

BORDERLAND INTERACTION: THE CASE OF PAK-IRANIAN BALOCH

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Abstract

Balochistan, the largest province of Pakistan, shares 909 km of its border with Iran. Of the four kinds of international borders — Alienated, Co-existent, Interdependent and Integrated — Pakistan-Iran border can be defined as interdependent and co-existent. The Baloch live on both sides of the border. They are inspired by ethno-centric nationalism having socio-cultural and historic bonds. They interact socially and economically and trade in items of household use. Iran's electricity is a boon for the people living on the Pakistani side. Besides human trafficking, there is smuggling of goods, especially of rice to Iran in return for petrol. The borderland Balochis are interdependent on each other to a great extent which underlines the need for greater integration of the economies of the two countries.

Introduction

It is said that “borders unite as well as divide, and that their existence as barriers to movement can simultaneously create reasons to cross them.”¹ The border barriers and interaction have a hand in glove relationship. Every borderland has its own way of life, whether it is Mexican-American, French-Spanish-Catalan, Thai-Malaysian, Thai-Cambodian or the Pak-Iranian. The interaction between people crossing the borders creates unique areas around the borders. The border crossers can largely be divided into seven categories: migrants, refugees, tourists, visitors, trader tourists, shoppers and traffickers.

The borderland between Pakistan and Iran is no exception to this general rule. Balochistan, the largest of the four provinces of Pakistan, shares a long 909 km border with Iran, known as the Goldsmid Line. It constitutes half of Iran's total border length with Pakistan and

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¹ Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, *Borders: Frontier of Identity, Nation and States* (New York: Berg, 1999), 87.

Afghanistan: 1,845 kms.² Serving as an international road and rail link for regular traffic, trade and other transactions, it can be categorized as an interdependent and co-existent border.³ Regular and irregular cross-border interaction between the two countries is a major linkage for the overall relationship between the two borderland communities. The nature of relationship between the two is characterized by factors such as geographical, socio-cultural, ideological, trade and even political; the socio-cultural being the dominant one.

This paper is an attempt to highlight the Baloch borderland interaction across the Goldsmid Line or Pak-Iran border. The major theme of the paper is that Baloch borderland is a co-existent and interdependent border between the two countries with socio-cultural, religious and nationalist homogeneity of the people. The paper is largely descriptive and highlights the major indices of borderland transactions.

Typology of Borders

With the emergence of nation-states on the map of the world, the number of borderlands has greatly increased. The borders can broadly be defined as of four kinds:

- i. Alienated
- ii. Co-existent
- iii. Interdependent, and
- iv. Integrated.⁴

An alienated border is the one where there is no regular transaction and flow of goods/persons. The border entry point with road or rail link may be heavily guarded on both sides by armed forces with little interaction. The borders of many Middle East countries with Israel are of the alienated kind. The Pak-India border along the disputed territory of Kashmir is also an alienated one. The people living across such borders are permanently separated. International tourism is either

² Mansoor Akbar Kundi, "A Passage to Kandahar," *The Nation*, 17 December 2003.

³ Clive H. Schofield, ed., *Global Boundaries: World Boundaries*, vol.1 (New York: Routledge, 1994), 1-2.

⁴ Oscar J. Martinez, "The Dynamics of Border Interaction," in Clive H. Schofield, ed., *Global Boundaries: World Boundaries*, vol.1 (New York: Routledge, 1994), 2-4.

restricted or discouraged across such borders. Oscar J. Martinez describes this kind as "the least desirable" owing to border disputes or strained relations due to "warfare, political disputes, intense nationalism, ideological animosity, religious enmity, cultural dissimilarity and ethnic rivalry".⁵ Alienated borderlands are marked by separation, ignorance and frustration of the people inhabiting them and are prone to militancy and terrorism.

A co-existent border is where there is regular or irregular interaction between the two countries with both countries having friendly or working relationship. They believe that their interaction is in the greater interest of their two countries. The borders between Egypt and Israel, Turkey and Iran (Bazargan) or Turkey and Bulgaria are of the co-existent type. A soft border can be defined as the loosest kind of the co-existent border where people on both sides can interact without visa or other required documents. The Pak-Afghan border across the Durand Line is an example. The Pak-Iran border under the Shah (1947-79) was also of a loose nature. When rules and regulations grow with day-to-day verification of passports/identity cards and *passé* requirements, a soft border drifts towards the non-soft category but can still be regarded as of the co-existent type. But growing tensions and war-like conditions between two countries can transform a co-existent border into an alienated one.

An interdependent border is one which regulates tourism, trade and border transactions under a mutual arrangement. Tourists with valid visas can walk across the border to a border town for certain hours as was the case with the US-Mexico border where one with an American passport could cross the border into an immediate town and return after attending to some business. Turkey-Bulgaria, Turkey-Greece and Turkey-Iran borders fell in this category.

An interdependent border can grow into an integrated border. There are similarities between borders of co-existent and interdependent kind.

An integrated border is where border interactions are facilitated and regularized with visa waiver, tourist transactions and trade mobility. Many European countries under the European Union set up have integrated borders under the Schengen visa system. Regional cooperation

⁵ Oscar J. Martinez, *Border People Life and Society in the U.S.-Mexican Borderlands* (Tucson: The University of Arizona, 1994), <http://www.ic.arizona.edu/ic/mcbride/ws200/simo-heal.htm>

for trade, socio-cultural and even political relations may lead to integrated borders. The process of globalization requires that borders become more interdependent and integrated.

The Pak-Iran border in large comes closer to the co-existent and interdependent border type. It is co-existent in the sense that it is open for formal and informal transactions throughout the year with friendly relations between the two countries. The borderland has seldom posed problems for the two governments. It can be called an interdependent border because it regulates tourism, trade and border transactions under mutual arrangement. Tourists with valid visas have no hindrance going across from both sides. Tourism was a regular source of income for the locals before the Islamic Revolution of 1979. However by no definition it is either alienated or integrated.

Balochistan: A Historical/Social Background

To understand the nature of Pakistan-Iran borderland interaction, it is necessary to give a brief background of the province of Balochistan. It is the largest of the four provinces of the country constituting 343,000 sq km or 43.2 per cent of the total area of Pakistan. In terms of population it is the smallest but with the highest population growth rate in the country. The population of the province in 2003 was 7,900,000 nearly doubling from 4,000,000 in 1981. The density of population is merely 12 persons per sq km with 85 per cent of the population scattered over rural areas. The major factor accounting for this high rate of population growth is the influx of Afghan refugees after the Saur Revolution. The refugees are now permanently settled.⁶

Unlike the rest of the country, there are two categories of citizenship in Balochistan: local and domicile. A local inhabitant is someone who himself/herself or whose parents belong to any indigenous tribe including Hindus, while a domicile is someone who himself/herself or whose parents have migrated from India or other parts of the country. A large number of Afghan refugees having bought property and national identity cards claim to be locals of the province which the Baloch nationalist groups contest and oppose. The Pashtuns and the Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Islam (JUI) support this ethnic swell as it adds to their vote bank. The refugees constitute the largest chunk of the overall population

⁶ Mansoor Akbar Kundi, *Balochistan: Hope and Despair* (Lahore: Dost Publication, 2002), 3.

(Pashthun, Baloch, Brauhi, settlers and Hazara). The number of Hazara and Pashthun people has dramatically increased after 1981 due to en masse migration from Afghanistan. The immigrants include Uzbek and Tajik, who are predominantly Shia.⁷

Balochistan comprised a huge area under the Rind-Lashar Confederacy established by Chakar Khan Rind in 1485, a confederacy which lasted until 1515 and was replaced by Kalat State/Confederation in 1666 which lasted until 1877 (officially disbanded in 1954). The Baloch having migrated from Aleppo in Syria thousands of years ago settled down in areas now part of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. These people were predominantly tribal.⁸ The area that the Baloch Confederacy occupied was subjugated by the British starting in 1839. It was finally brought under their control by early 1870s. In 1877 Balochistan was raised to the status of Agent to Governor General. Robert Sandeman was appointed the first Agent to the Governor General. In 1896, the Anglo-Afghan Boundary Commission ceded an area of 60,000 kms to Afghanistan in return for the areas British India got from demarcation of the Durand Line in 1893. It justified the area ceded to Afghanistan in 1873 at the time of the demarcation of Goldsmid Line. The line now called Pak-Iran Border was surveyed in 1871 by Major General Frederic Goldsmid. He was the one who established the Makran Boundary Commission and headed it for arbitration and demarcation of the area. George P. Tate who wrote the famous book *The Frontiers of Baluchistan* in 1909, an authentic document on Balochistan, claims that Goldsmid played a very important role in demarcation of many areas between British India and Persia. To him, a large area now included in Iran was the one ceded by the British to Persia under his demarcation.

In 1928, with the support of the British, Raza Khan's forces invaded Iranian Balochistan, which was enjoying the status of an independent confederation under the rule of Dost Mohammad Khan, and captured it. Dost Mohammad Khan Baloch was taken prisoner and executed by Raza Khan. The defeat of Baloch forces and the execution of

⁷ Mansoor Akbar Kundi "Tribalism in Balochistan: A Comparative Study," in *Tribal Areas of Pakistan: Challenges and Responses*, ed., Pervaz Iqbal Cheema and Maqsoodul Hasan Nuri (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute 2005), 14-25.

⁸ Inayatullah Baloch, *The Problem of Greater Balochistan: A Study of Baloch Nationalism*, 1987, (Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, Stuttgart, for South Asian Institute, University of Heidelberg), 97.

Mir Dost Muhammed Khan symbolized the annexation of Western Balochistan in Baloch history. A large area belonging to the Baloch Confederation was further annexed by Iran that is now part of the two provinces of Seistan and Kirman. The Greater Balochistan demand of the Baloch nationalists in fact constitutes areas that are now part of the Pakistani Balochistan, Iran and Afghanistan (Helmand and Nimroz which constitute more than 4 per cent of overall Afghan population). The Baloch people living in Afghanistan have their own cultural identity with Balochi as the predominantly spoken language.

Holding a proper census has always been a problem in Balochistan. But this is something that is true in case of many border areas in developing countries. The Baloch, according to the latest census, constitute 2.2 per cent and 3.57 per cent respectively of the overall populations of Iran and Pakistan.⁹ And borderland Baloch constitute 25 to 30 percent of the overall Baloch population in the two respective countries.¹⁰

Social-Cultural Interaction

Edward Taylor and Hatch, two leading authorities on culture, claim that culture is a “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, laws, customs and any other capabilities and habits acquired by masses as a member of society”. In Dr. Baqai’s analysis, culture is a “mental map which guides us in our relations to our surroundings and to other people.” It can be divided into material and non-material.¹¹ Non-material culture consists of language, customs and beliefs. Material culture comprises man-made objects like tools, furniture, buildings, irrigation canals, cultivated farms, roads, bridges etc.¹² The cultural similarities between borderland Baloch are largely of non-material nature though the material cannot be ruled out. Socio-cultural and economic factors are the major sources of interaction. The boundary between Iran and Pakistan was softer in the past than it is now. There are regular and irregular entry

⁹ CIA World Factbook on Iran and Pakistan, showing the July 2008 updated sources of population

¹⁰ *The Nation*, 3 November 2000.

¹¹ Gary Ferraro, *Cultural Anthropology: An Applied Perspective* (Belmon, CA, 200), 22.

¹² Dr. M.S. Baqai, *Social Order in Pakistan Society*, (Quetta: National Book Foundation 1975), 34.

points (irregular entry points have been gradually fading away with the deployment of border troops and fencing on both sides, particularly the Iranian side). There are a number of towns/villages where houses occupy both sides of the border, e.g., the town of Rideeg/Bulu in Turbat.

The borderland population in Pakistani Balochistan lives in the five border districts of Punjgur, Noshki, Wasuk, Turbat and Gwadar. Previously Kharan was the largest district area-wise which bordered Iran, but it ceased to be a border district after the formation of new districts. The new district, Washuk, now borders Iran. It is the same in the case of Chagai which after creation of Noshki district lost its border district status. Now Noshki links Afghanistan and Iran.¹³ The important border towns of Iranian Balochistan/Seistan are Chabahar, Zabol, Zeidan, and Sarawan. They are bigger in area than the Pakistani districts. The main tribes on both sides are Mohammad Hasni, Sanjarani, Gumsadzai and Gorgej. Narooi and Reeki are the biggest tribes on the Iranian side. There are a number of small tribes on both sides but their strength is small. The Reeki were more privileged during the Shah period and enjoyed access to government in Tehran. They include the Kurds also.

Unlike the Mexico-U.S. borderland there is no tension among the people of Baloch borderland. Two factors account for that. First, the good relationship between Iran and Pakistan under an enduring bilateralism without any border dispute, and second, the socio-cultural homogeneity of the borderland people speaking the same language.

Radari System

Many of the Baloch living on the borders have dual nationality and have access to *Radari*. The system was introduced in 1947 after the creation of Pakistan. *Radari* is convenient for those who don't have passports and want to cross the border for shorter distances. Those traveling deeper into Iran need to travel on passports as *Radari* facility is restricted to two border provinces of Iran. The borderland people are eligible for dual nationality. There is no definite policy or rules for dual citizenship between Iran and Pakistan. People with dual passports also need *Radari*. One has to be a local inhabitant of the border districts and have relations or some small business or humanitarian reason on the other side to qualify for *Radari* which covers 60 miles/ 100 kms from the border. Under the *Radari* system a pass is issued which is valid for fifteen days to

¹³ *Dawn*, 12 November 2005.

visit Iran. Legally it is issued only twice a year. Reciprocally, the Iranian government issues Radari to the Baloch residents of Seistan-Balochistan and Kirman to visit immediate areas across the border. Visitors from the Iran side enjoy more freedom of travel in Pakistan and can go even up to Karachi.

Intermarriages are common among the border Baloch. The system has been in practice for centuries as it helps strengthen tribal/family and ethnic bonds across the border while opening new opportunities of interaction by establishing new relationships. *Vani* (bride-price) is practiced but not under harsh rules. It is negotiated and varies from case to case.¹⁴ The system of dowry is also prevalent, but it is not as demanding as in other areas of Pakistan.

The Baloch living across the border are predominantly Sunni. They are not very rigid in their religious beliefs. But there are regular visits to shrines to participate in the annual *Urs* (anniversary) of Sufis across the border in Seistan-Balochistan. It is one of the sources of interaction between the two communities. The pilgrims are issued Radari or they simply cross the border as border security is relaxed on the occasion. The system was more relaxed during the Shah's rule.

There has been more economic and sustainable development in Iranian Baloch areas during the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Major development works were undertaken during the long Iran-Iraq war which had a salutary effect on the situation in the border areas. Since the Baloch areas were away from the war zone they could provide a backyard supply line, particularly the Khurram Sheir and Chabahar port where the government developed airports, roads and other infrastructures. There are numerous shrines of saints. The most important is that of Syed Ghulam Rasool in Chabahar. The other popular ones are those of Pir Shorab in Sastiyari, and Shazeni Pir and Rakal Shah in Chowkat. The *Urs* ceremonies continue for two to three days during which the pilgrims visit relatives, shop and do other errands.

Sports events in border towns are rare. As Donnan and Wilson say, in many border areas and cultures "sports is perhaps one of the least offensive ritual and symbolic structure". Sports activities are confined to football matches. Baloch are good footballers and football is comparatively more popular in the area than other sports, especially in

¹⁴ Khuda Bakhsh Marri, *Searchlights on Baluches and Baluchistan* (Karachi: Royal Book Company 1974), 52.

Iranian Balochistan. Many Baloch play in local and regional teams of Iran. There are football matches between the border area teams which generate lot of enthusiasm and provide occasion for interaction.

The promotion of cross border sports was mentioned in the Cultural Agreement signed in 1956, but no concrete steps were taken towards its promotion. The main cultural agreement between Pakistan and Iran known as Pakistan-Iran Cultural Agreement of March 9, 1956 did not focus on cultural interaction between the two Baloch communities, but under this agreement a number of cultural exchange programmes were signed from time to time. The last one was the Four-Year Cultural Exchange Programme which was signed in Islamabad during the visit of Iran's First Vice President, Dr. Mohammad Reza Aref, to Pakistan in March 2004.

Cricket is also popular on the Pakistani side but tent pegging which was more popular is declining in the border areas as more young people sport motor cycles instead of riding horses. Motorcycles serve as an important source of conveyance for cross border smuggling and transportation.

Economic/Trade Consideration

Borderlands are frontiers of economic dealings with opportunities for legal and illegal enterprise.¹⁵ Like the culture of nomadic Beduins centered around the camel, whose milk the nomads drink and use the animal for transport and travel, trade has been an integrating factor among the Baloch across the border.¹⁶ The people of the border area from ancient times have depended on cross border commerce and business as the major source of livelihood. The land they possess is largely non-irrigated and uncultivated. In case of no rain or insufficient rain it faces the threat of droughts. Therefore trade across the border is a major occupation of the people. People traveling to Iran with or without *radari*, passport or without passport, legally or illegally, take and bring with them different items of merchandise to support their livelihood. According to an estimate, the trade not covered under the regular customs regulations, including that of petroleum and its products, from Iran into Pakistan amounts to more than U.S. \$ 2 billion a year. It may be causing a loss to

¹⁵ Thomas M. Wilson and Hastings Donnan, *Border Identities* (London: Cambridge University Press, Jan 1998), 119-120.

¹⁶ Mansoor Akbar Kundi, *Balochistan: A Socio-Cultural and Political Analysis* (Quetta, Qasim Book Depot), 21.

Pakistan revenue but provides a source of livelihood to the poor borderland Baloch. The major items smuggled include blankets, plastic goods, carpets, dried fruit, hosiery goods, fresh fruit (e.g., cherries) and tinned fruit. Stationery items and dairy products, in particular cheese, have become very popular in recent years. Balochistan is a major market for Iranian goods from where they are transported to other areas of Pakistan. From Pakistan the major items of trade are rice, match boxes, tea, and cloth. The smuggling of rice is common. A person in possession of *Radari* is allowed to carry 40 kg of rice. There is hardly a person with *Radari* without a rice bag. Rice from Pakistan, petrol from Iran is the trade formula. The smuggling of cattle, particularly cows and bulls, into Iran is a very lucrative business. Beef and mutton are very expensive products in Iran. They are exported under license, but smuggling is common.

The train service is an important means of trade between Quetta and Taftan through Mirjawa (Mirjaveh in Persian). The Nushki Extension Railway runs through Mirjawa on the border to Zahidan (also known as Duzdap) in Iran. This line was constructed from Spezand Jn. near Quetta to Nushki in 1905. Extension work continued from 1917 to 1922 when the railway line reached Zahidan, covering 704km (440 miles).

Mirjaveh was ceded to Iran under the Presidency of Iskander Mirza. Iskander's wife, Naheed Mirza, who was an Iranian, was instrumental in the deal.¹⁷ There was protest against the decision in the National Assembly but the die had been cast.

Nationalism

Baloch communities across the borders are highly ethnocentric and exhibit strong nationalist feelings. Unlike much of native Balochistan (interior Balochistan on Pakistani side) where roots of sardari system are stronger and the Sardars as head of the tribe and sub-tribes are paid homage and keep the community together, the Sardari system in borderlands is weak. One can see more egalitarianism and nationalism among the border people. It is largely because the tribal identity is loose and ethnic bonds are strong.

Bresee, an Iranian Baloch, in his book (his Ph.D dissertation) defines Baloch nationalism as the feeling of a group of people linked by either ethnicity or territorial bond, and the belief that the corporate

¹⁷ Ahmed Yar Khan, *Inside Balochistan* (Karachi: Royal Books 2009), 178.

interests of that group can best be protected by the control of their own state.¹⁸ The nationalist feelings are based on demography, religion, ethnicity and a common feeling of deprivation. Ethnocentrism encourages nationalism and patriotism.¹⁹ It is true in case of Baloch nationalism. The three aspects of nationalism – unifying, separatist and patriotic²⁰ – are all found in Baloch nationalism, but due to lack of power sharing and viable political institutions it tilts more towards ethnocentric nationalism.²¹

The Baloch on both sides of the border believe in the promotion of nationalism – a factor that accounts for the close interaction between the two communities. The nationalist feeling has mobilized resistance against the Iranian and even Pakistani government. The movement of Greater Balochistan is largely based on nationalism. But political deprivation on both sides of the border has added to the separatist trends.²² The Iranian borderland Baloch had involvement in insurgency against the Shah of Iran but not on the Pakistani side. The Iranian borderland Baloch have more unity than their counterparts.

Borderland Baloch, like the Baloch living in Iran and Pakistan in general, have the sense of lack of power sharing in the federal government; in Pakistan this sense is more pronounced. Borderland Baloch are less privileged and less materially advanced. The Iranian Baloch no wonder have experienced more development after the Islamic Revolution in 1979 than under the Shah, but compared to the other Iranian areas the borderland is still the least developed.

Students Exchange

The students' interaction/exchange across borders is very limited. There are more cases of students from Seistan-Balochistan in Pakistani schools and colleges than vice versa. The major reason is that schooling in Iran is more disciplined and curricula oriented. Iranian colleges and schools require a high attendance rate; in Pakistani Balochistan attendance is no

¹⁸ Taj Mohammad Breseeg, *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origin and Development*, (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 200), 1.

¹⁹ Baqai, *Social Order in Pakistan Society*, 33.

²⁰ Andrew, Oldenquist, "Three Kinds of Nationalism," *Croatian Journal of Philosophy* 1, no.1 (2001), 63 .

²¹ Baqai, *Social Order in Pakistan Society*, 33.

²² S. Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baloch Nationalism and Soviet Temptation* (New York, Carnegie Endowment, 1981), 11.

problem. Nonetheless, students studying across the borders face no restrictions. The medium of instruction also affects students' exchange. Had Persian or Balochi been the common medium of instruction there could have been more exchange of students.

Electricity from Iran

The supply of electricity from Iran is a boon for Pakistani borderland people who experience neither load shedding nor fluctuation. Compared to the past the Baloch are using more electricity. WAPDA was using and is still using diesel-run generators to supply electricity to border towns only for 5 to 10 hours a day. The Iranian authorities proposed that a 132-kilovolt (KV) transmission line be laid between Mirjawa (Iran) and Dalbandin for Rs 1.34 billion and another 132-KV transmission line from Mirjawa to Dalbandin and Chagai via Nokundi for Rs 2.08 billion. WAPDA considered it too expensive for Pakistan. The authority submitted a new proposal to electrify the two Balochistan districts by laying its own transmission line from Faran Grid Station to Dalbandin for Rs 584 million.

Pakistan is currently importing electricity from Iran at Rs 1.80 per unit for the Mund, Taftan and Mushkhail areas in Balochistan as there is no WAPDA transmission system there. Pakistan is importing 30 megawatts (MWs) for Mund, 1 MW for Taftan and 1 MW for Mashkhail.²³

The use of Iranian electricity by the border Baloch is a major source of jubilation as there is no load shedding there compared to other areas of Balochistan which remain plunged in darkness for long hours. The demand for Iranian electricity is growing in Kharan, Noshki etc., that their areas also be hooked to the Iranian supply of electricity.

Iranian Petrol

Hasting Donnan and Thomas Wilson claim that "one can hardly open a book about borders without finding at least passing reference to smuggling and the clandestine movement of people and goods from one side of the national boundary to the other".²⁴ To them, smuggling across international borders has historically functioned to subvert the economic and political order of states which share a border, while at the same time

²³ QESCO handout, Head office in Quetta.

²⁴ Hastings and Wilson, *Borders*, 100.

often building solidarity between co-ethnics who are minorities in each of the states.²⁵ It is true in case of Baloch borderland.

The Iranian gasoline is a major item smuggled from Iran into Pakistan through the border. It is mostly illegal in which a chain of mafia, government officials, and local notables are involved. The petrol is sold all over Balochistan, right from inside the Pakistan border to lower down to Punjab and Sindh. The major route of smuggling is from Iran through a number of dirt routes along the RCD and Quetta/Taftan international trunk road. There are different methods of smuggling. It is carried in oil tankers by the private and commercial vehicles in containers and trucks with big tanks tucked underneath. According to Customs sources, the private commercial trucks on the route are designed with special fuel tanks with capacity of around 500 liters.

The smuggling of petrol is a source of interaction and a boon for those smuggling it. People living in the far-flung areas of Balochistan, particularly areas hit by drought depend on petrol smuggling as the source of livelihood.²⁶ Smuggling suffered for many months in June 2007 after the erection of a wall on the border by Iran (many places from where entrance was comparatively easy) and rationing of petrol quota to the residents inside Pakistan. But in 2008 the Iranian government relaxed the rationing system and the smuggling of petrol resumed with the visible change in the sale of Iranian petrol in border and non-border cities at much reduced prices.

Language Factor in Interaction

Ferraro writes that the “most distinctive feature of being human is the capacity to create and use language and other symbolic forms of communication”. To him, language serves as a major way through which one generation passes its cultural heritage to another.²⁷ Huntington’s analysis is that “the central elements of any culture or civilization are language and religion.”²⁸ The borderlands Baloch are unified by language as there is little diversity of language. The Baloch have two languages: Balochi and Brauhi, but the latter is scarcely spoken in borderlands. There are two schools of thought about this division. One says that the

²⁵ Ibid, 79.

²⁶ Mansoor Akbar Kundi “Selling like hot cakes,” *Dawn Magazine*, 9 June 2002.

²⁷ Ferraro, *Cultural Anthropology*, 105.

²⁸ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (London: Touchstone Books, 1997), 59.

two are two different ethnic groups. The other holds that the Baloch are one community speaking two languages. The Baloch border entity nevertheless is supportive of the second school of thought. The language similarity is thus a strong bond supported by Balochi Persian which is commonly spoken across the borders.

Drug and Human Trafficking

It is said that

if the boundaries of the nation-state have been shaped by the forces of global economic integration, they have also been shaped, less obviously perhaps, by the illicit activities which at once exist because of the state border and give borders their *raison d'être*.²⁹

It is true of the Baloch borderland particularly in case of drug trafficking. Iran's border with Pakistan and Afghanistan has traditionally been known as the South Asian golden triangle for drug smuggling since 1979. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, the largest portion of drugs enter Iran through the major routes across Goldsmid Line from Afghanistan and Pakistan. The report said

All drugs which enter Iran from Sistan and Baluchestan Province are primarily dispatched to outskirts of Bam City via Zahedan, the capital of Sistan and Baluchestan Province. A large percentage of the total amounts of opium, heroin and morphine enter Iran from Sistan and Baluchestan Province and a large portion of this is sent to Bam City. From Zahedan to Bam are two main routes: (1) from Zahedan to Narmashir through the Roodmahi mountain then from Narmashir to Bam City; and (2) from Zahedan to Noosratabad to Kabody mountain to Bam. Trafficking to the main stations in Iran usually takes place at night. Route Guides know all the roads and passages in the eastern part of Iran. Some even know how to move drugs across up to city of Qom which is 110 Km south of Tehran.³⁰

Pakistan and Iran have signed a number of Memorandums of

²⁹ Hastings and Wilson, *Borders*, 89.

³⁰ "Integrated Border Control in the Islamic Republic of Iran".
<http://www.unodc.org/iran/en/i50.html>

Understanding for the control of smuggling and human trafficking supplemented by the actions of home departments and border towns administrations.

Similarly, the cases of human trafficking are common in the areas with the involvement of mafias and notables from the area to facilitate those who illegally cross the borders into Iran for their passage to Europe en route Turkey. Hardly a month passes when there is not a major report of human trafficking in the media. There are frequent arrests of people illegally entering Iran. The number of illegal entrants can exceed 100 in a day. The FIA sources claim that there is involvement of borderland mafias as well as law enforcement agencies. Local actors also play an important role. They are mostly tribal notables. The trafficking sometimes leads to tragic incidents as the one on 4th April 2009 when a container entered Quetta from Afghanistan with 110 Afghans of whom 52 people were found dead due to suffocation.³¹

Many Pakistan border officers whom the author interviewed said that Iran has been more strict on smuggling and trafficking activities. Compared to Pakistan, smuggling across the border in Iranian government's viewpoint is regarded as a secessionist activity which can jeopardize the nation's integrity. No matter borderlands have generally been areas of support and subversion of states, but the Baloch borderland is more supportive and less subversive.

Conclusion

Borderlands are not easy to study. It needs anthropological background, observer participation, and accessibility to the area. Every discipline, be it that of sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists or the historians', sees them from its own perspective. Baloch borderland being both the back and front yard of two countries with common hereditary, socio-cultural and historical bonds is largely of an interdependent or coexistent nature. Several factors account for interaction between the two populations. But it needs more interaction for economic integration which will benefit both Pakistan and Iran. The Goldsmid Line does not stand in the way as the borderland Baloch show through their daily interaction. This borderland phenomenon of interdependence supported by historical, socio-cultural, economic and political ties is pregnant with possibilities of further integration. ■

³¹ "Death in Container," *Dawn*, 6 April 2009.