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About BTTN

Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) was established at Quetta, on March 1, 2021. It is an autonomous, non-profit, non-partisan, and multidisciplinary Research Center with a focus not limited to Balochistan only, but includes the regional and global dynamics which can influence Pakistan. Broadly, BTTN endeavors to undertake in-depth research of provincial issues with a view to developing the socio, political, and economic status of the province. Its interests also include issues of Energy, Regional Stability, Strategic Stability, Peace and Security, Arms Control and Disarmament, Non-Proliferation, Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Technology, Conflict Resolution, Regional Connectivity, and Socioeconomic development at the national level. Geopolitically, besides South Asia, BTTN's research areas also include regions of Europe and Africa.

BTTN OP-EDs

Balochistan Think Tank Network (BTTN) Faculty of Research has been writing op-eds on a regular basis on different contemporary issues that are published on various international and national platforms. The opinions expressed in this edition are the authors' individual views and do not reflect the official policy of BTTN or any governmental organization. This electronic review is compiled on a monthly basis.

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Balochistan: A Great Tourist Destination

Shehzadi Irum

December 19, 2023

Balochistan is endowed with extraordinary beauty by God. Every region of the province possesses the allure to captivate visitors with breathtaking vistas. It is one of Pakistan's most enchanting and well-liked tourist destinations. Covering an enormous area of about [347,190](#) square kilometers, Balochistan boasts a diverse topography that includes breathtaking mountain ranges, fascinating deserts, captivating beaches, tranquil coastal regions, historic ancient structures, and waterfalls.

Quetta, the provincial capital, is nestled in a picturesque valley, surrounded by snow-capped peaks, creating a surreal atmosphere. Balochistan is regarded as a tourist paradise because of its immense natural beauty, with numerous stunning regions offering glimpses of real heaven. The province is endowed with an abundance of aesthetically appealing places that have a great potential to attract fervent tourists.

Balochistan is a major tourist attraction province because it has natural beauty and historical places. Due to its vast geography and landscapes of different natures, it experiences the coldest temperatures in some places, such as Ziarat Valley, and the hottest temperatures in the deserts of Kharan and Chagai. Despite being the source of several valuable minerals, the province is known as the "fruit basket of Pakistan" since it produces an abundance of various fruit varieties. Dates, apples, almonds, etc. are significant among them.

Undoubtedly, it is an amazing region, with a wide range of captivating landscapes that are alluring and fascinating. The Suleiman-Kirthar Mountain range adds to the beauty of Balochistan and lies between the Balochistan plateau and the Indus Valley. The scenic beauty of Ziarat Valley alongside its snowy weather in winter and cool breezes in summer, the awe-inspiring waterfalls of Pir Ghayb, the unmatched view of frozen Hanna Lake in winter, the serenity of Kund Malir beach, and the worth-mentioning beauty of Astola Island are few glimpses of Balochistan inherent beauty.

The province offers a plethora of opportunities for both native and foreign tourists. Balochistan has enormous tourist potential due to its natural treasure trove and

brehtaking scenery, which presents a multitude of options for adventure seekers and nature enthusiasts. The Hingol National Park, with its diverse ecosystem and unique wildlife, including the elusive Persian leopard, presents an unparalleled experience for wildlife lovers. The scenic beaches of Ormara and the rest of the coastal belt with the golden sands and crystal-clear waters, provide tranquil retreats away from the hustle and bustle of city life. The beach offers a serene and peaceful environment, making it a great place to relax and unwind.

Balochistan boasts many amazing coastlines on the planet. Beaches like Somniani, Ormara, Pasni, etc. are currently big tourist destinations. [Kund Malir Beach](#) is one of Asia's Top 50 beaches, which is in Hingol National Park. This pristine beach rests between a desert, mountains, and the sea, providing stunning vistas. This beach is a prominent gem among the diverse beaches of Pakistan, which enhances the province's natural beauty and charming coastal splendor.

Astola Island, also referred to as "Island of the Seven Hills" is a tiny, uninhabited island in the Arabian Sea. It is also Pakistan's largest island, making it a popular tourist destination. It is among the most well-known beaches not just in Pakistan but in the whole world. People come to this island to go deep sea diving, fishing, and beach camping. The water is so clean that the seabed is visible down to a depth of roughly 20 feet. The view from the island is unforgettable, people can see the blue sea for miles, spectacular moments of sunset, flying birds, bright sunshine, and the cool gentle breeze leave the viewers spellbound.

Mata Hinglaj, also known as Nani Mandir, is a significant Hindu temple located in the middle of the Hingol National Park. It holds immense religious importance for Hindus around the world and has become a unifying point for Hindu communities. The annual pilgrimage takes place every April where more than [250,000](#) pilgrims take part in the Hinglaj Yatra. Pilgrims from all over [Pakistan](#) and even [India](#) visit the temple during the spring. With proper maintenance and planning, this can turn into one of Balochistan's biggest revenue-generating places in the tourism sector.

Near the mouth of Balochistan's historic Bolan Pass is the Mehrgarh Heritage Site. This 9000-year-old distinguished, and iconic heritage site is a symbol of pride for the province.

It is among the world's most significant and ancient archaeological sites as it provides valuable insights into the early human civilization in the region. Foreign tourists are often interested in exploring Mehrgarh to uncover the mysteries of the ancient past. However, Mehrgarh also needs to be properly preserved and turned into a museum for tourists from across the globe.

Despite being the largest province of Pakistan, Balochistan has received minimal attention in promoting tourism and is lagging far behind other provinces. A significant portion of the people are still unfamiliar with the province's inherent natural beauty. No proper attention was paid to harnessing the God-gifted opportunity to earn more and more foreign tourists and foreign exchange which can open new avenues of employment in the tourism sector. It is the right time for Pakistan to take initiatives to develop tourism by improving infrastructure under the CPEC project and establishing high-quality restaurants and hotels that can attract many tourists each year. However, all this can only happen when the security situation improves in Balochistan. The number of tourists will increase when they are provided with facilities of motels and safety and other luxuries etc. It will not only boost the country's economy but also provide Balochistan and its underprivileged citizens with a plethora of new opportunities. Promoting tourism in the province will not only portray a soft and peace-loving image of Balochistan but will also result in ample revenue generation.

[Balochistan: A Great Tourist Destination – Eurasia Review](#)

India's long-range missile capability: A Threat to Global Security

Sher Ali Kakar

December 19, 2023

The pursuit of nuclear dominance continues to be a grave concern for international security. The lack of global consensus on critical matters, such as the arms control and global nuclear governance, primarily due to geopolitical competitions, is benefiting India in furthering its strategic ambitions. India, which positions itself as a key country in the region and a potential superpower, is actively engaged in the race for nuclear and technological dominance. In recent years, it has increased its efforts to bolster its nuclear capabilities, with a specific focus on long-range missiles, raising doubts about its declared policy and posing serious threats to world peace. The development of long-range missiles by India, which are capable of reaching far-off targets with nuclear warheads, raises concerns for international security, as these missile ranges, with the capability to target Washington, Ottawa, London, Paris, etc, have undoubtedly further complicated the global security landscape.

India was the first country to nuclearise South Asia and continues to develop nuclear weapons alongside massive conventional buildups. In recent years, India has made a considerable expansion in its missile programme, facilitated by increasing international collaboration, especially enjoying US support and exemptions. India is already capable of targeting the entire territory of Pakistan. India's short-to medium-range missiles are, by their very ranges, Pakistan-specific. Besides, India is capable of targeting the entire Chinese territory. The Agni-IV missile with 4500km range and Agni-V missile with 5500km range is perceived as a strategic weapon designed with the capability to target the entire Chinese mainland. However, the development of missiles beyond these ranges, such as Agni-VI which is in the developing stage and anticipated to have between 12,000-16000km range, contemplates India's stride for power projection and nuclear supremacy.

Furthermore, the development of long-range missiles by India signifies the pursuit of prestige on the global stage, and becoming as a superpower nation, emphasising its ability to influence and shape international affairs in terms of strategic significance. For instance, India joins the ranks of nuclear states possessing Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) capabilities, aligning with established nuclear powers such as the US,

Russia, the UK, France and China. Notably, North Korea, an NPT withdrawn state, has also conducted tests demonstrating its ICBM capabilities. India has already acquired anti-satellite weapons (ASAT) capability and is now advancing its missile programme. India continues to enjoy the impunity of the US and the Western world, which are helping India bolster its military capabilities, granting access to cutting-edge technologies and fissile materials under the exceptional NSG waiver under which India is enhancing its nuclear weapons production capability. Also, the US is ignoring the development in India's missile programme's intercontinental ranges, despite its poor nuclear safety and security record, in apparent violation of international norms and the non-proliferation regime's commitments. Despite receiving support and exemptions from the US and the West, India has yet to prove itself as a reliable US partner.

The growing extremism of Hindutva is evolving into a global issue. Recently, the involvement of the Indian intelligence agency in the killing of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil and the threatening remarks by an India professor, Kapil Kumar, against Canada on a TV channel shows that, after creating problems for regional countries, India's Hindutva-driven policies are now threatening global peace. The possession of nuclear-capable long-range ICBMs by such an extremist country poses a significant risk of instability in the region and beyond, as these missiles with the potential to go beyond Pakistan and China and target other parts of the world with nuclear warheads is a great source of concern for the global security. The US and its allies need to recognise that India's military buildups not only impact strategic stability in South Asia but also entail the risk of nuclear escalation beyond the region.

[India's long-range missile capability: a threat to global security – The Express Tribune](#)

سریاب پہ رحم کریں
Asadullah Raisani

December 20, 2023

پچھلے دنوں ایک تحقیق کے سلسلے میں کوئٹہ شہر کے سریاب اور قمبرانی کے کلیوں کے چند اسکولوں کے دورے کا موقع ملا۔ اکثر اسکولوں کی حالت اتنی خستہ تھی کہ انہیں ڈھونڈنے میں گھنٹوں لگ گئے۔ ان اسکولوں کے اوپر نہ ان کے نام کی تختی تھی نہ اسکول کے لیے ایک مخصوص عمارت اور نہ ہی ایک بڑا دروازہ۔ ایک آدھ اسکول کے تو ہم سامنے ہی کھڑے تھے اور پتہ ہی نہیں چل رہا تھا کہ یہ اسکول ہیں کیونکہ وہ اسکول گھروں کو کرائے پر لے کر چلائے جا رہے تھے جو کہ انتہائی خستہ اور بری حالت میں تھے۔

مختلف اساتذہ کرام بالخصوص ہیڈمیسٹریسز سے گفتگو کا موقع ملا۔ انہوں نے بتایا کہ انہیں پیسوں کی شدید کمی کا سامنا ہے جس کی وجہ سے اسکول میں انفراسٹرکچر نہ ہونے کے برابر ہے۔ کئی اسکول تو ایسے بھی ملے جہاں ایک ہی جماعت میں سو بچے بیٹھ کر پڑھ رہے تھے، جبکہ ایک کلاس پیریڈ کی مدت ۳۰ سے ۳۵ منٹ ہوتی ہے۔ ۳۵ منٹ میں ۱۰۰ بچوں کو پڑھانا، اُن سے فیڈ بیک لینا انتہائی مشکل نہیں بلکہ ناممکن کام ہے۔

ایک اسکول ایسا تھا جہاں ٹھیکہ دار نے پچھلے سال کام شروع کیا اور پھر کام روک دیا، اب سریہ، بگری، سیمنٹ، اینٹیں اور کافی سامان اسکول کے صحن میں پڑا ہوا ہے جبکہ اسکول کی حالت اتنی بری ہے کہ کمرے کم پڑ گئے ہیں اور باہر بھی بیٹھنے کی جگہ نہیں ہے۔ اساتذہ نے گلہ کیا کہ ٹھیکہ دار اب ان کا فون نہیں اٹھاتا اور حکام پالا کو درخواستیں لکھ لکھ کر ان کے قلم کی سیاہی بھی خشک ہو گئی ہے۔

اکثر اساتذہ اس بات کا بھی رونا رو رہے تھے کہ غیرنصابی سرگرمیاں نہ ہونے کی وجہ سے بچوں میں شدید ذہنی تناؤ بھی ہے لیکن "یہاں نصابی سرگرمیوں کے لیے جگہ اور وقت کم پڑ جاتے ہیں تو غیرنصابی سرگرمیاں کہاں سے کرانیں۔" ان ایک درجن کے قریب اسکولوں میں کوئی کاؤنسلنگ ڈیسک بھی نہیں۔ جس کا مطلب ہے کہ اگر طالبات کسی بھی قسم کی ذہنی کوفت یا پریشانی کا شکار ہیں تو اسکول میں انہیں سننے اور سمجھانے والا کوئی نہیں۔

چند ایک پرنسپلز نے کھل کر اپنی رائے کا اظہار کیا۔ ان کا کہنا تھا کہ ان کے اسکول میں پڑھنے والے بچیوں میں سے کئیوں کے والدین جیلوں میں ہیں، کئیوں کے والدین مزدوری کرتے ہیں، جبکہ باقیوں کے والدین فارغ گھومتے ہیں اور خود کو ملک کہتے ہیں۔ ان تمام اسکولوں میں نہ تو بجلی تھی نہ گیس اور نہ ہی انٹرنیٹ ما سوائے کلسٹر ہیڈ اسکولوں کے۔ ایک مخصوص علاقے کے اسکول جس اسکول کے ماتحت کام کرتے ہیں اُسے کلسٹربیڈ اسکول کہتے ہیں۔

انفراسٹرکچر کے بعد ان اسکولوں میں سب سے بڑا مسئلہ اساتذہ کی کمی تھی۔ چھ سو، آٹھ سو حتہ کہ ہزار طلبہ و طالبات کے اسکولوں میں کہیں ۱۴ تو کہیں ۱۶ اساتذہ موجود ہیں۔ جب اساتذہ خود پریشانیوں کا شکار رہیں گے تو وہ طلبہ و طالبات پر کتنا اور کیسے دھیان دیں گے اور ان کی پڑھائی لکھائی پر کتنا دھیان جائے گا۔ سونے پہ سہاگہ یہ کہ ایک پرنسپل نے تو یہ بھی کہا کہ جو لوکل اساتذہ ہیں وہ کام نہیں کرنا چاہتے، دیر سے آنا اور جلدی گھر جانا چاہتے ہیں، جب ان کا دل کرے چھٹی کرنا چاہتے ہیں لیکن تنخواہ پوری چاہتے ہیں۔ جبکہ جو باہر کے اساتذہ ہیں جو

یہاں کے لوکل نہیں ہیں اسکول ان کے بھروسے چلتی ہے اکثر چیزیں یہی دیکھ رہے ہوتے ہیں اور اگر لوکل اساتذہ پر کسی بھی قسم کی سختی کی جائے تو پرنسپلز کو مختلف معبران کے فون آتے ہیں۔ ایک نے تو ایک پرنسپل کو دھمکی بھی دی ہے کہ ان کے بندوں کو تنگ نہ کیا جائے ورنہ ان کا تبادلہ کرا دیا جائے گا۔

انفراسٹرکچر اور اسٹاف کی کمی کے بعد ان اسکولوں میں سب سے بڑا مسئلہ سنگل نیشنل کریکلم کا ہے۔ اساتذہ کی اکثریت نے یہ گلہ کیا کہ اکثر ان اساتذہ کو ٹریننگ دی جاتی ہے جن کی کوئی نہ کوئی سیاسی پشت پناہی ہوتی ہے یا ان کا کوئی سفارش کرنے والا ہوتا ہے جبکہ ایسے کئی اساتذہ ہیں جو ۲۵ یا ۳۰ سال سے پڑھا رہے ہیں انہیں انگریزی نہیں آتی اور ان کے لیے ٹریننگ بہت ضروری ہے کیونکہ سنگل نیشنل کریکولم کے بعد نصاب کا کافی حصہ انگریزی میں ہو چکا ہے۔ ان اساتذہ نے یہ بھی گلہ کیا کہ سنگل نیشنل کریکلم کو بناتے وقت بلوچستان جیسے پسماندہ صوبے کو یکسر نظر انداز کیا گیا ہے۔ بلوچستان کے دارالخلافہ کوئٹہ میں آدھے سے زیادہ ایسے اسکول ہیں جن میں انٹرنیٹ کی سہولت نہیں، اندرون بلوچستان میں تو حالات اس سے بھی زیادہ خستہ ہیں۔ اکثر اساتذہ نے سنگل نیشنل کریکلم کو بلوچستان کے ساتھ ظلم قرار دیا۔

اس کے بعد سب سے بڑا مسئلہ ان علاقوں میں چوری کا ہے۔ کئی اساتذہ نے کہا کہ وہ اسکولوں کے دروازوں کے اوپر چوریوں کی وجہ سے تختی تک نہیں لگاتے کہ وہ چوری ہو جاتے ہیں، اسکولوں کی کرسیاں، میز یہاں تک کہ دروازے اور پنکھے بھی چوری ہو جاتے ہیں۔ چوکیدار رکھنے کی ان کی سکت نہیں اور وہ کہتے ہیں کہ وہ حکام بالا کو درخواستیں لکھ لکھ کر تھک چکے ہیں لیکن نہ انہیں کوئی آیا دی جاتی ہے اور نہ ہی کوئی چوکیدار اور اگر ایک آدھ اسکول میں کوئی آیا یا چوکیدار ہے ان کلیوں کے اسکولوں میں تو وہ بھی اساتذہ اپنی تنخواہوں سے کچھ نہ کچھ رقم جوڑ کر ان کو دیتے ہیں تاکہ اسکول کا نظام کچھ نہ کچھ حد تک چلتا رہے۔

قمبرانی کا ایک اسکول جسے صرف ڈھونڈنے میں ہمیں دو گھنٹے لگے وہاں کے پرنسپل نے کہا کہ وہ سردیوں کے تین مہینے کی چھٹیوں سے پہلے پہلے اپنے اسکول کا سارا فرنیچر بشمول اسکول کی گھنٹی بھی کسی نہ کسی کے گھر پہ رکھوا دیتی ہیں اور اسکول کھلتے ہی وہ تمام سامان وقفے وقفے سے واپس اسکول لے آتی ہیں تاکہ چھٹیوں میں سامان چوری نہ ہو جائے۔

مختصراً یہ کہ ان کلیوں کے اکثریت اسکولوں میں چند ایک مسئلے بہت واضح تھے جیسے کہ انفراسٹرکچر اور پیسوں کی شدید کمی، اسٹاف کا نہ ہونا، سنگل نیشنل کریکلم اور بے تحاشہ چوریاں۔ اساتذہ کے ملے جلے مشوروں میں سے چند ایک درج ذیل ہیں؛

ایک: یہ اسکول بجٹ کے لینے کلسٹر ہیڈ کے محتاج نہیں رہنا چاہتے کیونکہ کلسٹر ہیڈ بجٹ کا بہت سارا حصہ اپنے اسکول پر لگاتا ہے جبکہ اپنے سے نیچے کے اسکولوں کی خستہ حالت سے بالکل ناواقف ہے۔ ان کا یہ کہنا تھا کہ ان کے اسکول کا بجٹ براہ راست انہیں ملے تاکہ معیاری تعلیم کو ممکن بنایا جا سکے۔ دو: ان کو مخصوص انفراسٹرکچر دینے کے بعد اسٹاف بھی مہیا کیا جائے کیونکہ ایک جماعت میں ۳۰ سے ۳۵ بچوں سے زیادہ کو پڑھانا تقریباً ناممکن ہے۔ تین: ان کا یہ کہنا تھا کہ سنگل نیشنل کریکلم کو بلوچستان کی ضروریات کو مدنظر رکھتے ہوئے دوبارہ ترتیب

دینے کی اشد ضرورت ہے کیونکہ بلوچستان جیسے پسماندہ علاقے میں بہت سارے اساتذہ اس کریکلم کو پڑھانے سے یکسر کاسر ہیں۔ چار: ان اسکولوں کو چوکیدار اور آیا کی سخت ضرورت ہے جو کہ ایک جائز مطالبہ ہے۔ پانچ: ان اسکولوں میں ایک کاؤنسلنگ ڈیسک کا ہونا بہت ضروری ہے تاکہ وہ بچے اور بچیاں جو کسی بھی طرح سے ذہنی تناؤ کا شکار ہیں ان کو سننے والا اور ان کو صحیح مشورہ دینے والا کوئی اسکول میں موجود ہو۔

اس بات کی اشد ضرورت ہے کہ ان اسکولوں کو مزید نظر انداز نہ کیا جائے کیونکہ ان اسکولوں کو نظر انداز کرنے کا مطلب اپنی اگلی نسلوں کو نظر انداز کرنا ہے جو کہ ایک اچھی روایت نہیں۔ اس بات سے کوئی انکار نہیں کہ ان اساتذہ میں بھی کئی برائیاں، کوتاہیاں اور سستیاں ہوں گی پر جب تک حکام بالا ان اسکولوں کو بنیادی سہولیات نہیں دیتے تب تک اساتذہ پر سختی کرنا جائز نہیں کیونکہ جن مشکلات اور کم وسائل میں یہ بچوں اور بچیوں کو پڑھا رہے ہیں ان استادوں کو صد سلام!

Daily Azadi Quetta: سریاب پہ رحم کری

US's South Asia Policy

Sher Ali Kakar

December 21, 2023

Recently, the United States Department of State released a policy document concerning Pakistan. The document points out the US priorities in the region, which are: regional stability in South Asia; maintaining strategic stability in the region; preventing nuclear weapons and materials from falling into the hands of terrorists as a US national security imperative; encouraging Pakistan to continue demonstrating responsible stewardship of its nuclear assets; and encouraging Pakistan to engage diplomatically with India. There is no denying that the US can play a crucial role in preventing conflicts, addressing the daunting challenges the region is currently facing, and promoting peace and stability. Over the past two decades, building strategic partnership with India, and supporting its military capabilities, is adding to the complexity of the region's security, political, and economic landscape. The US has designated India as a Major Defence Partner and signed multiple defense agreements with India, which aim at enhancing US military support to India and providing India access to cutting edge military and dual-use technologies. Despite India's dubious policy and the nuclear material theft cases that pose a risk of proliferation and instability in the region and beyond, the US signed a civilian-nuclear deal with India, followed by the provision of an exceptional NSG waiver, which is helping India enhance its nuclear production capability. Meanwhile, India is the largest recipient of US conventional arms. The US continues to overlook the development in India's missile program's intercontinental ranges, ignoring its propensity to resume nuclear weapons testing, not even questioning its strategies to fight a limited conventional and pre-emptive war under nuclear overhang. Ironically, the US did not penalise India for purchasing the S-400 under CAATSA. All these developments signify a remarkable shift in US policy towards the region, which seeks the role of India as its counterweight to China.

India enjoys the impunity of the US and its allies in the West, thereby continuing to reject Pakistan's initiatives, such as the establishment of Strategic Restraint Regime. Pakistan has always shown responsibility and exercised restraint, time and again. Notably, Pakistan exercised unprecedented restraint when India's BrahMos, a supersonic nuclear-capable cruise missile, landed in Pakistani territory, which is a dangerous and unique

incident in the nuclear age. Furthermore, India, for years, has been involved in false flag operations against Pakistan for political gains. The BJP's attempts to gain electoral benefits through whipping up war hysteria and false claims led to the dangerous escalatory risk after the Pulwama-Balakot crisis. India continues to illegally occupy Jammu and Kashmir, committing significant human rights violations and making the lives hell in the occupied valley. The abrogation of Article 370 by the Indian government and its upholding by the Indian Supreme Court in its recent verdict is a clear indication that the Indian side is pushing the region towards a serious crisis. In addition, India is making conspiracies against the regional economic development initiatives such as BRI and CPEC, and indeed, India is the only country that is openly opposing these initiatives and sponsoring terrorism in Balochistan to sabotage the mega project, thus calling into play the role of the international community, in particular the US. In recent years, the traditional India-Pakistan rivalry has been exacerbating due to Modi's government policies. While Pakistan wants to bury the hatchet and resolve all the issues, including the long-standing issue of Jammu and Kashmir, through negotiations, India has always shown reluctance to respond positively to Pakistan's peace offers. Earlier this year, Pakistan's foreign minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari visited India to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit, which was the first senior leader's visit to India in 12 years. The visit reflects Pakistan's willingness to engage diplomatically with India. However, India, as it has traditionally done, labelled baseless accusations against Pakistan and could not create an atmosphere of cordiality and hospitality. Pakistan is a responsible nuclear state and recognises nuclear security as an utmost national responsibility. With that goal, it has accordingly established a thorough and efficient nuclear security regime that covers all nuclear and radioactive materials. Pakistan has always proactively considered and engaged in regional and international initiatives and agreements that are non-discriminatory and ensure equal and undiminished security for all. Pakistan is a signatory to the Conventions on Prohibiting Biological and Chemical Weapons and adheres to international standards and guidelines for chemical, biological, and radioactive weapons. Pakistan's nuclear assets are under the control of a foolproof nuclear command and control system. History shows that it is India where proliferation activities have been reported many times. The Indian nuclear

command and control is under the control of Hindu fundamentalists, who are creating the risks of a nuclear exchange, thus demanding the urgent and dispassionate role of the international community, especially the US. The BJP's Hindutva-driven policies are not only threatening regional peace but it is evolving into a global problem which is exemplified by India's pursuit of nuclear supremacy, the involvement of the Indian Intelligence Agency in killing of a Canadian citizen on Canadian soil, and the revealing of plot to kill a Sikh separatist on American soil. Peace and stability in the region is inextricably intertwined with the resolution of regional disputes especially the enduring issue of Jammu & Kashmir. The US can play crucial role in promoting the boarder Asia goals by supporting diplomatic engagements between Pakistan and India, preventing the arms race, and supporting risks reduction measures. Regional stability cannot be built through imbalance and biased policies. The potential for collaboration between India and Pakistan in economic, political and security issues is contingent upon both the countries. There is a need for unbiased assessment of regional stability and security environment to promote durable peace in the region.

[US's South Asia Policy – The Nation](#)

Sahel: Africa's Most Crisis-Prone Region

Shehzadi Irum

December 23, 2023

The Sahel is the semi-arid region of Africa, that separates the Sahara Desert to the north and Savannas to the south and stretches from west to Senegal and the east to Eritrea, is among the richest regions in the world, with abundant energy and natural resources like gold, uranium, and oil. Still, it is the least developed region in the world, where thousands of its inhabitants are in the grip of grinding poverty, confronted with security threats, chronic diseases, and harsh climates that bring droughts and floods. These crises force families to abandon their lands and homes, travel for weeks or months, leave everything behind, and risk their lives to find safety in other areas.

Poverty and food insecurity are also prevalent in the Sahel. About [18.6 million](#) people face acute hunger, with many on the brink of starvation and [8.5 million](#) children under the age of 5 are severely malnourished. Instability is rife and security incidents, attacks, and kidnappings have become a daily routine for millions. [Analysts](#) say people are celebrating coups because they are frustrated by constant instability. Thus, this article delves into the challenges faced by the Sahel region and emphasizes how addressing these challenges and collective efforts can bring a positive change in the region.

The Sahel crisis is one of the world's fastest-growing yet most neglected crises. Recently, the situation in the Sahel has deteriorated significantly as the region has proved to be a fertile ground for conflict and violence. Conflict is more likely to increase in this region, particularly with the expansion of various extremist groups like Boko Haram, al-Qaida, and Islamic State-affiliated groups. In [Mali](#), right-wing extremism will remain a threat, despite national and international efforts to halt it. Religious extremists might have been dispersed, but have not been halted. Communities are exposed to violent attacks, targeted killings, abductions, and harassment. The violence destroys jobs, property, health facilities, and schools. As a result of these conflicts, Sahelians are being squeezed by violence in both the north and the south. The region is now among the ten most vulnerable areas in the world because of violent extremism and other issues like climate change.

As the world battles climate change, global warming is around [50 percent](#) greater in the Sahel. As a result, the region suffered the worst droughts and floods than anywhere on the planet. Despite being among the regions with the lowest CO2 emissions worldwide, Sahelian countries are among those most severely affected by climate change. Some studies argue that the concept of 'normal' annual rainfall is almost meaningless in the Sahel and the region is slowly turning into a desert. Food shortages are recurrent and millions of people in the region face food insecurity due to the prolonged drought, poor accessibility to food, high grain prices, and environmental degradation. Together, these worsening weather patterns have created a vicious cycle of poverty, instability, and communal violence. It is estimated that [13.5 million](#) more people could fall into poverty by 2050 if urgent action is not taken to tackle climate change.

The situation has gone from bad to worse in much of the region and the crisis has become the reality for millions of people in the Sahelian countries. They do not have access to potable drinking water as well as improved sanitation facilities. Consequently, people in the region face multiple disease outbreaks such as cholera, and measles and the cases of preventable diseases such as polio, malaria, meningitis, and hepatitis E continue to increase. These diseases put a significant strain on the already limited healthcare systems in the region. Likewise, the impact of diseases is not limited to physical health. It can also have socio-economic consequences. When individuals fall ill, they may not be able to work or provide for their families, leading to a loss of income and increased poverty levels in the region.

Logically, the populace is upset and wants an immediate change in the region. The West has been failing in the Sahel by neglecting and paying little attention to the needs of the Sahel. Instead, they have often put their interests first, leaving the Sahel without adequate funding and support, therefore the region has been suffering. If it continues unabated, its consequences may extend beyond the region. As a result, the Sahel will face an uphill battle in the future to achieve stability, development, and improved living conditions for its people.

Addressing the Sahel crisis requires collective efforts and cooperation from all parties involved that can bring positive change in the region. When different stakeholders come

together, they can pool their resources, ideas, and expertise to tackle the issues the region faces. This collaboration will ensure that the needs and priorities of the Sahel are properly addressed and that solutions are tailored to the region's specific context. Also, fostering dialogue and understanding between different communities within the Sahel can help build trust, reduce tensions, and promote a more cohesive and inclusive society. Ultimately, through collective efforts, Sahel can achieve positive and sustainable change for the betterment of its people and the region as a whole.

[Sahel: Africa's Most Crisis-Prone Region – Modern Diplomacy](#)

The Misunderstood Balochistan

Asadullah Raisani

December 31, 2023

I have spent over three years in different parts of Punjab, mainly in Multan for studies. Apart from Multan, I have been to Lahore, Faisalabad, Bahawalpur, Bahawalnagar, Khanewal, Dera Ghazi Khan; in *pinds* (villages), Mandi Sadiq Ganj, Dera Bakkhar Wala, and Qasim Wala. A few of the misconceptions about Balochistan and the people living here were common almost everywhere I went. This piece aims to discuss and correct them.

Misconception 1: Balochistan is a place where only Baloch live

If you think that Balochistan is home to people who all belong to a single ethnicity, that is Baloch, then you are wrong. The majority of the people who live in Balochistan are ethnically Baloch, but Balochistan is a multi-ethnic province that includes Pashtuns, Sindhis, Hazaras, Seraikis, Punjabis, Hindkos, Kashmiris, Gilgitis, Urdu and Persian speakers, even Tajiks, and Uzbeks. As a matter of fact, the number of Baloch living in South Punjab is more than the total Baloch population in Balochistan. In short, Balochistan is home to multiple ethnicities, also, multiple religions, as Hindus, Christians, and Zoroastrians also live in different parts of the province, and they own businesses too.

Misconception# 2: The people of Balochistan are anti-state

It would be unfair if I claim that Balochistan is filled with individuals deeply devoted to the country. However, it is also an exaggeration to believe that the people of Balochistan are anti-state. People living in Balochistan, particularly the Baloch and Pashtun nationalists, do have grievances, but that by no justification makes them anti-state. Most of these dissidents are concerned citizens and they, like any average Pakistani today, believe that the country is not on the right track. The difference is that they are quite vocal against the policies that they think are against the national integration of Pakistan. In short, they are not against the state but certain policies and attitudes.

There are various misconceptions about Balochistan and its people, notably in Punjab. While these ideas can't be dismissed outright, they are largely incorrect. The negative image of Balochistan is attributed to media, unchecked information, and limited

communication between the people of Balochistan and Punjab. Therefore, it is recommended to increase the portrayal of the true image of Balochistan in media and increase communication between Balochistan and Punjab through different cultural exchange programmes like celebrating Baloch culture in Punjab and Punjabi and Seraiki cultures in Balochistan at the government level

Misconception 3: The people of Balochistan are stubborn and aggressive

It would be a white lie to claim that the people of Balochistan are not assertive; however, they are neither stubborn nor aggressive. Even the assertion in the points of view of the people living in Balochistan is due to its tribal setup, where assertion and confidence are considered a part and parcel of a strong character and bravery, which can be understood by studying the code of conduct of Baloch called the [Baloch Mayar](#) and Pashtun called the [Pashtunwali](#). That assertion can also be melted down by showing affection and love to its people. As a famous Balochi maxim says, “With love, I am ready to partner you in Hell; with force, I will reject to enter even Heaven.”

Misconception 4: The (majority of the) people of Balochistan are Outlaws

Baloch were [described](#) as “uncivilized people engaged in murder and looting” in the Sociology book of the 12th class in Punjab since the mid-1980s. It was corrected in 2016, which means that for some 30 years, people in Punjab were taught that Baloch are outlaws. A great number of them still believe the same. It is not true. Balochistan, despite being the least populated province of Pakistan, has a far greater enthusiasm for higher education and readership of books. It is estimated that in the recent Quetta Literary Festival 2022, books worth Rs 7 million were sold in just three days. There are hundreds of single-room libraries in Quetta alone where people have turned their drawing rooms into libraries as libraries of the city are already entertaining readers beyond their capacities. A fine number of tuition centres, English language academies, and freelancing training centres are present almost everywhere in the province. There are people who donate books to libraries on a routine basis. The people of Balochistan are serving in different institutions, actively participating in politics, doing business, and much more. In short, the [crime ratio](#) in Balochistan is below the [average crime ratio](#) (3.98 percent) in the country and the people of Balochistan are actively participating in different fields.

Misconception 5: Balochistan is not a safe place (to live in)

It is true that owing to multiple factors, Balochistan is not as safe and secure as it used to be. However, wondering how people are still living in Balochistan defines the frightful images the people of Punjab carry about Balochistan. The major source of such frightful images is the media, as BBC headlined Quetta, '[Hell on Earth](#)' in 2013. But that is no longer relevant. A large portion of Balochistan might not be safe for tourists, not because the locals dislike outsiders, but because it is a thinly populated province. In the case of a vehicle breakdown or accident, there is no help for miles; however, Balochistan is livable. People living in Balochistan are as human as the rest of the Homo Sapiens and they do earn a living, go for picnics, play sports, like partying, and have fun, which they despite odds manage to do. In short, Balochistan is livable.

Misconception 6: The people of Balochistan are against Punjabis

It would be sheer romance to claim that Punjabis are welcomed with open arms in Balochistan. The incidents of killing Punjabis had gained a significant pace after the assassination of Nawab Akbar Bugti on 26 August 2006. However, the whole of Balochistan cannot be blamed for their killings, as Balochistan has a significant number of Punjabis living and working here. Even I recall one of my school teachers, to whom we had asked, "Why aren't you leaving (Balochistan as many of our Punjabi teachers have left due to the ongoing killings of you people?)" and he confidently replied, "How can one abandon his mother(land)?" In short, Punjabis did face tough times in the province in the recent past, but that does not mean that the people of Balochistan hate or are against them. It also needs to be understood that the majority of the people who influence the policy-making of the country are Punjabis and it naturally creates a sense of apprehension against this majority not only in Balochistan but also in other parts of Pakistan.

Misconception 7: Balochistan is ruled by Sardars

Indeed, many elders in Balochistan themselves do not adhere to the code of conduct of their ethnicities and there are stories of them torturing their tribesmen, but that is not the case in the whole of Balochistan. The tribal setup in Balochistan is not as intact as it was in the past; also, the tribal setup of Balochistan is different from the tribal setup of Sindh

and South Punjab. To legitimize his authority, A Sardar has to ask his tribesmen to vote for him. If they were the rulers of Balochistan then they would have not requested people to vote for them. Even political engineering in Balochistan is proof that many Sardars who do not deserve the seat, need an outside push to legitimize their control. In short, Balochistan is ruled by the same people who rule Pakistan.

In sum, there are various misconceptions about Balochistan and its people, notably in Punjab. While these ideas can't be dismissed outright, they are largely incorrect. The negative image of Balochistan is attributed to media, unchecked information, and limited communication between the people of Balochistan and Punjab. Therefore, it is recommended to increase the portrayal of the true image of Balochistan in media and increase communication between Balochistan and Punjab through different cultural exchange programmes like celebrating Baloch culture in Punjab and Punjabi and Seraiki cultures in Balochistan at the government level.

[The Misunderstood Balochistan – Pakistan Today](#)

