



## Conflict Transformation in Balochistan: Considering Agonistic Dialogue for Ending Violent Conflict

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### ABSTRACT

This article is concerned with the possibilities of applying the conflict transformation framework to conflict in Balochistan. It will examine salient features regarding the history and evolution of the conflict transformation framework that could be applied to understanding violent conflict in Balochistan, as well as considering the possibilities of agonistic dialogue for transformation of violent conflict. Agonistic dialogue highlights the engagement of the conflict parties towards the transformation of relationships. The key features to be included are a discussion on structural violence, and the use of dialogue – specifically agonistic dialogue, that could work towards maintaining open spaces for dialogue and, theoretically, become instrumental in creating social structures capable of transforming conflict non-violently.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper will discuss the impact of conflict that has disturbed the peacebuilding situation and deepened the grievances of Balochistan and caused fracturing of the relationship between Balochistan and Pakistan's government. It has outlined aspects of the conflict transformation framework and agonistic dialogue that could be adapted to the conflicts between Balochistan and the federation of Pakistan for reducing and eliminating violence. Instead of using force, political options would be required for sustaining the political reconciliation and dialogue process, and agonistic dialogue as a political practice could be considered to eliminate violence and repair relationships. The conflict landscape of Balochistan has become multidimensional and to resolve the long-standing conflict requires multidimensional approaches and a continuing series of political dialogues involving all parties to the conflict.

To address the widespread mistrust, the state of Pakistan needs to begin to build a politico-institutional mechanism for dialogue processes towards transforming the ethnic Baloch conflict. From both political and economic perspectives, the Baloch highlighted that their voice has been unheard, which has led to violent uprising in Balochistan. The political and economic demands were not being addressed, which has led to the ongoing conflict and has increased violence. Because of the limited consensus and vacuum for political dialogue, constructive conflict resolution remained unfulfilled between the province and the federation. The increasing numbers of missing persons from different walks of life including student organizations members, locally based journalists, and political activists. Too many have been forcefully kidnapped and disappeared, often tortured and killed. Without addressing the demand for justice regarding the issue of missing persons, the reconciliation and political dialogue process will just be a buzzword for the political parties who are not interested in genuine dialogue. To rebuild the relationship and resolve the long-standing conflict of Balochistan the second agenda for the federation should be to rehumanize their broken relations and accept the political and economic needs of the Baloch. For resolving the conflict in Balochistan the federation of Pakistan must

involve all the institutions along with the actors of conflict parties so that it can open ways and space for dialogue.

This paper discusses the possibilities of applying conflict transformation framework to the conflict in Balochistan. The situation has become increasingly complex and therefore it requires the application of a multidimensional framework for analysis. With its focus on understanding 'conflict- in- context,' it is able to address the dynamics of conflict, as well as how deep-rooted nature of conflict in Balochistan has become complexified over time. Conflict transformation utilizes dialogue as a tool to increase and deepen understanding between the conflict parties. The paper also introduces the concept of agonism as a potential form of dialogue for application in the transformation of violent conflict. Chantal Mouffe's agonism is the process of shifting violence-based antagonism and change them into a contestation of a democratic and peaceful process. The agonistic dialogues emphasize the sustaining of dialogue through engaging in disagreement which are in the violent shape among the conflicting parties. When the opinions between the conflicting parties in the dialogue turn into antagonism, but still it can't continue to leave the process of sorting out the issues will help them to open new path for the more debate on the issue of conflict (Adeney, 2012). When such kind of dialogue process becomes sustained, the conflicting actors are legitimized and reconciliation is possible. In the context of Balochistan's conflict, the agonistic dialogue is important to discuss the contemporary conflict and historical roots of antagonism and antagonistic relations between Balochistan and the federation of Pakistan. Since its annexation by the state of Pakistan in 1947, relations between the ethnic Baloch and the federation of Pakistan have remained hostile. Thus, it has caused five episodes of conflict which primarily emerged out of conflictual relations and the failure of reconciliatory efforts. In all episodes, Pakistan's federal government consistently applied the use of force toward Balochistan. To argue this, the paper is divided into three sections: 1) Balochistan's political and economic grievances, 2) the significance of conflict transformation in Balochistan and 3) the significance of agonistic dialogue for ending violent conflict.

## **2. Balochistan's Political and Economic Grievances**

Being the largest province of Pakistan among the other provinces, the geography of Balochistan consists of 43% percent of the overall territory of Pakistan. It has a population of 12,335,129 out of Pakistan's total population of 207.77 million people. According to the 2017 census carried out by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, it is the least populated of all of Pakistan's provinces. The province of Balochistan borders on states of Iran and Afghanistan, and also has the country's longest coastline as well as a vast array of mineral resources and natural gas fields. Balochistan has remained the most underserved province. Pakistan's federal government has not met Balochistan's political and economic demands and as well as the demands for autonomy of the ethnic Baloch, which has become the main concern for the local inhabitants of Balochistan. Conciliatory measures by the federation of Pakistan to improve development in Balochistan have fallen short of their intended purposes for reasons that are not always plain to discern due to lack of transparency, censorship of media and corruption at all levels of government. In the protracted conflict in Balochistan, the local people's common view is that 'Nobody listens to us. We don't have a voice' is indicative of the deep-rooted feelings and the sense of alienation that prevails in the local people that their voice is not being heard. On the one hand, the Baloch leadership has historically expressed distrust towards the federation of Pakistan because of their unmet political and constitutional rights. On more than one occasion they excused themselves from participating in national elections as well as refusing to accept benefit packages aimed at improving critical services for the development of infrastructure in Balochistan. Among certain factions, they maintain that the issue of whether annexation of Balochistan to the state of Pakistan was coerced and is, therefore, not legitimate.

On the other hand, the federation's fear of rising separatist tendencies among factions of Baloch tribes, particularly since the loss of Bangladesh in 1971, and chronic suspiciousness about security threats from India, the government of Pakistan has most frequently resorted to physical force to control the Balochs' demands for provincial autonomy and economic justice(Adeney, 2012). The center government is crippled by the residual legacy of a political patronage system that began prior to partition. As landed elites have worked to maintain their advantages, they grew to depend on the military to support their political gains and to manipulate the evolution of political parties and elections. Caught up in their own intrigues

various administrations of civil-military governments with varying degrees of militancy and civility have left a trail of violence behind as political parties gained and lost favor depending on their acquiescence or resistance to whoever ascended to the highest ranks in the military, civil bureaucracies, and political offices (Najam, 2022).

The ethnic Baloch have never had their political and economic representation either in the federal, government, civil bureaucracies, or the military. Sometimes they did not complete their provincial government tenure as in 1973, 1998 and 2015 due to the intervention of the federal government. The federal government's intervention and the exclusion of the provincial government has exacerbated the ethnic Baloch grievances and led them to demands on a spectrum ranging from full political autonomy to becoming a separate independent state (Zeb, 2018). The unequal treatment of Balochistan has further alienated the ethnic Baloch, and some factions have chosen armed struggle to demand their socio-political and constitutional rights (Noormal, 2021). As early as 1948, right after the annexation of Balochistan into the newly independent state of Pakistan, the younger brother of the Khan of Kalat, Prince Abdul Karim, and later in 1958 the known tribal elder of Balochistan, Babu Norouz Khan, led armed struggles against the state of Pakistan, asking that the status of Balochistan remain a separate and autonomous province (Siddiqi, 2012). In the more recent past, the military coup in Pakistan in 1999 brought Pervez Musharraf into power and his policies were mostly military-oriented towards Balochistan. Musharraf made no effort to agree with the demands of Nawab Akbar Bugti. He refused to engage in sustainable dialogue. The ensuing events led to the assassination of Bugti, and it has become the focal point for the conflict and counter insurgency in Balochistan. Moreover, Musharraf's stance to deal with the situation led him to send military troops in Balochistan, which has turned into violent conflict. Bugti's assassination deeply affected and alienated the Baloch, further deteriorating any trust towards the federation and causing the most significant move for the ongoing phases of violence in Balochistan (S. M. Baloch).

Due to the violence and the long-standing unrest in Balochistan the conflict has adversely affected the overall socio-political and economic development which has increased the impossibility of conflict transformation. According to the 2019 United Nations Human Development Index, (HDI) most of the population in Balochistan province is living under extreme conditions, including poverty and drought. Nine out of ten people (89%) in the province live under low development, ranking lower in comparison to other provinces of Pakistan. In Sindh province, 33% of the population lives under similar conditions, while in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) province the development ratio is 16%, and in the Punjab province it is only 8% (Y. A. Baloch, 2022). Additionally, roads and other infrastructure are not well developed, with many rural-urban areas of Balochistan remaining unconnected. Standing out starkly among the poor human development statistics are the low literacy rates in Balochistan. In both the HDI report and the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Balochistan stands at the lowest level, with the average number of years of schooling at only 7.4, where KPK stands at 9.7, Punjab is 10.1 and the Sindh province is 8.3 (S. M. Baloch).

The impact of conflict further hindered the socio-political and economic development from 1947 to 2006, and as well the state of Pakistan's approach towards Balochistan was mainly taken to handle the demands of the Baloch through interventionist measures rather than building a structure for a peaceful negotiated mechanism. In Balochistan, the political voices have not been addressed from the mainstream politics which led to the Baloch political parties' mistrust towards the federation of Pakistan. Due to the continued unrest in Balochistan, some of the parties have lost interest in participating in the parliamentary system. For example, in 2006 elected national assembly members and senators of BNP- Mengal (Balochistan National Party) resigned because of the assassination of political leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti and his disgraceful burial (Kasi, 2006). Further, voter turnout in Balochistan was very low in 2008 and 2013 with percentages of 33% and 36. % respectively (Election Commission, 2013).

#### **4. Persistent Social Injustices**

Both Pakistan's government and the international community have focused their attention on the abundance of resources in Balochistan. Natural gas, gold and copper, and other minerals are found in large quantities in various areas of the province. According to Rabia Aslam and Qaisar Bangali, the Baloch separatists viewed the mining contracts given to foreigners as exploitation of their resources, while moderate Baloch who continue to make efforts to participate in the political system of Pakistan view it as unfair that they do not receive an equal

share of profits from the sale of natural resources from their province (Aslam, 2011). As an example, the multibillion-dollar, Saindak copper-gold mining project was to have been transferred to the control of the Balochistan provincial government under the Aghaz-i-Haqooq Balochistan package in 2012, but the transfer has still not been made by the federation, which cites debt owed for the investment in the project, and the lease with foreign company for the project has been renewed twice (Kakar, 2019).

Since 1947, Balochistan has been insisting on justice and its due economic shares from the early days of the creation of Pakistan. Most of the political leadership and progressive tribal chiefs in Balochistan have demanded an autonomous federating unit of Pakistan, although Balochistan was not established as a separate province until August 1970 following the dissolution of Pakistan's One Unit policy (Singh, 2018). The main grievances of the province were the Baloch's denial of their political and economic rights which today remain largely unaddressed. This is the cause of protracted conflict in Balochistan and has spread from being localized in certain tribal areas to encompass the entirety of the province (UNPO). Gwadar port in south Balochistan is part of the Chinese-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a series of development projects undertaken between China and Pakistan. It has become a site of considerable conflict with some Baloch expressing that the Baloch were not given an opportunity to participate in decisions regarding the project and separatists claiming responsibility for violent attacks in the region (Marino, 2020). Additionally, Baloch who have been earning their livelihood fishing in Gwadar for hundreds of years have been displaced by 'land mafias', whose prior knowledge of proposed development projects resulted in citizens being exploited (Miall, 2004). Gwadar has also seen mass non-violent protests against development projects by the outsiders organized by Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, general secretary of the Balochistan branch of Jamaat-i-Islam (JI) Pakistan (Notezai, 2001).

## **5. Conflict Transformation and its Significance for Balochistan**

The conflict transformation framework emerged from the work of various peace and conflict scholars in the post-Cold War period and continues to evolve as scholars continue to contemplate new ways to approach conflict. It continues to remain somewhat of an anomaly in the academic circles of political science and international relations scholars because it departs from the security-focused approach of much of the research in these areas (Botes, 2003). However, in the context of Balochistan, according to Kakar (2019), public policy and development specialist, and current Minister of Planning Development in Balochistan, "the persistence of violence proves that the security-centric approach has failed to deliver peace and prosperity in Balochistan."

There is an ongoing discourse among peace and conflict scholars about the difference between the term's resolution and transformation, and whether there is a difference between the approaches or if it is merely a matter of semantics (Botes, 2003). As the framework continues to be developed, there seems to be increasing evidence that there is a shift of focus, and not just merely a change of terminology. A primary criticism leveled at conflict resolution is that it implies that conflict gets solved (resolved) and then ceases to exist or have an impact (Miall, 2004). However, as scholars continue to examine the dynamics of conflict, the transformation framework continues to be refined and distinctions between the approaches becomes clearer as causes and subtleties of conflict are more deeply understood. For conflict transformation, according to Harmonie Toros, a researcher in international conflict analysis at the University of Kent, what is needed is a holistic approach that engages with the "structures of domination and exclusion that generate and perpetuate violence (Toros, 2012)." An important consideration in understanding the change from conflict resolution to conflict transformation is that conflict studies have paralleled the changes in warfare. Warfare after World War II began to change, and civilians were deliberately targeted, not just collateral damage (Graf, Kramer, & Nicolescou, 2006). Researchers found that most post-Cold War conflicts were intrastate, ethnic conflicts rather than interstate conflicts (Miall, 2004). The conflict transformation framework actively seeks to understand the roots of conflict and in light of that understanding to constructively build social structures that are able to non-violently resolve conflict without resorting to violence (J. P. Lederach, 2015). Ramsbotham (2005), a prominent scholar of conflict resolution, says "The aim, rather is to transform actual or potentially violent conflict into non-violent forms of social struggle and social change" (Ferguson, 2012). Emerging study of conflict transformation moves out from merely addressing structural changes to a deeper understanding

of the dynamic nature of conflict and the interplay between social structures and social relationships. In the context of conflict in Balochistan it is important to note the difference between the way that the Baloch historically resolved conflict within their tribal social structure and the way that Pakistan, being a state that resulted from the division of colonial India under the British, was influenced by their methods of resolving conflict and their legal system. Changes in social structures impact relationships and, conversely, relationships impact social structures.

The conflict transformation framework draws from the work of Norwegian sociologist Johan Galtung, referred to by some as 'the Father of Peace Studies.' Coming from a family of doctors he employed medical vocabulary to describe social structures that produced injustice as *pathological social structures* (Graf et al., 2006). Furthering this metaphor he coined the term structural violence to describe the harm caused to people by these unhealthy structures. To avoid overuse of the word violence he alternately referred to structural violence as social injustice (Galtung, 1969). If social structures result in the thwarting of human potential and block people from getting their needs met, then it is pathological (Graf et al., 2006). Conflict transformation is focused on reforming the social structures so that they do not produce structural violence and social injustice. Owen Frazer, Center for Security Studies in Zurich and Lakhdar Ghattas of the Cordoba Foundation of Geneva put it this way:

*Conflict transformation is about transforming the way that societies deal with moving them from violent to nonviolent means. Its goal is to build just, sustainable societies that resolve differences non-violently. To achieve this it must address the direct and structural causes of conflict. It assumes that conflict is an inevitable aspect of social change while at the same time it assumes that the way with conflict need not be violent. The reason violent conflict emerges is because parties do not have agreed mechanisms for resolving conflict non-violently (Foundation).*

In more recent discourse on conflict transformation, consideration of whether reforms of social structures, particularly in developing countries in globalized world markets, are based on needs of people or based on hegemonic ideologies which serve market-based agendas critiques of the liberal peacebuilding agenda of capitalistic democracies is emerging. It is common agreement that Pakistan has never successfully created a national identity, and this is in large part is due to the fact that it has never successfully contended with the multiplicity of ethnic groups that it inherited when it was created as a state by the British in their departure from colonial India. Following the partition of India and Pakistan, the Muslim-majority province of Panjab, where the British had groomed the military, the Panjab together with immigrant Muslim Mohhajirs have maintained their dominance in the state of Pakistan. Consistent efforts by the state to develop a national identity for Pakistan as an Islamic Republic have met with resistance from ethnic minorities of Pakistan (Qadeer, 2006). According to scholars who contributed to the development of the conflict transformation theory, one human need is the need for identity. John Burton, in his theorizing on human needs asserted that the failure of existing state systems to satisfy the need for identity as the primary source of modern ethno-nationalist struggles (Rubenstein & Association, 2001). If the need for identity is not satisfied, then this becomes a breeding ground for conflict. Other needs are for basic material needs like water and food and medical care when needed (Rubenstein & Association, 2001). In Balochistan, the human development statistics show that Balochistan has consistently shown the lowest human development statistics of all of the provinces in Pakistan. These statistics are relevant in the implication of the deprivation of human needs as a factor for increasing the likelihood of conflict. The research shows that when needs are consistently denied over a long period of time that the likelihood of violent conflict increases (Ramsbotham, 2005).

The conflict transformation framework is suitable for application to the conflict in Balochistan because it is a multi-dimensional approach and the conflicts in Balochistan across many dimensions. The primary four dimensions in transforming conflict as identified by (J. Lederach, 2015), a peace and conflict scholar who rose to prominence in the 1970s, are personal, cultural, relational and structural. He contends that conflict must be addressed in all of these dimensions in order to effectively transform conflict. J. P. Lederach (2015) personal Anabaptist/Mennonite background employs a moral element and works from the assumption that violence to others is unethical because it causes harm to others. The framework additionally identifies the need to analyze root causes of conflict on multiple levels: local, regional and international. The inclusion of local actors in the resolution of conflict is a key factor in

transforming conflicts (J. P. Lederach, 2015). He further contends that the transformation of conflict requires not only a change in the social structures that create violence but also a repair of the relationships of those impacted by the violence also be placed into consideration in order for violent conflict to be sustainable (J. P. Lederach, 2015). Additionally, according to J. Lederach (2015) framework the aspect of time must be considered in building transformational platforms, due to the understanding that conflict is infrequently transformed in a linear fashion. Advances towards understanding often undergo setbacks and implementations may require re-evaluation when outcomes do not have anticipated results.

A complex conflict landscape such as that of Balochistan's requires a framework that is able to contain and adapt to the shifting dynamics of conflict. Because the conflict in Balochistan is long-standing, it has become more complex over time as the residue of unresolved conflicts has fed back into contemporary events and changed the nature of the cultures and how they have dealt with the conflict. It was necessary for the Baloch to adapt from traditional ways of tribal life with customs and economies related to nomadic herding life and part-time agriculture in a territory they had occupied for thousands of years due to the impact of colonizers, particularly the British. When social structures of distinct cultures and ways of resolving conflict within cultures come into contact, there is often the chance of development of conflict. Moreover, in the aftermath of colonization, development agendas often place the need for successful marketization of resources for profit over the need of people.

## **7. Structural Violence and Education System**

A particularly abysmal statistic for Balochistan is the state of schools and the education system. While the entire federation of Pakistan also shows poorly in terms of literacy, Balochistan is notably worse. Some indicate that the female literacy rate in Balochistan is actually the lowest in the world (Buzdar, 2018). While the entire state of Pakistan has grim educational statistics, with low literacy rates, poor attendance, low achievement levels and unsafe, unsanitary, and inadequate facilities, again Balochistan ranks lowest, despite the fact that Pakistan spends almost as much money on its education system as it does for defense. This uneven share of monetary budget spending has brought chronic imbalance in the social development. A large percentage of Pakistanis opt to send their children to private schools, and others to *madaris*, as an alternative to the government run schools. The government of Pakistan actively supported the increase of *madaris* under the military government administration of Zia Huq (Templin, 2015). Private schools are, needless to say, not an option for those families living in poverty who are unable to afford an alternative. Children are often not sent to school because they are needed to earn money to contribute to the family or cannot afford uniforms required by schools. The matter of curriculum is particularly sensitive in Balochistan where outdated textbooks are still used which present derogatory content regarding the culture of the Baloch. Balochistan suffers significantly from a nation-wide problem of 'ghost schools and ghost teachers' where teachers are paid but do not show up to teach. Reasons given are various. Some teachers have been appointed by government officials as part of patronage systems, and merely collect salaries, while they are not even physically present in the area where they are assigned to teach (Buzdar, 2018). Others are afraid to teach because they are targeted by either religious extremists or separatists.

Fearing for the safety of their children is also given by Baloch parents as a reason for not sending their children to school, as well. Due to the geography of Balochistan and the wide expanses it is physically difficult to get to school, often requiring travel of long distances. Lack of infrastructure impacts transportation and facilities as well. School buildings are often in disrepair, with crumbling structures, and no electricity or running water. Dropout rates between primary level education and middle schools are high, often due to the inability of families to afford transportation to school. There are markedly fewer girls' schools and even fewer girls attend school beyond the primary level. Instruction is not offered in the mother language of Balochi, even though education research indicates that at elementary school levels being taught in a student's primary language is an indicator of future academic success. This is the type of structural violence that has been continuing in Balochistan a long period.

## **8. Dialogue Approach and Agonistic Dialogue for peace**

Another significant feature of the conflict transformation framework is dialogue, and it is close to the heart of Lederach's framework. He suggests that dialogue is a way to 'open spaces'

for 'improbable' dialogue' meaning dialogue that enables us to understand the causes of conflict and work together to open the spaces for dialogue. The spaces must be maintained over time so that they become transformative processes where people can exchange ideas and proposals on how in concrete terms, collective well-being may be improved (Sheffield, 2022). Because of the longstanding and deeply entrenched conflicts in Balochistan, it is essential that spaces for dialogues must be opened. Working from the conflict transformation framework which incorporates in-depth analysis of complex conflicts, it is possible to suggest that agonistic dialogues might succeed where other types of dialogues may not. "An agonistic dialogue aims to engage conflict dynamics rather than repressing such dynamic and their relational aspect" (Maddison & Diprose, 2018). The defining feature of agonism is that it accepts conflict in the political sphere and attempts to channel it constructively (Mouffe, 1999). Therefore, the base point for agonistic dialogues is not that there is no conflict, but that the conflict is allowed to exist, it is not denied and there is no attempt to resolve it permanently. As an emerging development in the study of conflict transformation, the possibilities for using agonistic dialogue as a tool to open uncharted political space is ripe for exploration (Lehti, 2016). Sarah Maddison, a scholar and researcher from the University of Melbourne, observed that "despite a growing interest in the merits of dialogue, and in the face of a proliferation of dialogue projects in a range of contexts, this mode of intervention as a field of political practice remains surprisingly undertheorized (Maddison, 2015)."

Based on her research, Maddison contends that dialogue must be agonistic in its approach and as such must be focused on engagement and not on resolution. The engagement, she contends, holds open political space where conflict parties in divided and post-violent conflict societies can engage across differences with a view to transforming their relationships. Such focus on engagement must be sustained over time rather than a one-time event, so that conflict actors are able to build relationships. Such relational transformation, she suggests, is necessary and needs to be given increased attention as previous consensus-oriented approaches frequently failed to address the necessity for repairing relationships and often overlook the residual rancor and trauma of violence. Maddison and co-researcher, Rachael Diprose, further contend that effective agonistic dialogue needs to have wider politico-institutional support within the conflict context. This support provides legitimacy to the process and helps to prevent violence by parties on the furthest ends of the spectrum of conflict (Maddison & Diprose, 2018). Political reconciliation in Balochistan would require continual dialogue in multiple dimensions. Such dialogue must aim to contextualize past conflicts and synthesize the complexity of the conflicts. The hostilities and antagonisms between the Baloch and the state of Pakistan are longstanding and it must be accepted that disagreement and antipathy will be present in these dialogues. However, to begin movement towards the cessation of violent conflict, dialogues must start and must continue past the point of comfort. Antagonism must be given room to be reduced to agonism and a plurality of voices must be allowed.

The federal government of Pakistan along with the political and social institutions must be on board to involve all actors of conflicts and recognize the impacts of the conflicts and to consider transformation of conflict. The establishment of dialogue forums has to be constantly engaged with all of the parties to the conflict, and a wide institutional support base needs to develop a justice mechanism. The dialogue would be the main agenda so that it can enable all the institutions/actors/stakeholders of the conflict to further uncover the very fault lines and the main drivers of protracted conflict in Balochistan. The reduction of conflict can only happen when there is firm action towards the conflict issues such as, economic prosperity, social stability and restoration of hope of the ethnic Baloch. Their genuine and persistent human right issues in terms of enforced disappearances and kill-and-dump policies must be fully addressed. The dialogue would be to consider their fears of being abducted. The continued harassment of the Baloch youth must be stop in the educational and public institutions within the province and across the country.

## **9. Conclusion**

Four historical episodes of conflict in Balochistan were not resolved because there was no sustained and engaged dialogue. The failed efforts to create peace led to the 5th episode of conflict in 2004, and this episode of conflict is deeply rooted throughout the whole province of Balochistan. The current phase of conflict has changed the dynamics of the conflict and has surfaced new demands in the ethnic Baloch, among them are the presenting issues of missing persons, extrajudicial killings, insecurity, and the growing militarization. The long-standing



nature of the conflict has complicated the conflict in Balochistan, and for transformation it requires a multidimensional, multilevel approach. Due to the disenfranchisement of the Baloch from the political process in Pakistan and the level of institutional and political dysfunction of the central government since the creation of the state of Pakistan in 1947, further investigation of dialogue as a political process is imperative. However, due to the ineffectiveness of civil and political mechanisms and the irregular relationship between the central government and the provincial government of Balochistan, without a preliminary approach from the state to reform the institutional strata of government. It is questionable whether the conflicting parties would be willing to come to the table for dialogue. Such an overture from the federation would be instrumental in providing the good faith required by the Baloch. While dialogue could invite the real possibility of contentious disagreement as the efforts to engage would drive at the roots of the conflict and could raise the possibility of aggravating the hostilities, using the conflict transformation framework could assist the conflict parties in understanding that transformation of conflict does not proceed in a linear fashion, and that agonistic dialogue could be used to build a provide a platform where disagreements could be openly aired and dialogue could be sustained in pursuit of a peace for which there is no predictable guarantee.

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