's» network and hanging of its young leader Abdolmalek Rigi for 79 counts of crime in 2010 Iranian-controlled Balochistan became relatively calm again [23].

However, the supporters of idea of independence managed to reconstitute their structure and create new organisations «Jaish-ul-Adl» (Army of Justice) in Sistan and Baluchistan and «Haraqat Ansar Iran» (Sunni Mujahidins of Iran) in Iranian and Pakistani parts of Balochistan in spring of 2012. They have confirmed their responsibility for several of violent attacks on Iran-Pakistani border, the last of which happened in late October 2013 in Saravan and took 14 lives of Iranian border guards [Евсмпамов, 2014]. Due to their different objectives and lack of communication means, Iranian Baloch organisations don't coordinate their activities with respective movements in Pakistan and remain weak.

In *Afghanistan*, the Baloch people are excluded from political and social life and also badly organised, so they do not constitute a serious threat for the state. For its part, government in Kabul has no grip over the whole territory of the country. This turns Afghanistan into a safe heaven for insurgents from both Pakistan and Iran and complicates situation even further.

At this point of time Baloch national movement in all three states looks fragmented, deprived of coordination, clear objectives and prominent leaders, who could be perceived as such in all parts of the region and among the majority of tribes. Moreover, local people are not represented in international arena by charismatic leaders. This reduces their movement mainly to the retaliation on the local level and to protests against repressions with almost no articulated strategy of reaching independence.

When the Chief of army staff Pervez Musharraf came to power in 1999 in a bloodless coup, he decided to develop Balochistan with a direct Chinese assistance. To this end he invited com-

panies from China to build the port near the city of Gwadar on Makran coast of Arabian Sea in 2011. This strategic object, located only 400 km away from the Strait of Hormuz and 1,500 km from the big city of Kashgar, was born to generate economic activity in Balochistan and facilitate Chinese involvement in transit of a «black gold» via Pakistan to Xinjiang. In 2013 the operational control over Gwadar was given to «China Overseas Port Holdings Ltd». This port provides China with an alternative trade route to the Strait of Malacca, which is responsible for 80 per cent of Chinese oil imports, and enables the country to enhance trade relations with the Gulf monarchies [28]. Moreover, Pervez Musharraf ordered to provide several Chinese companies with several important mining concessions in Balochistan and decided to build two military cantonments to protect workers from China.

However, locals dislike those developments because they have negative experience of colonization and exploitation by the state during the previous decades. The vast majority of Baloch suspect that when the megaprojects, where they hardly participate, are successfully completed, their land would see tremendous inflow of Punjabi and Chinese settlers. They also remember that in the last 30 years the authorities failed to stop or slow down the waves of refugees from Afghanistan to the Northern parts of Balochistan during the civil war in Afghanistan and now will do the same in the Southern part. Development of the huge city-port of Karachi in Sindh, which used to be settled only by Muhajirs from India and local Sindhis, migrating from villages during draught in the Indus Valley, was endangered by a chaotic arrival of millions of Pukhtuns in 1980s, who initiated street skirmishes with traditional inhabitants and monopolised construction works and transportation services. Today at least 15 per cent of Karachi's population is represented by the Pukhtuns [Jafar, 2011]. That is why Baloch people are afraid of demographic marginalization in their own province. They consider Gwadar port as a dangerous bridge to foreign countries, which may help intensify the exploitation of considerable resources by Chinese companies and encourage more people to migrate from overpopulated Punjab.

After the victory of Pakistan's People Party in Parliamentary elections the new President Ali Zardari proposed the truce to rebels and in 2009 he unveiled revolutionary reforms package under the name «Aghaz-i-Huqooq-i-Balochistan», which included: release of political prisoners; investigation of disappearances; return of exiles; expansion of regional government's responsibilities and decrease in military presence; annual creation of new 15,000 jobs for young people in Balochistan; initiation of megaprojects and improvement of the royalty formula for gas and other mineral resources. In 2010 the 18<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment was passed, allowing for a greater provincial autonomy and better access for administrative units to national financial resources. Ali Zardari also promised to pay 120 billion of Pakistani rupees (USD 1,15 billion) in additional gas royalties to provincial authorities for the volumes of gas, supplied during 1954-1991 [12]. The President was interested in a 1900-kilometer-long Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline necessary to deal with chronic power outages in Pakistan, and wanted to pacify local tribes in such way in order to guarantee the security of it. Infamous airfield in Shamsi was closed down in 2011 after deterioration of relations with the US caused by «friendly» fire against the group of Pakistani soldiers near Salala checkpoint in November of 2011. Despite all those concessions, local nationalists continued to criticize the national government for extracting the natural wealth and not giving back enough funds for the development [27]. Unfortunately, the regime of Ali Zardari was too weak and preoccupied with insurgencies in tribal areas and flooding in Sindh, thus allowing influential military to continue establishing harsh rule and order in Balochistan. This led to intensification of attacks of local guerrillas against military, police and ordinary settlers, infrastructure and industrial objects. As a result, many companies from China abandoned their projects in the area citing the lack of security.



In May 2013, the political party of Nawaz Sharif Muslim League-N convincingly won Parliamentary elections. The new Prime Minister promised to deal in a peaceful way with the separatism in Balochistan, whose land he considered as a major place of future megaprojects. Despite its mineral wealth and the longest coastline in Pakistan, the province remains the poorest in the whole country with only 25 per cent of the population literate and around 30 per cent unemployed [15]. High unemployment rates force local people to engage in smuggling of diesel fuel and foodstuff from Iran and in trafficking of persons from Afghanistan. This process gained some intensity after international sanctions against Iran devalued local currency and Iranian goods became relatively cheap. Balochistan has 45,68 per cent of population below the poverty line with a number of poor people here even higher than in war-torn Pukhtun lands of Pakistan, because Pukhtuns in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa receive money from their relatives in Karachi and some of them exploit adjacent opium producing areas of Afghanistan to their advantage [Shah, 2013].

Nawaz Sharif took another step in order to satisfy Baloch demands. The Pakistani ex-President Pervez Musharraf was temporary arrested in 2013 in connection with the assassination of the nationalist leader Nawab Akbar Bugti in 2006 and the arrest warrant was also issued for his former Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz. Later he nominated Abdul Malik Baloch as the province's chief minister, despite the fact that Sharif's own party received the majority of seats in the provincial assembly. Baluch Malik is the first head of the province, who does not belong to traditional rich layers of society. He already ordered investigation of terrorist acts and disappearances of people and agreed to dismantle many road-blocks loathed by local population. Simultaneously the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif urged dissident Baloch nationalists to surrender their arms and create political parties [18]. Unfortunately, the situation in Pakistan is complicated by the competition of influential provinces of Sindh and Punjab, overpopulation and lack of natural resources [Белокреницкий, 2009: 12-17]. As a result, the authorities simply don't have enough time and resources to deal with traditionally marginalized Balochistan.

In order to give a boost to economic development of own region *Iran* decided to develop the Chabahar port on Makran coast of Sistan and Baluchistan 72 km away from Gwadar in close cooperation with Indian companies. Chabahar free trade industrial zone created in 1992 to lure more industries into the province. This important port will provide Iran with an easy access to the Indian Ocean and it is closer to India than Iranian Bandar Abbas. Official Delhi strives to use port facilities in trade with Afghanistan and Central Asian states and to bypass unreliable Pakistan that limits transit of Indian goods to Afghanistan. The port is already connected by roads to the town of Zaranj in Afghanistan's province of Nimruz. On the other hand, many businessmen and investors also had serious doubts concerning a long-term stability in Afghanistan after 2014 elections since the long-time President Hamid Karzai was not eligible to run for office and successors lacked his charisma [Singh, 2013].

Development of large infrastructure projects in Pakistani and Iranian Balochistan is a serious dilemma for both the local population and for the central governments. On the one hand, investments inflow and creation of numerous jobs may decrease poverty and social tensions, which cause separatism, terrorism and drug trafficking. This will result in rise of literacy level, gradual appearance of the middle class, decline of tribalism. On their part, Baloch people have reasonable fears of uncontrolled migration from other parts of their respective countries and from abroad in search of jobs on newly opened industrial and infrastructure sites. Such a migration is quite realistic as mainly uneducated Baloch will have a few chances to find jobs in all spheres of economic activity except for mining.

Strategic position, size and natural resources of Balochistan draw attention of major regional and world actors. It is the key territory for such countries like Pakistan, Iran and even China. And

theoretical creation of the rich independent Balochistan inhabited by moderate Sunni Muslims will completely change the power balance in South Asia and Middle East. But so far foreign actors of various levels attempt to use periodical unrest in Balochistan for their tactical purposes. For decades Pakistan routinely accuses India of its assistance to rebels as a tool of revenge for unrest in Kashmir valley and as a tool of weakening of Pakistani security. Official Islamabad claims that Indians are using the net of consulates in Southern Afghanistan to supply weapons and medicines to Baloch insurgents and train them in the art of guerrilla war in Afghanistan. In many cases Pakistan puts forward those accusations in order to undermine Chinese-Indian relations, taking into consideration that many Chinese workers died in province at hands of local terrorists. As a response China steps up sales of weapons to Pakistan and continues a policy of India's containment and encirclement in South Asia. For example, China became the world's fifth largest arms exporter with five per cent of the global trade due to increased demand from her Pakistani ally, which bought 55 per cent of the Chinese export's volume last year [20].

After the victory of Nawaz Sharif in Parliamentary elections both partners opened China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Secretariat in Islamabad and proclaimed readiness to build strategic pipeline from Gwadar to the Western China. Official Beijing is likely to use Pakistan as a transit zone for transportation of oil from the Middle East to Chinese urbanized centres in the west. China has also shown considerable interest in joining the Iran-Pakistan gas deal and conducts feasibility studies of laying pipes next to Karakorum highway. Balochistan and Xinjiang are the largest and rebellious provinces in both countries, but their economic interaction can bring considerable improvement of quality of life to local population and stabilize the shaky situation [29]. In general, Balochistan plays a central role in China's efforts to strengthen its position in South Asia and to receive additional mineral resources. Moreover, the land of Baloch provides an incentive for a deepening China's alliance with Pakistan, which causes serious concern in India. Possible common projects may include not only pipelines, roads and ports, but also LNG plants, oil refineries and ore enrichment facilities. In general Pakistan considers China as the main partner in this restive region.

**Conclusions.** Internal situation in three parts of the historic region of Balochistan as well as the power balance in South Asia is not conducive for Baloch people in their quest to gain independence in medium and even in long term. The only possible mechanism for securing their rights is to increase representation on local and central levels of authority of respective states, to extend possibilities of self-governance, to overcome tribalism and formulate a joint agenda for negotiations, which should include the issues of limiting internal and external migration and creation of numerous jobs for locals. Governments of both Iran and Pakistan are obviously interested in peaceful Balochistan in order to remove barriers for implementation of large industrial and infrastructure projects. Signs of Iran's compromise with the Western countries may improve investment climate in the region and make Sistan and Balochistan a desired target of investments again. Concerning Baloch people in Afghanistan, they are likely to remain on the roadside of country's development.

What are other important steps, which are necessary for the development of some of the largest provinces of Pakistan and Iran? *Firstly*, to increase the number of multinationals engaged in extraction of mineral resources and to give to Balochistan a justified and locally accepted share of their revenues in order to build modern electricity, systems of water supply and transport infrastructure. *Secondly*, to develop the ring of paved roads and to create full-fledged transport corridors to neighbouring countries, thus facilitating dynamic trade exchanges. *Thirdly*, to deal seriously with issues of abductions, because they paralyze social and economic life in rebellious provinces and create the atmosphere of unlawfulness. *Fourthly*, to initiate the disbursement of microcredit and other SME programmes for local population and to provide a

support for development of construction industry, handicrafts and services sector. *Fifthly*, to go ahead with education campaign in towns and rural areas for better integration of Baloch population into societies of Iran and Pakistan. And, *finally*, lands, settled by Baloch tribes, must receive absolutely equal treatment on national level in all respects – not only on the basis of population, but also taking into consideration their mineral resources [Khan, 2013: 217].

Despite the difficulties all historic parts of Balochistan need public and foreign investments as well as close mutual cooperation in economic field in order to overcome the issues of separatism and poverty. The Balochis are entitled to receive the rightful share of state funds in each country along with compensation for mineral resources extracted in the past. This should be accompanied by protection of their human rights and investigation of abuses by security forces. The trust must be regained at all costs...

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