



## Systemic conflict transformation approach to ethnic conflicts: a reflection from Balochistan, Pakistan

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### Abstract:

This research aimed to construct a model to examine the root causes, design the peace structure for intervention, and plan the pathways for transforming ethnic conflicts in the Balochistan province of Pakistan. The current approaches to intervention in ethnic conflicts often lack a thorough analysis of the complexity of conflicts and transformation plans. This research adopted the Systemic Conflict Transformation framework of the Berghof Foundation for Peace Support of 2006, with certain amendments to suit the context of Balochistan. The project is significant because implementing this model would lead to conflict resolution, relation-building, and peace in the region. A qualitative methodology with the case study approach has been employed to address the research objectives. This study incorporated non-structure interviews, a review of existing literature, and personal reflections for constructing a peace framework. The findings indicate that the systemic conflict model is applicable in the context of Balochistan. It effectively identifies the apparent and hidden factors of conflicts and offers a comprehensive and actionable plan for conflict transformation, providing a comprehensive solution. This study recommends adopting this model by state authorities, government, and peace agents involved in ethnic conflicts to foster peace and harmony and rebuild regional relations.

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## 1. Introduction

The end of the Cold War resulted in the decline of the inter-state conflicts, but a wave of intra-regional ethnic conflicts spread throughout the world (Gawerc, 2006; Cordell & Wolff, 2011; Yeghiazaryan, 2018). Ethnic conflicts proved more lethal than inter-state conflicts, as these intimidate the order of the world's cultures. As a key ally of the Western Bloc in the Cold War, Pakistan is not an exception; it is one of the nations affected by this phenomenon. The primordial, instrumentalist, and constructivist aspects, such as suppression of identity, lack of economic and political control, and repressive responses, have created many ethnic contenders for the state (Ejaz & Rehman 2022). The centripetal ethnic forces, though feeling ignored and deprived, are still working for autonomy within the existing setup. However, the major issue is the centrifugal secessionist ethnic actors, who have become despondent from the current set-up, are demanding separation (Hashmi, 2013).

Baluchistan, area-wise the largest federating unit of Pakistan, is an affected area of ethnic conflicts. The Baloch, as an ethnic group, feels that they are the poorest among all the ethnic groups of Pakistan. They have resentment about the overthrowing of their language and culture, alienation of their ethnic group, and failure in the provision of security and freedoms. Moreover, a sense of deprivation that they have a low share in the political realms, finances, army, bureaucracy, education, and jobs has also fuelled fire (Bansal, 2006; Grare, 2013; Akhtar, 2017; Ahmed et al., 2023). Baloch has enunciated their mistrust and ill-treatment of the federation and state elites but to them, they are overlooked (Hashmi, 2013). At this time, the conflict in Baluchistan has several fault lines. The actors of Baloch Ethnicity can be split into two groups. The "nationalists" demanded maximum autonomy but wanted to live in the federation. However, the other "insurgents," are dissatisfied with this structure and are asking for complete independence (Grare, 2013). Over the years, the nationalists have struggled with the federation and the Pashtun ethnicity in the province. The insurgents have been involved in five insurgencies. The present one started in 2006 and still is ongoing.

The academics have written about the conflict's situation, damages, and solutions. However, they look at the ethnic conflicts from the angle of inter-state conflicts. Ethnic conflicts are new wars. They are complex, intractable, protracted, and asymmetric. The intractable conflicts cannot be resolved, and chances are always there of their re-emergence because none of the parties wants to surrender their positions. The challenges that ethnic conflicts cause demand in-depth study because effective dealing with conflicts is difficult without understanding the occurrence (Cordell & Wolff, 2011). It is a conflict transformation approach that can effectively deal with them. It is eccentric that scholarship on the new models of conflict transformation is deficient. This research was an attempt to view and analyse the conflicts in Baluchistan from the outlook of the comparatively new field of Systemic Conflict Transformation (SCT). It analytically examined and analysed the conflicts and also offered measures for the progressive transformation of the conflicts. The main objective of this research was to develop a model to study the core causes, plan the peace scheme for

intervention, and design ways to transform Baluchistan's ethnic conflicts. The research was limited to the ethnic tensions of Baluchistan, the context and situation of conflicts, and viable options for transformation. Although this research dealt with the historical epoch as well, the study period mainly dealt with the last two decades i.e., 2010 and 2020. It is a significant project, as this area lacks research, and there is an urgent need for research to bring back the region's prosperity.

This paper is divided into nine main sections. The first section deals with the introduction and the literature review, the second section, titled theoretical framework sets the thematic model for research, and the third unit centres on the research method and materials. The fourth portion applies the model to the ethnic conflicts of Baluchistan. It includes conflict analysis, strategic planning, involvement of key stakeholders, engagement of peaceful agents, and transformation of conflicts. The last section is the conclusion, which contains a summary of the analysis based on the findings and recommendations.

## **2. Literature review**

Ethnic and identity conflicts have been of interest to researchers over the years. Scholars have produced several scientific studies for understanding and responding to ethnicity and ethnic conflicts (Isajiw, 2000; Kaufmann, 2005). Pakistan has many fault lines, including ethnic diversity. In recent times, some valuable literature has been produced by researchers about the ethnic conflicts in Pakistan. However, because of the critical condition, the Baluchistan province has become a matter of ample interest to both national and international academicians. The national intellectuals including Breseeg (2009), Siddiqi (2012), Hashmi (2013), Samad (2014), Akhtar (2017), Muzaffar et al. (2018), Raisani (2018), Ahmed et al. (2020) and international scholars including Bansal (2006), Wirsing (2008), Jetly (2009), Grare (2013), Mendez (2020) and Yogesh (2021) produced valuable work.

The conflict analysis has many models and frameworks. The universally appropriate is conflict mapping, which examines and analyses every aspect of the conflict, such as actors, issues, history, dynamics, contexts, and discourses (Wehr, 1979). The literature on the understanding of conflicts is diverse and focuses on one or two aspects of the conflicts. Historical, issue-related, and dynamic analysis is common. The historical investigations revolve around the five insurgencies, their causes, and the repressive responses of the state. The issue study discloses the standard issues, such as economic disparity, lack of political autonomy, illegal migrations, lack of political control, and military operations. (Kupecz, 2012; Grare, 2013; Bansal, 2006; Noormal, 2016; Tariq, 2013). Additionally, some authors also took into consideration the human rights violations and the establishment of a military cantonment in the area (Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2006; Brown et.al, 2012). The majority of scholars including Bansal (2006), (Hashmi (2013), and Akhtar (2017) added the external hand and greater Baluchistan while Chowdhury et al. (2023) added the narrative of discrimination. However, the minority scholars including Jetly (2009), Breseeg (2009), Muzaffar et al. (2018), Ejaz and

Rehman (2022), and Ejaz et al. (2023) analysed the role of alienation of the language and culture in conflict.

Baloch takes pride in ancient mythology, its heritage, and belief edifices that act as guiding forces for all of them (Jetly, 2009; Muzaffar et al, 2018; Ahmed et al, 2023). Grare (2013) examined the conflicts from the perspective of excessive Islamization, and the state's role in empowering religious actors to defuse the power of ethnic actors. Henceforth economic disparities and other grievances led the marginalized groups to take arms and to resort violence to address their demands (Brown et al, 2012). Breseeg (2009) and Ejaz and Rehman (2022) analysed the conflicts with the support of theoretical perspectives on ethnic conflicts, such as primordialism, instrumentalism, and constructivism. Sultan (2021) also tested the situational analysis, subjective method, and the epiphenomena strategy. Tabassum et al. (2023) set their thesis on the "Total Interpretive Structural Model", but they only explained it and did not apply it to the context. Violence has become a norm, and it received the highest instances of violence as compared to any other province (Kupecz, 2012). Additionally, as Amin (1993) said it also started the Punjabi-Baloch conflict because the Baloch felt Punjabis were exploiting them and they were forced to leave Baluchistan.

The plan for the transformation of the conflict has got a little share in scholarship, rather some people, such as Kupecz (2012) are hopeless of the peace. Kupecz (2012) remarked that the peace resolution of Baluchistan's conflict is doubtful rapidly. Brown et al. (2012) argued that the Baluchistan insurgency cannot be stopped, but its consequences can be mitigated. A segment among the scholars has put certain suggestions in recommendations. These suggestions are related to the bottom-up approach and ask for the compromise and accommodation of the state for the insurgents (Sultan, 2021; Ahmed et al., 2023). It is so because the government's counterinsurgency strategy is faulty (Wirsing, 2008; Ejaz et al., 2023). Wirsing (2008) further debated that the existing policy should be replaced with amnesty, dialogue, incentives, and amicable end. Pipes (2010) suggested that international powers and agencies should play a role in mitigation. Muzaffar et al. (2018) presented a valid position and asked for local self-government and provincial autonomy, political control, autonomy, sharing in mega projects, and respect for identity. Furthermore, employment, removal of army cantonments, reduction in operations, and the role of media for better narratives can also be helpful (Marwat & Yasmeen, 2021; Zaheer & Asim, 2021).

The overwhelming literature has focused on state-level solutions and only presented the state actors as viable forces in resolution. However, as Wirsing (2008) said, "to engage the Baloch nationalists politically instead of only militarily will not be easy... the problem of resolving Baluchistan's political fortunes is much more complicated than that" (p. vii). Very few, through passing references, asked for the involvement of peaceful agents, such as media and civil societies. This study is an attempt to fill the academic gap that is left by scholars. The conflicts are analysed by scholars and the modern conflict analysis methods have not been utilized. Therefore, the root cause, the present dynamics, and the context of conflicts are not sufficiently

explored. The majority presented the state-level and top-down solutions to the issue and did not consider the role of pacific actors, such as civil society for peace. The recommendations without the model and implementation framework are insufficient to bring peace. This study, with the support of interviews, websites, books, articles, and personal reflection, has developed a conflict analysis model and the framework for the transformation. This framework would be comprehensive and look at it systematically by analysing all factors and involving all actors. It was a significant project because it looked at the conflicts from a systemic and overall border framework that would help the policymakers, academics, researchers, and students understand the phenomenon.

### **3. Theoretical framework**

Ethnic conflicts are protracted, complex, and asymmetric (Ejaz et al., 2022a). The dynamics and nature of such conflicts are hard to understand until sustainable approaches are applied. Ethnic conflicts, because of their complex nature and incompatible cannot be resolved (Isajiw, 2000; Gawerc, 2006; Cordell & Wolff, 2011). The standard issues cannot be settled because of the relative incompatible stands of warring parties on issues. There are always chances of their reemergence (Gawerc, 2006). The original escalating factors go to the background; only dynamics remain significant. The warring parties involved them in a spiral of action that aggravated the situation further. The net result is fragmentation, misunderstanding, and over-optimistic policy designs for the conflict (Wils et al., 2006). Therefore, the conflict transformation is the only viable method for a permanent settlement and ultimate resolution. Surprisingly, researchers ignored the viability of conflict transformation for Baluchistan conflicts. This research would study the conflicts from the perspective of transformation. The conflict transformation has many perspectives. SCT, a relatively new framework, scientifically investigates conflicts, plans for action, searches for actors, and presents measures for transforming conflicts.

The main objective of SCT is not to establish a school of conflict resolution, such as conflict management but to provide clarity of thought on conflict transformation (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006). This framework is based on three principles: a) The application and further development of key peacebuilding concepts; b) The evaluation of practical experience gained by the Berghof Centre, especially the Resource Network for Conflict Studies and Transformation (RNCST) in Sri Lanka, and the high-level Georgian-Abkhazian Dialogue Process (CR); and c) The application of key concepts and instruments from systems theory, which in recent years have become well-established and positively received in disciplines such as organizational development consulting, family therapy, and cybernetics (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006).

Wils et al. (2006) argued that SCT can be understood at four levels. Firstly, recognition that highly intensified ethnic conflicts create a highly complex system that can only be modelled and transformed. Secondly, the appropriate analysis of the intensified conflict system. During

the analysis and intervening in a system, it is necessary to define the boundaries of the system and know the interdependencies and interactions with the supra and sub-system. Thirdly, it offers gestalt of the system as a whole and individual sub-system (Bird's eye view and frog's eye view). Lastly, intervention required the lessening of complexity by applying a chain of hypotheses that would allow effective interventions with better effects. It helps in the identification of state actors, critical mass, and peaceful agents for social and political change. Thus, it constructively transforms the systems, supports the process of comprehensive change, involves local actors too, and adopts an inclusive and holistic approach to peacebuilding (Wils et al., 2006). The SCT is viable as compared to other theoretical frameworks and approaches to conflict transformation because it effectively deals with the dynamics, complexity, and external parameters of the conflicts. The SCT manages the asymmetrical conflict structures and shows the roles of non-state actors in case the state machinery fails, considering the narratives, interests, and needs of the conflict actors and spoilers (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006).

The SCT approach does not only disclose complexity but also contributes to the reduction of complexity by identifying the structures that can bring change to the system. It is not the agent of status-quo that works to maintain this system but to transform this system to a meaningful end. The SCT framework has five core elements. It is not a magical or universal methodology; rather it is highly flexible and can be implemented according to contexts. These core elements are; a) Systemic Conflict Analysis and Conflict Monitoring; b) Strategic Planning of Systemic Interventions; c) Engagement with Key Stakeholders; d) Mobilization of Agents of Peaceful Change; and f) Creativity in the Imagination of Sustainable Solutions. (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006).

Systemic analysis is included in a variety of theories and practices for constructing and deconstructing events. It gained popularity in the 1950s, especially in the 1980s, but all of them failed to make a generally accepted framework. The systemic approach to conflicts was applied by the conflict resolution school in the 1980s. However, the application was narrow in approach and was unable to captivate the conflicts at the systemic level (Ropers, 2008). It lacked the framework for analysis until the "Berghof Foundation for Peace Support" (BFPS) developed the systemic thinking for designs of peace intervention while taking the complexity of the conflicts. The first logical framework of the conflict mapping was developed by Wehr (1979), and he highlighted five elements, including history, parties, issues, context, and dynamics. Many analysts developed theoretical frameworks, but this research is interested in Roper's (2008) systemic analysis framework involving the conflicting parties, issues, historical dimensions, structural factors, contexts, perspectives of warring parties, and the available resolution options.

Strategic planning for systemic intervention is the groundwork that reflects the system's complexity. It answers the question of "how to use the most effective leverage points for change. How do you link activities on different tracks? How to sequence peace support

measures most effectively? How do we consider the large-scale political dynamics of conflict systems when planning and implementing a conflict transformation project or program? How do we effectively monitor and assess our activities?” It does not have a miraculous formula; rather, measures are dependent upon the complexity of the system (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006).

The policy of engagement with the key stakeholders is a gigantic task because it involves the relationship building. The SCT asks for an inclusive approach, and even the pacific and parties of stakes are to be considered in the resolution process. The spoilers and outsiders are also important in the system along with the mainstream parties of the country. This step works to institutionalise capacity building, trust building, and communications between external and internal stakeholders. The main objective of this approach is to change perceptions and future aspirations and change the strategies for at least satisfying parties' needs, if not fully addressed (Wils et al., 2006).

The agents of peace are individuals and groups that are a part of the conflict system. They have the potential to enhance peace communication and reduce violence. The systemic approaches give preference to the local actors over outsiders. The locals are the primary actors in conflicts and provide comparatively better moral and metrical support in the constructive transformation of conflicts. It is a long-term practice and involves advocacy, trust building, capacity building, and network management. Similar to other elements, it does not have a specific jacket of activities (Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, 2006).

Creativity in the imagination of sustainable solutions is an important step. The issues are to be reframed so that the new perspectives break the cycle of action and reaction. Potential solutions with the acceptance of parties are also a concern. Third parties can offer great support and develop new frameworks. Conflict transformation goes beyond the philosophy of management and resolution. Presently, it is the dominant paradigm for protracted conflicts. (Kriesberg, 2011). The main task is to constructively rebuild the relations among the warring parties that have been destroyed during conflicts (Kriesberg, 2011). The conflicts are caused by the disproportion of power and the sudden change in relations. Therefore, for transforming conflicts, the relationship transformation is essential (Gawerc, 2006). It is a gradual and long-term process that asks for engagements and engagements. Vayrynen (1991) offered four types of transformations, that is, actor, rule, issue, and structural transformation. Lederach (1995 1997) provided personal, relational, cultural, and structural change. Miall (2004) proposed the actor, structure, personal/narrative, and issue transformations. This research is fascinated by Miall's (2004) elements of conflict transformation.

In practice, these five areas cannot be separated from one another and cannot be regarded as chronological. It can be applied to all conflicts, especially disputes related to identity for better resolution. The approach is appropriate for the pre-, post, and negotiation phases of conflicts (Ropers, 2008).

#### **4. Methodology**

Research methodology is a broad framework of guidelines for research. It includes the selection of approaches and perspectives, the logic of selecting the approaches, and the demarcation of data collection techniques (Kumar, 2011). The research aimed to construct and describe the framework and model comprising conflict analysis, utilization of agents, and transforming actors, context, and issues. Therefore, qualitative research methodology with a case study approach is adopted. Influential scholars on the case study approach, Yin (2011) described the three major aspects appropriate for this research. To him, a case study is applicable when the investigator inquires the “why” and “how” quires, investigates the current phenomenon in its real-life context, and rely upon multiple data confirmations. The case study method also provides a comprehensive and contextual study (Hussain et al., 2022). The main quires of the research were related to why and how queries. The research tried to understand the contemporary patterns of conflict and ways of peace in the real-life context of Baluchistan, Pakistan. Likewise, it relied on multiple sources including literature review, documents, interviews, and personal experiences. The critical question in case studies is the criteria for selecting the case.

This research while taking inspiration from Ragin (1989) selected the case study on the method of impartiality, compatibility of conflicts and region with research objectives and proposed framework, and availability of unbiased material. The data in books, periodicals, research papers, reports, periodicals, reports, government records, and electronic sources was utilized. Using non-structured interviews, the data was also collected from civil society experts, Islamic clerics, and politicians. The sample was designated using the non-random purposive sampling technique, and only those who had the appropriate material about the subject were considered for data collection. Twelve activists in total were interviewed. An understanding was also established by holding dialogue with the experts on peace, conflict, and ethnicity. The data analysis process of qualitative research is dynamic and creative, demanding reasoning, thinking, and reflection. Therefore, the thematic analysis method of Miles and Huberman (1994) was utilized in this study, which has three stages, i.e., data reduction, data display, data drawing, and data verification.

#### **5. Systematic conflict analysis of ethnic conflicts of Baluchistan**

##### **5.1. Conflict parties**

Baluchistan, in the border spectrum, can be divided into two ethnicities, Baloch and Pashtun. The Baloch-speaking (including Brahuri people) are almost 60% of the total population. The rest speak Urdu Pashto and Saraiki (Hashmi, 2013). The nationalists trust the federal system as directed in the Constitution. However, they ask for maximum autonomy. The insurgents are in ample divergence with the state and, are struggling for independence or Greater Baluchistan (comprised of Iranian and Pakistani areas) (Grare, 2013).

Table 1: Conflict parties

Conflicts	Primary Parties	Secondary Parties	Tertiary Parties
Ethnic Conflicts (Nationalists)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Federation of Pakistan</li> <li>• Punjabi Establishment</li> <li>• Security Forces</li> <li>• Pakhtunkhwa Mili Awami Party (PMAP)</li> <li>• Baluch National Awami Party (BNAP)</li> <li>• Awami National Party (ANP)</li> <li>• National Party Hai Group (NPH)</li> <li>• Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Common Public</li> <li>• Local Intelligence Agencies</li> <li>• Political Interest Groups</li> <li>• Diaspora Population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local NGOs</li> <li>• IGOs</li> <li>• Civil Society</li> <li>• International Advocacy</li> <li>• Institutions</li> <li>• Businessmen, Teachers, and Journalists</li> <li>• Scholars</li> </ul>
Ethnic Conflicts (Insurgents)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government of Pakistan</li> <li>• Pakistan's Armed Forces</li> <li>• Para-Military Forces</li> <li>• Baloch Republican Party (BRP)</li> <li>• Baloch Liberation Army (BLA)</li> <li>• Baloch Students Organization (BSO)</li> <li>• Baloch National Front/Movement (BNM)</li> <li>• Baloch People's Liberation Front (BLF)</li> <li>• Baloch Republican Army (BRA)</li> <li>• Lashkar-e-Baluchistan (LB)</li> <li>• Baluchistan Liberation United Front (BLF)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common Public</li> <li>• Pashtun Ethnicity</li> <li>• Punjabi Ethnicity</li> <li>• Intelligence Agencies from India, the US and Iran</li> <li>• Diaspora</li> <li>• Media</li> <li>• Organizations</li> <li>• Arm Prevention Organizations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strategic Conflict Analysts</li> <li>• International Advocacy</li> <li>• Business Community</li> <li>• Diplomatic Community</li> <li>• Religious Organizations</li> <li>• Women</li> <li>• Liberal Groups</li> </ul>

## **5.2. Historical dimension of conflicts**

The historical dimension of conflicts comprises the account of tensions and the link of these tensions with the foundation and dynamics of resentment. This account proves valuable because it helps in understanding uncompromising behaviours and envisions the actions of actors (Wehr, 1979). The main background of these conflicts lies in the British Era. As it had links with Buffer Afghanistan and Iran, it was left administratively fragile, politically backward, and socially fragmented.

The decision of the ruler of Kalat to remain independent created the first tension. The State of Pakistan did not respect his decision and annexed it with force. The younger brother of Nawab, Khan Abdul Karim stood against the Pakistani authorities. (Titus & Swidler, 2000). The army of Pakistan crushed the rebellion after a few scuffles. However, it generated dissatisfaction among the Baloch. The subsequent uprising was attached to the imposition of martial law in 1958. The Third uprising, known as ‘Parrai Resistance 1962,’ was the rebellion of the Marri, Bugti, and Mangal Tribes. It was a reaction to the distribution of land to service members, the lack of respect for elected members, the establishment of the Army cantonment, and the lack of economic and political autonomy (Hashmi, 2013).

After the creation of the province in 1970, nationalists formed the government. However, the central government dismissed it over alleged treachery against the country and lawlessness. Bloch rebels, including the Bloch People’s Liberation Front, launched a guerrilla war against the army. The army reciprocated with targeting, terrifying, and assaults. Ziaul Haq recompensed by making investments in infrastructure. The situation remains somewhat calm in the democratic period (1988-1999). Insurgent rose again during Pervez Musharraf’s Era because of the lack of share in mega-projects. The recent insurgency started in 2006 after the rape of Dr. Shazia Khalid by an alleged army officer. Due to the cold response from the administration, Nawab Akbar Bugti rose against the Government. Akbar Bugti, along with Balach Murri, was put to death; it instigated a widespread national movement. Though, democratic governments (2008-2023) tried to address grievances but failed to cope with core issues, therefore, the situation is tense.

## **5.3. Issues in conflicts**

The conflicts are rooted in the lack of recognition of the Baloch identity. Generally, Baloch feel that they are discriminated against compared to ethnic identities and provinces. Additionally, they are not allowed to rule over them, and their civil rights are also curbed. The establishment (Government, army, and bureaucracy) considers them miscreants and foreign agents. To them, they are hurdles in the way of development and peace. The Pakistan Peoples Party’s government (2008-13) launched the “Aghaz-i-Haqooq Balochistan Project (AHBP) and development projects. The main objective was to substitute their demands but still tensions are going on over needs and interests (Akhtar, 2017; Yogesh, 2021).

Table 2: Conflict issues

Parties	Interests	Needs	Issues	Means of Influence
Insurgents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete sovereign region</li> <li>Independent Baluchistan</li> <li>Greater Baluchistan</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Freedom from violence</li> <li>Freedom from exploitation</li> <li>Survival of their ethnicity</li> <li>Cultural Development</li> <li>Survival of heritage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marginalization</li> <li>Lack of recognition</li> <li>Low share in resources</li> <li>Lack of share in mega projects</li> <li>Missing Persons</li> <li>Violence</li> <li>Low share in army and bureaucracy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Militancy</li> <li>Insurgency</li> </ul>
Nationalists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provincial autonomy</li> <li>Control over resources</li> <li>Control of administration</li> <li>Share in mega projects</li> <li>Share in employment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survival of ethnicity</li> <li>Economic needs</li> <li>Social Development</li> <li>Education</li> <li>Development of Balochi Language</li> <li>Freedom from fear</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of recognition</li> <li>Marginalization</li> <li>Powerlessness at the provincial level</li> <li>Low share in army and bureaucracy</li> <li>Lack of fundamental rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agitations</li> <li>Advocacy</li> <li>Blame game</li> </ul>
Pakistani Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National integrity</li> <li>Unconditional patriotism</li> <li>Economic control</li> <li>Negative peace</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assertion of its Power</li> <li>Acceptance of state's jurisdiction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Threat from insurgents</li> <li>Violence</li> <li>Annihilation of state with foreign enemies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political</li> <li>Military</li> <li>Strategic</li> <li>Economic Concessions</li> </ul>

#### 5.4. Dynamics of conflicts

The dynamics of conflicts are more important than the history and causes of identity conflicts. The warring parties have different identity perspectives and therefore are in diverse positions, provincial autonomy with nationalists while uprising with insurgents is a major concern (Feyyaz, 2013). The government failed to fulfil their demands; therefore, they are attacking the armed forces, paramilitary, police, and their instalments. The government offices, Pashtuns, Hazari, and Punjabi settlers, and foreigners are not immune from them (Feyyaz, 2013). The Punjabi settlers are labelled as the "Punjabi Establishment" and have been asked to leave for their native home or to get ready for death. The struggle is now named "All Baloch Struggle" (Feyyaz, 2013). The forceful response of the state has further intensified the situation. The

government also tried to neutralize the ethnic uprising with Islamic appeal but to no avail (Arshid et al., 2023).

The state's inability to understand the conflicts is the hurdle in peace. To add more, Baloch are secular as compared to Pashtuns. Their issues are regional, linguistic, and cultural and not religious (Harrison, 1996). The government also responded recently with concessions, rewards, and compensation. The NFC Award and 18<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment have assured financial and political. They also include self-control over resources, educational scholarships, less interference from the centre, increased quota in jobs, and a share in mega projects. Firstly, the response has become too late, and the implementation is still an issue. The warring parties are not ready for conciliation. The presence of alleged foreign and security forces has created a trust deficiency. Any attempt at negotiation, reconciliation, and mediation is treated with misapprehension.

### **5.5. Structural and contextual factors**

The structural factors include economic, political, geographical, cultural, and social concerns. Political dynamics are the lack of political rights, sense of deprivation, representatives in administration, issues of governance, undemocratic culture, and unitary practices in the federation. Economic factors include the lack of economic development, low standard of living, a sense of deprivation, and low control over resources. Cultural and Social factors comprise the preservation of land and cultural and issue of survival of identity. The secular dogma of Baloch is diluted with the infringement of religious sentiments. These factors outlined a structure that favoured the conflicts and undermined efforts for peace.

In the historical context, the style of governance is colonial. Authorities applied the divide-and-rule policy of the British and had no faith in the competencies and loyalty of the Baloch. The regional and international context is vital for the inquiry of conflicts because nothing occurs in isolation. The proximity of the province to the Persian Gulf, Afghanistan, Strait of Hormuz, and Iran makes it a region of US interest. The Chinese presence with CEPC and Gwadar Port creates worries about US influence in the Indian Ocean. India contemplates Chinese presence as a naval threat. It also wants to destabilize the province. Afghanistan is also involved and supporting the Nawab Akbar Bughti (Bansal, 2006).

### **5.6. Interpretation of parties of the conflicts**

Interpretations are the narratives of conflicts between primary stakeholders and the other interested actors. Protracted conflicts always have diverse discourses (Ropers, 2008). The state developed a narrative of foreign hands and propagated that India and Afghanistan used agents of uprising to destabilize Pakistan (Feyyaz, 2013). The state calls it a public disorder. The ethnic actors are dubbed as miscreants and terrorists. The state also pledged that it would establish its writ at any cost.

The ethnic actors viewed the State's interference in provincial matters as the colonial style of politics. They also believe that they are being excluded from mainstream politics (Noormal, 2016). They consider their movement as identity-seeking and self-right, identity-seeking (Noormal, 2016). Additionally, they believe that they are a nation and not an ethnicity. They think that they have distinguished culture, heritage, language, and martyrs. Such a nation cannot live under dominance (Hashmi, 2013).

## **6. Key steps for conflict resolution in Balochistan**

### **6.1. Strategic planning for systemic interventions in Baluchistan**

The conflict transformation asks for an accommodating environment for intervention for peace. Analysing ethnic conflicts in Baluchistan revealed that the involved parties have divergent stands. The perspectives of positions and the approach to resolution are also conflicting. In present circumstances, any proposed scheme for intervention cannot achieve the required success (Kupecz, 2012). The authorities have deceived the insurgents in the name of peace-making. It is, therefore, there is a need for constructive reconciliation first to win the trust and confidence of ethnic actors (Jabeen, 2010). The reconciliation without a commission is of no use, therefore, a commission just like the "Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa" is to be formed and general amnesty is to be given to both nationalists and insurgents. The mediation for reconciliation creates balance among the warring parties. It also paved the way for confidence-building measures, reforms, and smooth completion of the process (Hellmuller & Ahere, 2014).

The mediators may not be the people who have stakes in conflict in the province. Insurgents lack trust in the central government, armed forces, and paramilitaries. Therefore, a pool of diverse actors, including national and international, would be engaged. Due to trust deficiency with the direct parties, such as frontier constabulary, the power to democratic actors would give positive results. The democratic pacific methods would have more lasting effects than the forceful methods. Besides this, democratic culture, transparent elections, and the application of concessions would create a sense of equality and empowerment (Nazir et al., 2023). All these measures would create an environment where the pacific construction of relationships would be possible.

### **6.2. Engagement with critical stakeholders in Baluchistan**

The engagement with stakeholders asked for a rational approach. The dialogues with the insurgents have not been taken as a viable option in the province (Sial & Basit, 2010). The proceeding governments made committees, gave recommendations, and sometimes implemented some aspects. However, Baloch felt that their main demands and grievances were never honoured (Siddiq, 2012; Hashmi, 2013). The historical analysis tells us that whenever the state gave concessions, the ethnic actors responded positively and reduced the militant

attacks response). The main problem is that the state gives certain concessions, but it does not compromise with ethnic identities (Ejaz et al., 2023). The rational approach demands the replacement of military means with dialogue and compromises. Nationalists are always ready for dialogue, and even insurgents have also emphasized peaceful solutions (Siddique, 2017). Furthermore, the compromise needs to be with the federal government and the insurgents. The security forces should not be a part of this deal because insurgents are not ready to make a deal with them due to trust deficit.

The Government of PPP (2008-13) initiated a dialogue process for operational, developmental, administrative, legal, and political frameworks. However, the weak government in the province, lack of mediation, and strategic compulsions the success was limited. The PML-N Government (2013-17) publicized an ideally more compound policy, to deal with violence and the order confronts. This policy witnessed the surrender of 2000 insurgents in 2016. The exiled leaders were also invited to return to the national country (Lund, 2018). In addition, 500 more surrendered in front of CM in May 2017 (Shahid, 2017). UN also assured its share in dealing with and assisting in conflicts. Regional actors such as China and the European Union have desired to be a part of the dialogue. The balanced and coherent engagement requires the involvement of local, regional, national, and international actors, especially those who have expertise in dialogue, mediation, peace-building, conflict resolution, and human rights development.

### **6.3. Mobilization of peaceful agents of peaceful change in Baluchistan**

The peaceful agents are the civil societies, NGOs, media, and diaspora. Peace can only be birth from peace; it cannot come out of violence (Galtung, 1996). The peaceful agents, especially in civil societies role has been recognized by the international community because of the failure of military interventions in ethnic conflicts (Leeuwen, 2008). However, the debate is still there whether they have a primary role or a secondary role in peace interventions. Paffenholz (2010) and Orjuela (2008) discussed that they have a secondary role in most of the attributes, where they work as partners of the state. Though, they have a primary role in some of the aspects of conflict. CSOs can be better actors in identity conflicts in Pakistan. Qazi (2013) mentioned their non-partisan nature; socially sensitive roles, pragmatism, local knowledge, and viable access made them an influential agent. Civil societies and NGOs have played worth-mentioning roles in this conflict (Johnston et al., 2016; Ejaz & Khan, 2021; Ejaz et al, 2022b; S. Mehmood, personal communication, January 28, 2021; Raza Rumi, personal communication, February 18, 2021)'.

Baluchistan's case is different; therefore, peaceful agents can only play a supporting role in peace-making and peacebuilding. The Pacific agents of the province can be mobilized for a complementary role in peacebuilding. The society of the province leaves little room for women; still, they are actively contributing to agitation against violence and human rights violations (Asghar, 2023). The local NGOs, "Harboi Development Organization" and "Azat

Foundation” have a valuable work for peace. Civil society organizations, despite impediments, have taken numerous drives of health, welfare, development, and education in some districts (Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, 2010).

The NGOs and civil societies need to be strengthened more. Close contact with the diaspora population and empowerment of the common public especially youths is vital. Awareness campaigns from textbooks, social media, and electronic media for non-violence, values of democracy, and national integration are required. The counter-narratives are to be developed, so, the polarized youth would have no compassion for conflict-creators. The organization and cohesion of the common public, media, diaspora, and NGOs are dependent upon a strong civil society.

## **7. Conflict transformation of ethno-national conflicts of Baluchistan**

The underlying conjecture of the conflict transformation is, that the potential of peacebuilding already exists in the particular community and is rooted in traditional culture. The transformation requires transforming the relationship, interests, discourses, and, if required, the Constitution of the society that supports violence (Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency). The following is the “Creativity in the Imagination of Sustainable Solutions” of systemic conflict transformation.

### **7.1. Actor’s transformation**

According to Miall (2004), this transformation pursues to alter the goals to seek peace. It is also related to the alteration of main leadership and political parties that are dynamic for peace. The actors’ transformation, in advance, demands the process of reconciliation. This process has been in progress for the last two decades in the province. The nationalists have been allowed to rule in the province for the last tenures (2008-23). This process has developed the trust of the nationalists, a little. Still, indeed, the state’s military approach to conflicts and the presence of military elites in the province creates more mistrust (Jabeen, 2010). Only, the police are to be left for security. The political leaders and peaceful agents are involved in dialogue and dealing because the rebels have trust in security forces (Siddique, 2017).

More concessions and compromises would build trust and wish to live within the federation. The state’s uncompromising attitude of establishing its writ is replaced with adjustments. This approach would modify the conduct and position of the conflicting parties. The Chief Minister once suggested the political and intellectual means of dialogue, such as, the “British-Irish Approach of Negotiation” with the rebels (Kasi, 2013).

### **7.2. Structural transformation**

The structure is the surrounding of the society in which the conflict is embedded. The structure

makes the goals incompatible and has the force to create viable conflicts. In the province of Baluchistan, the social, political, and economic dispossessions have created uncompromising goals between the insurgents and the authorities. Though, authorities in the past responded with a stick but the PPP and PML.N's recent packages that have jobs, development projects, and foreign scholarships have, somehow, changed the context.

The "Prosperous Baluchistan" and "Equalisation Development Package," for elevating the common Baloch in education and health is another boost (Lund, 2018). An amnesty for rebels has also been declared which would lead to the surrender of many rebels (Lund, 2018). These developments have splintered the old structure but still, opponents are in dissimilar positions. The way out is a federal system as intended in the Constitution would be instigated. The reforms delineated in PPP's packages are to be implemented. The natives should have control over resources (Brown et al., 2012). The liberties in cultural, linguistic, spiritual, ideological, and cultural spheres are to be granted (Javaid, 2010). By applying all that the conflictive structure would be changed.

### **7.3. Context transformation**

Context transformation denotes the revision in time and place that changes the insight of parties about the state of conflict. The determination for the expansion of packages and the renaissance of civilian institutions has transformed the historical context of the colonial style of governance (Lund, 2018). The insurgents also losing support because they are now killing the peaceful segments, such as doctors, teachers, and other professionals. They are also dubbed as ISIS agents, an international terrorist organization. It gave them a bad name (Khan, 2014). Iran has also taken back its support to some of the insurgents because of their demand for "Greater Baluchistan" which also includes the Iranian areas. The regional power China has an interest in the anticipated Pak-Iran Gas Pipeline Project; consequently, it is active for the solidity of Baluchistan. The Afghanistan and Central Asian states kept silent because of the presence of China. The present context will lead to a peaceful structure if it goes on the same patterns in the future.

### **7.4. Issue transformation**

Finally, a reconciliation environment will be created in the province. The government has invited dissidents and nationalists for negotiations over the standard issues (Latif, 2017). The authorities have adopted the program of accepting rights, recognizing locals, and reducing operations (Latif, 2017). Baluchistan's share of central revenue has increased from 5.1% to 9.09%. 15000 people were ordained in internship programs, and 5000 new jobs were created. In all bigger projects, the jobs from scale one (1) to sixteen (16) would only be given to the local populace. The provincial governments got the supervision of FC and newly established military cantonments at Sui and Kohlu are congested (Ghumman, 2011). Because of the strikes of civil society and media personnel, the judiciary has created the judicial commission for the

investigation of missing persons (Javaid, 2010). The above measures of the past tried to balance the issues however, self-government and autonomy, sharing in the army and bureaucracy, and special autonomy and bureaucracy are still required. Civil society and human rights activists are allowed to promote human rights. Only the people of Baluchistan would have the right to employment in all mega projects, such as Gwadar Port, and in non-technical occupations. The original power is given to the provincial governments so that their mandate is respected. The main issue the state is confronting today is the conflict structure. Once the issues are settled, this structure will also be broken.

### **7.5. Personal/elite transformation**

The long-standing state's standpoint of anti-Pakistan and foreign agents is termed even by military experts as negative (Mirza, 2013). The insurgents' narratives of colonial style, lack of share, and state domination are getting weaker because of the state's concessions. The transformation asks for bargaining and compromises over the issues, parties' ideologies, and past myths. The acceptance of the power of elites and multilevel dialogue would change the elites. The surrender of insurgents has also weakened the power of elites and their organizations are becoming dysfunctional outside of the country. The proceeding provision of financial and political control and concessions has attracted many in the system. As constructivists maintain their perspective of ethnic conflicts, until the elite is transformed, the conflict cannot be clogged. The involvement of the superior judiciary, global NGOs, and other organizations can create an enabling environment for the conflict resolution. The main workforces of the nationalist parties, the insurgent groups, and security forces are to be educated and trained so that they take the encounter from a plural, balanced, and peaceful approach. The workshops, training, international advocacy, education, and involvement of local civil society would further reform them.

## **8. Conclusion**

The post-Cold War era witnessed a sharp decline in state conflicts. Complex, asymmetric, and protracted ethnic conflicts have substituted these conflicts (Gawerc, 2006; Cordell & Wolff, 2011; Yeghiazaryan, 2018). Traditional approaches to conflicts have little or no application to these conflicts (Gawerc, 2006). The complex nature of these conflicts necessitates new, dynamic, innovative, and sustainable approaches (Isajiw, 2000; Gawerc, 2006; Cordell & Wolff, 2011). Pakistan, a religiously and ethnically fragmented society, is the main victim of such conflicts (Nazir et al., 2024). The ethnic conflicts in Baluchistan have intimidated the basic fabric of the society. From the beginning, the Bloch ethnicity has unresolved issues with the federal government and authorities. The unsettled issues are related to identity and culture, political and economic control, foreign hand, and narratives of marginalization and domination. The challenges these conflicts ask for a thorough, in-depth, and analytical approach to understanding and resolution (Cordell & Wolff, 2011). However, in the case of Baluchistan, it is difficult to find a coherent study that logically analyses the ethnic conflicts of Baluchistan.

This study was an attempt to analytically analyse the ethnic conflicts of Baluchistan and develop a model for the conflict transformation of the conflicts.

The only viable approach for dealing with ethnic conflicts is conflict transformation. However, the scholarship in this field is diverse, therefore, the models and frameworks for analysis and transformation are challenging to find. The literature review identified the “Systemic Conflict Transformation” approach analytically discerns the conflicts, designs the intervention, and anticipates the transformation. The approach, with certain reforms tailored to the context of Baluchistan, has been adopted in this study. It was found that the systemic analysis of the conflicts not only explored the apparent factors, such as issues and history, but also uncovered factors, such as structure, narratives, dynamics, and context. The conflict can be understood from all perceptions and all sides. It was also revealed that the potential for conflict resolution exists; the key is to utilize the supporting factors. It was also found that the existing models of transformation, such as Miall (2004), can be applied to the ethnic conflicts in Baluchistan. It is concluded that the Federal Government, authorities, international community, and civil societies should adopt this model for the constructive transformation of the intractable ethnic conflicts of Baluchistan.

The case studies and their findings are context-specific and cannot be generalized across all settings. While the results are somewhat applicable to Pakistan and other Third World Countries, they are not universally applicable. Ethnic and identity conflicts are challenging to resolve, and this case study is a modest effort to make a workable model. Several other models in conflict transformation can be applied to the ethnic conflict of Baluchistan. Moreover, the Systemic Conflict Analysis can also be applied to ethnoreligious conflicts, such as Jihadist and sectarian identities in Pakistan.

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