

# **Conquest without Rule**

**Baloch Portfolio Mercenaries in the Indian Ocean**

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“Conquest without Rule: Baloch Portfolio Mercenaries in the Indian Ocean.”

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Dissertation submitted in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of  
Cultural Anthropology  
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ABSTRACT

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## Abstract

The central question this dissertation engages with is why modern states in the Persian Gulf rely heavily on informal networks of untrained and inexperienced recruits from the region of Balochistan, presently spread across Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The answer, it argues, lies in the *longue durée* phenomenon of Baloch conquering territories abroad but not ruling in their own name. Baloch, I argue, conquered not to establish their sovereign rule, but to open channels of mobility for others. The rise of nation-states and citizen-armies in the twentieth century limited the possibility of Baloch conquest. Yet, the Baloch continued to find a place in the Gulf's protection industry through historically shaped informal, familial, commercial, and parapolitical transnational networks. Flexible and persistent Baloch networks provided territorially bounded states the ability to access resources outside their boundaries without investment in formal international contracts. Moreover, this dissertation makes the argument that mobile Baloch operated as 'Portfolio-Mercenaries', offering their military-labor to foreign states in order to build their own portfolio of transnational economic, social and political activities. At times these portfolio projects contradicted state interests; at other moments they corroborated them. In either situation, the non-soldiering activities of mercenaries went on to transform the nature of political order in the twentieth century space of the Indian Ocean. They shaped the nature of international law, carried state order beyond borders, stabilized unpopular regimes, and provided

ready sources of labor. Through the example of Baloch Portfolio- Mercenaries, the dissertation thus highlights the thick and enduring relationships between state and transnational networks.

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents Zaeem Lutfi and Shabana Zaeem for their unwavering love and support.

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## Introduction

My interest in this project grew out of an advertisement published in a Pakistani newspaper for job openings in Bahrain, in 2011. At first sight, the advertisement seemed similar to others placed by labor recruitment firms for employment in the Gulf region. Labor export to the Gulf has been Pakistan's biggest source of foreign exchange since at least the nineteen eighties. While in the early post-oil years Gulf states recruited labor through informal chain migration, in the last couple of decades the process has been systematized through state agencies, such as the Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, and registered labor recruitment firms. As result of this regularization, firms interested in recruiting labor for the Gulf have to follow a proper protocol that begins with advertising an open call for applications.

However, unlike the other calls for job openings in the Gulf I was used to seeing in Pakistani newspapers, the advertisement in 2011 was not placed on behalf of a private company, but the Bahraini National Guards. The recruitment firm that had placed the advertisement was looking for soldiers, not laborers. More specifically they were looking for: drill instructors with prior retirement from the Pakistani Military Academy, anti-riot instructors with prior experience in the Sindh Rangers (the urban military branch of the Pakistani army) or the Elite Police Force, non-commissioned police officers, and security guards who were at least six feet tall.

**فوری ضرورت سروس برائے بحرین نیشنل گارڈ (BNG)**

۱۔ BNG میں سروس کیلئے مندرجہ ذیل اہلیت کے حامل سولیلین، سابقہ فوجی اور پولیس کے افراد کی فوری ضرورت ہے۔

1۔ سابقہ آرمی ڈریل انسٹرکٹرز (PMA) (این۔سی۔او)، عمر 45 سال تک۔

2۔ ہیوم کنٹرول انسٹرکٹرز (Antiriot Instructors) سابقہ سندھ رینجرز یا اہلیت پولیس ملازمین کو ترجیح دی جائے گی۔

3۔ سیکورٹی گارڈ (سولیلین) عمر 20 سے 25 سال تک، تعلیم۔ میٹرک اور قد 6 فٹ سے زیادہ ہو۔

4۔ سابقہ آرمی ککس (Cooks) 5۔ سابقہ آرمی میس ویٹر (Mess Waiter) (یا ہاؤس کیپنگ عملہ۔

6۔ ریٹائرڈ ملٹری پولیس سپاہی (این۔سی۔او) عمر 45 سال تک۔

۲۔ خواہشمند اور اہل افراد کی جانچ پڑتال مورخہ 2 مارچ سے 5 مارچ 2011 تک روزانہ صبح 09:00 بجے مندرجہ ذیل پتہ پر شروع کی جائے گی۔ "فوجی فاؤنڈیشن، اورسز ایمپلائمنٹ سروسز (OES)، فوجی ٹاور 68، ٹیورڈ، چکالہ راولپنڈی کینٹ"۔ اپنے ہمراہ شناختی کارڈ (بمعہ اصل کاپی)، ڈسچارج سرٹیفکیٹ یا سروس بک، تعلیمی اور پیشہ ورانہ سرٹیفکیٹس اور دو عدد فوٹو (پاسپورٹ سائز) ضرور لائیں (تعداد مکمل ہونے پر بھرتی 5 مارچ سے پہلے بھی ختم ہو سکتی ہے)۔

۳۔ مزید تفصیلات کیلئے ہماری ویب سائٹ: [www.faujioes.pk](http://www.faujioes.pk) دیکھیں یا ان فون نمبرز: 0092-51-5951821, Extns: 1364, 1366 & 1368 پر رابطہ کریں۔

الائسنس نمبر: 310/Rwp/فوجی فاؤنڈیشن 24 Feb 11 of 4854 Permission No:

**اورسز ایمپلائمنٹ سروسز**

**فوجی فاؤنڈیشن**

سائٹ: اورسز ایمپلائمنٹ سروسز

Figure 1: Call for job opening in the Bahrain National Guards<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jang Newspaper. Karachi, Pakistan. March 1st, 2011. A similar advertisement was again published in Jang Newspaper on February 25th, 2011. Heading Translation: "Immediate Requirement: Service for Bahrain National Guard". The advertisement calls for applications from the following: 1) retired army Drill Instructor from the Pakistan Military Academy with a maximum age of 45, 2) Anti-Riot instructor retired from the Sindhi Rangers or Elite Police Force, 3) Civilian security guard between the age of 20-25 with a matriculation certificate and minimum height of six feet. 4) Retired army cook, 5) Retired army mess waiter, 5) Retired Police officer (Non-Commissioned Officer) with a maximum age of 45. The advertisement further asks all interested applications to appear in person at the Fauji Foundation's Overseas Employment Services office in Rawalpindi with the following documents: National Identification Card, Discharge Certificate or Service book from the Police or the Army, Original Educational Degrees and Proof of Employment, and two passport sized photographs. The significance of these needed documents will be explained in detail in the Chapter 4.

**WANTED FOR BAHRAIN**




M/S RAMSIS ENGINEERING.W.L.L requires the following staff at Bahrain for projects. Individuals having experience at GCC countries / Middle East with oil and gas field experience would be preferred.

Sr.No	Craft	QTY	Salary BD	Sr.No	Craft	QTY	Salary BD
1	Piping Supervisor	20	300+150	6	HIAB Operator	5	150
2	Tank Supervisor	10	300+150	7	Mill Wright Technicians	7	180
3	Rigging Supervisor	2	300+150	8	Sand Blaster	20	90-100
4	Pipe Fabricator	40	140-160	9	Painter (Airless, GRP)	10	90-100
5	Welder SMAW (R6010 C/F7018)	30	150				

All above categories MUST have degree/diploma/certificate and 5-10 years minimum OIL AND GAS/ REFINERY working experience. Applicants are requested to bring their complete CV along with Original employment/experience certificates, educational certificates, Original CNIC, Original Passport (Min 1 year validity) and 2 pictures with blue background.

Note: Serial no.6 must have valid GCC equipment operator license

**Walk-in Interviews** **Lahore: 7<sup>th</sup> March 2012 to 9<sup>th</sup> March 2012**  
**At: Zealcon Training Institute 30-KM Ferozepur Road, Near Jhulkey Darbar Stop**

**FOR FURTHER DETAILS PLEASE CONTACT :**  
 Mr. Waqas Subhani: 0300-6898084, Malik Bashir: 0344-5667505 Khawaja Mubashar: 0300-4647884

**NOTE: No interview will be conducted without Original Passport & Experience Certificates**



**Mansol Manpower Solutions**  
 Office No. 123, 1st Floor, Divine Mega-2, New Airport Road, Lahore  
 Cantt, Pakistan. Tel: +92 42 35700362-3 Fax: +92 42 35700364  
 Web: [www.mansol.com.pk](http://www.mansol.com.pk) Email: [hrd@mansol.com.pk](mailto:hrd@mansol.com.pk)

**FREE Recruitment**

MPO/LHR/3004/2011  
 PEP/1564/11  
 Dated: 12-12-11

Figure 2: Advertisement of construction labor jobs in Bahrain<sup>2</sup>

Around the same time the advertisement appeared in Pakistan, online blogs and magazines in Bahrain started publishing pictures of mercenaries brutally cracking down on protesters.<sup>3</sup> By 2011 the Arab Spring—the string of anti-establishment protests spread across the Arab world—had reached Bahrain. Bahraini citizens poured out onto the streets to demand serious state reforms. The Bahraini state, they argued, belonged to the Bahraini nation and not to a single ruling family. Just as in Egypt and Tunisia, Bahrainis called for the democratization of the state and an end to the authoritarian regime. Loath to negotiate with protestors, the monarchy decided to use its coercive authority to end

<sup>2</sup> DAWN Newspaper. Karachi, Pakistan. September 21st 2015.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see Bahrain Center for Human Rights online post from March 11th 2011. <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/3774>. Also see Al Jazeera's report 'Pakistani troops aid Bahrain's crackdown' published on July 30th 2011. <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/07/2011725145048574888.html>

the uprising. Anti-riot squads were fully armed, with free license to use violence in dispersing protesters. Special police forces arrested and tortured many prominent activists. The blogs and magazines written by the dissenters described security forces as acting without any empathy. The soldiers in Bahraini uniforms, they claimed, were foreign mercenaries with no connections to Bahrain. As proof, these online media published Pakistani ID cards of mercenaries and highlighted YouTube videos of soldiers in Bahraini uniforms dancing to Pakistani music and talking in languages other than Arabic.



Figure 3: A Bahraini woman holding up the national flag in front of foreign mercenaries<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Source: John Moore/Getty Images: 'An anti-government protester, Pearl roundabout, February 2011, Manama, Bahrain. As found on Amnesty International's report 'The Arab Springs: Five Years On'. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2016/01/arab-spring-five-years-on/>

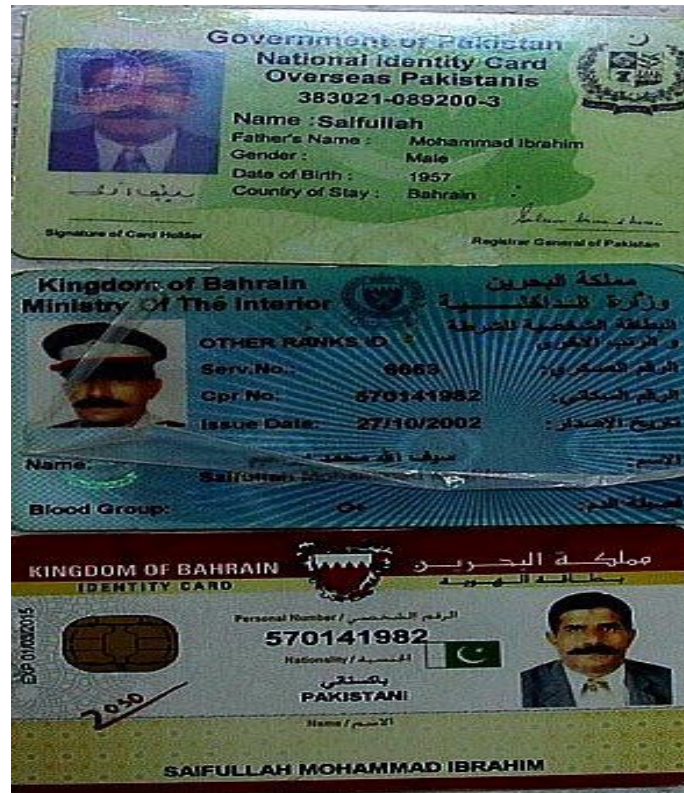


Figure 4: Proof of foreign origins of the Bahraini mercenaries<sup>5</sup>



Figure 5: Snapshot of mercenaries dancing to Pakistani music<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Snapshot taken from Al-Jazeera documentary 'Shouting in the dark' published online on June 19th 2012. <https://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/2011/08/201184144547798162.html>

<sup>6</sup> The video was published on Youtube on July 6th 2013.

The pictures from Bahrain and the advertisement in the Pakistani newspapers triggered a series of articles within the Pakistani, Bahraini and international press. For the Pakistani analysts, the export of mercenaries to Bahrain was seen as part of the longer history of the Pakistani army offering soldiers for rent to monarchies in the Middle East.<sup>7</sup> The periodic deployment of Pakistani soldiers as part of a US-allied military force of a country such as Saudi Arabia, was an open secret in Pakistan.<sup>8</sup> During the Gulf-war, on the request of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan had sent its forces to guard the holy sites of Mecca and Medina.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, after the departure of the British Empire, some Gulf States had hired the Pakistani army to train their military forces.<sup>10</sup> Journalists critical of the Pakistani military compared the recruitment for Bahrain National Guards to the infamous case of Pakistani army soldiers attacking Palestinians on the behest of the Jordanian government during 'Operation Black September' in 1970.<sup>11</sup>

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<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LnWaueBsmR0&t=88s>

<sup>7</sup> For example see the online blog post by 'Let Us Build Pakistan' published on May 25th 2014. <https://lubpak.com/archives/313914>

<sup>8</sup> Bishku, Michael B. "In search of identity and security: Pakistan and the Middle East, 1947-77." *Journal of Conflict Studies* 12, no. 3 (1992).

<sup>9</sup> "In Saudi Arabia, the Pakistani presence had been, until the 1991 Gulf War, the largest of any foreign military in the Arab world; it included providing services for the Saudi army, National Guard and palace guard. Estimates of Pakistani military personnel in Saudi Arabia vary; during the 1980s, it may have been about 20,000 while during the Gulf War the official figure was 11,000." *Ibid.* p 43.

<sup>10</sup> Kamran, Sehar (Senator). "Pak-Gulf Defense and Security Cooperation" Center for Pakistan and Gulf Studies. Rawalpindi, Pakistan. January 2013.

<sup>11</sup> Bennett-Jones, Owen. "Pakistan's inter-services intelligence directorate: covert action and internal operations." (2017): 523-525.



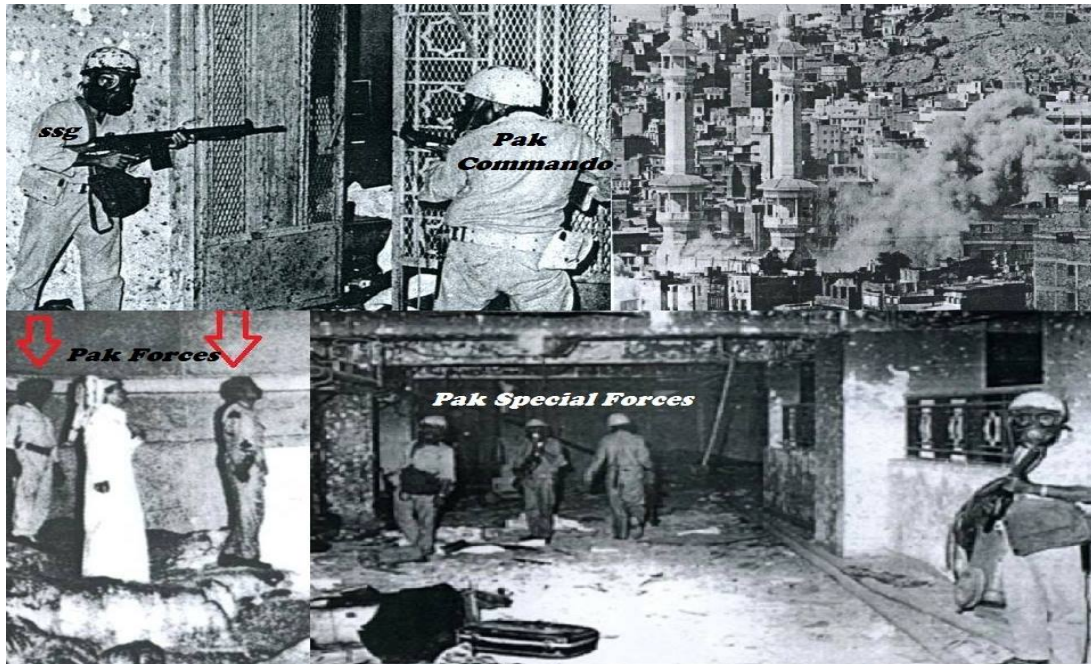


Figure 6: Pakistan forces defending the Grand Mosque in Saudi Arabia in 1979<sup>12</sup>



Figure 7: Pakistani General Zia-ul-Haq in Jordan<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Source: Unnamed. Taken from the website:

<http://www.itsaboutpakistan.com/GetUpdate.php?id=996&&Name=1979%20Pakistan%20Army%20SSG%20Commandos%20head%20by%20General%20Pervez%20Musharraf%20at%20that%20time%20to%20Save%20Khana-e-Kaaba%20Attack>

<sup>13</sup> Source: Isa Daudpota's Photo Archive. Published in 'The Friday Times'. Vol. XXV, No. 15. Islamabad, Pakistan. May 24th 2013.

<http://www.thefridaytimes.com/beta3/tft/article.php?issue=20130524&page=30>



In a similar vein, journalists in Bahrain saw the recruitment as part of the Sunni regime's policy of suppressing the local Shia majority by borrowing support from nearby Sunni states. In contrast to the other predominantly Sunni Gulf states, about 70% of Bahraini citizens are Shia.<sup>14</sup> However, like other Gulf States, the regime is Sunni. The Sunni minority's control of the Bahraini state was at the center of contention during the Arab Springs. The Shia majority argues that the Sunni minorities had monopolized the state, through both covert and overt support of Sunni states like Saudi Arabia, and foreign Sunni mercenaries. The end of the Arab Spring in Bahrain was even marked by Saudi tanks rolling into Bahrain, to further their position within the broader regional Sunni-Shia conflict. Soon after the protests ended, Shia dissenters started to claim that the Sunni regime was deliberately trying to change the demographic balance by offering citizenship to Sunni mercenaries from Pakistan.

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<sup>14</sup> Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs Fact Sheet 'U.S. Relations With Bahrain' US Department of State. February 2, 2017. <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/26414.htm>



Figure 8: Protest in front of the Bahrain Immigration Directorate in Manama<sup>15</sup>

Meanwhile, international observers saw the mercenary recruitment from Pakistan as part of the global process of privatizing military forces. Since the rise of the notorious Blackwater agency, journalists critical of the neo-liberalization of the military had kept an eye on American and British soldiers operating as private mercenaries abroad. By 2011, a large part of America's war in Afghanistan and Iraq had already been handed over to private security contractors. These private military companies were also recognized for protecting unpopular authoritarian regimes in Africa. The recruitment of mercenaries in Bahrain was seen as part of the expansion of the military's privatization. The Pakistani security company that had advertised the job openings was a recently established private subsidiary of the Pakistani military, built on the model of retired

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<sup>15</sup> Source: REUTERS/Hamad I Mohammed/Files. March 9, 2011. Protester holds up a Bahraini passport as he protests against nationalization, in front of the Bahrain Immigration Directorate in Manama.

American soldiers establishing private security companies. Journalists even pointed out to the simultaneous recruitment of retired American and British police and military officers for the supervision of the Bahraini military.<sup>16</sup> At around the same time the advertisement appeared in Pakistan, a specialized headhunting company circulated a job opening for retired American soldiers through the American Embassy in Bahrain.<sup>17</sup> Some of the more historically attuned analysts pointed out that the hiring of soldiers from the North Atlantic world was not new in Bahrain.<sup>18</sup> Ever since the departure of the British Empire, security forces in Bahrain had always been headed by British officers.



Figure 9: Protesters in Manama holding a banner condemning the deployment of John Timoney<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Devereaux, Ryan "John Timoney: the notorious police chief sent to reform forces in Bahrain" The Guardian. February 16th 2012. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/feb/16/john-timoney-police-chief-bahrain-protests>

<sup>17</sup> The email was uncovered by Bahrain Watch, a human right group in Bahrain, from the Wikileaks documents. <https://search.wikileaks.org/gifiles/?viewemailid=85406>

<sup>18</sup> Jones, Marc Owen. "Rotten Apples or Rotten Orchards; Police deviance, brutality and unaccountability in Bahrain." Zed Books Ltd., 2015.

<sup>19</sup> John Timoney, a retired police officer from Miami, and John Yates, a retired official from the Scotland Yard were two of the most infamous Western mercenaries recruited during the Arab Springs. Both Yates and Timoney were highly ranked officials in their respective military force

I started my fieldwork in 2013, with these three interrelated readings of the advertisement in mind: the continuation of the Pakistani Army's soldier rental business in the Middle East, the Bahraini regime's plan for Sunnization, and the expansion of the global private military industrial complex. As an anthropologist I wanted to study these three phenomena not as abstract geo-political strategies, but social processes made visible through ethnographic engagement. I had to thus identify appropriate specific field sites within which this transnational process of military recruitment could be seen in action.

The site I chose to visit first was the recruitment office of the 'Overseas Employment Agency' (OEA) that had placed the advertisement in the newspaper. Their office was located within the heavily fortified Rawalpindi headquarters of the Fauji Foundation.<sup>20</sup> While the Fauji Foundation was officially established as a non-profit organization for the benefit of retired Pakistani soldiers, it has over the years become the largest private corporate conglomerate in Pakistan. The Foundation has its fingers in all possible sectors of the economy, ranging from milk farms, cereal production, leasing and insurance companies, to fertilizer and cement factories.<sup>21</sup> While OEA had been part of

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and came with a reputation of using legally grey tactics to control riots and protests.

<sup>20</sup> Fauji Foundation HQ is located a short distance from Pakistan Army's HQ in Rawalpindi, the city adjacent to Pakistan's federal capital of Islamabad.

<sup>21</sup> Wasim, Aamir '50 commercial entities being run by armed forces'. DAWN Newspaper. Karachi, Pakistan. July 21st 2016. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1272211/50-commercial-entities-being-run-by-armed-forces>

the foundation since 1978, they had only recently expanded into the security industry, through a new branch called 'Fauji Security Services'.



Figure 10: Banner from the FSS website <sup>22</sup>

On my first few visits I was unable to get beyond the security guards standing at a barrier located several meters in front of the main entrance gate. I told the guards that I was a researcher interested in finding out more about the OEA. Immediately, I was asked to leave. On my next visit I told the guards that I wanted to apply for a job advertised by OEA. The guard again turned me away after informing me that all recruitment was handled by their regional offices. While on my third visit I was able to enter the OEA manager's office using contacts within the Pakistani Army, I was asked to leave as soon as the manager found out I was an 'American' researcher.

Before fieldwork I had always wondered why anthropologists tend to focus on weapons of the weak and ignore the arms of the rich. A few weeks into fieldwork, I had my answer. Arms of the rich do not easily open up to anthropological modes of enquiry.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.faujisecurities.com/>

Anthropological methods demand candidness from its ethnographic subjects, or in the least permission to quietly observe social activities from close proximity over an extended period of time. Weapons of the powerful, like modern militaries, operate through secrecy. State armies have stringent policies on disclosure of ongoing activities and policies. Most important decisions are made behind closed doors. Army officers, unlike poor laborers, have neither the time, permission nor the desire to talk to an anthropologist for months.

Despite using all possible connections with army higher-ups, I was unable to get access to the Fauji Foundation as a participant-observer. Given Bahrain's track record of suppressing the media and the fact that I did not have established contacts with the state, I was even less hopefully about the prospect of conducting research at police and military quarters in Bahrain. Before giving up fully I decided to follow the lead given by the guard outside Fauji Foundation and approached the organization's much smaller regional office in Karachi.

At the regional office in Karachi, like in Rawalpindi, I was turned away from the gate. I was told that OEA was not interviewing anymore candidates at that time. My last remaining lead had just gone cold. I spent the next few weeks trying to conjure an alternate line of approach and socializing with friends and family in Karachi. I asked almost everyone I knew in the city for a possible entryway into the issue. A close friend told me that while he did not have any contacts within the Pakistani army, a publishing

house he worked for had hired a few years ago a 'Baloch' retired from the Bahraini police to drive their office van.

This chance connection opened the door to a vast area of inquiry. Rafiq, the retired policeman working as a delivery driver, had been employed in Bahrain's security infrastructure from 1986 to 2001.<sup>23</sup> Through Rafiq I came to know that while open recruitment calls were published for the first time in a Pakistani newspaper in 2011, Bahrain had quietly been recruiting soldiers from Pakistan for decades. Rafiq claimed that almost all of the neighborhood friends he grew up with had at some point in time worked as a security guard in Bahrain. Many of them had since returned to Karachi and lived in his mohallah located at the center of city.

For the next four months, I would visit Rafiq's mohallah every other evening.<sup>24</sup> Each day Rafiq would introduce me to former Bahraini mercenaries. Even after months, I kept on meeting retired soldiers I had not met before. Within the small mohallah of about a thousand houses, almost every other family had a military connection to Bahrain. Some had brothers currently employed in the Bahraini military, others had sons aspiring for a job in Bahrain or fathers who had retired from the Bahraini police. Popular estimates suggested that this one neighborhood, about a thousand families strong, had provided Bahrain somewhere between 300 to 500 mercenaries. Life in this predominantly Baloch neighborhood of Karachi revolved around jobs in the Bahraini

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<sup>23</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>24</sup> See Chapter 5.

security forces. There were many cars with stickers of the Bahraini military coat of arms and decals of rulers of the Persian Gulf city-states. There were several houses in that neighborhood with ongoing repair and construction projects; all of them were invariably being funded by relatives working as a mercenary in Bahrain. The neighborhood provided the ideal bounded ethnographic field site that I had not even thought was possible when I first started following the advertisement. It had a higher concentration of retired Bahraini soldiers than anywhere in Bahrain.



Figure 11: A car in Karachi with a decal of Sheikh Zayed bin Al Nahyan, the late ruler of Abu Dhabi<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Source: Taken by author on January 21st, 2016.



I followed the Baloch mohallah's transnational connections to Bahrain. I soon found out that the Baloch of Karachi I started with were only a fraction of the total number of Baloch working in Bahraini security forces.<sup>26</sup> Estimates suggest that around 40% of Bahrain's security personnel are ethnic Baloch with roots in the stateless region of Balochistan currently divided between Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. They are by far the largest ethnic group in Bahrain's police. Within the broad category of Baloch, there were people from various parts of the world. Besides Rafiq's mohallah, there were Baloch from other parts of Karachi. There were Baloch from various parts of coastal and hinterland Balochistan; including those from Iran controlled parts of Balochistan. There were Sindhi and Punjabi Baloch. There even Baloch born in other parts of the Gulf, such as Sharjah and Muscat. There even were some second generation Bahraini Baloch. As an informant remarked, Baloch in Bahrain's military were diverse enough to have a football world cup of just Baloch teams.<sup>27</sup>

None of the Baloch mercenaries I talked to recalled filling out any application form to get to Bahrain. No one remembered seeing any recruitment advertisement or formal interview with a recruitment agency at home. All of them, however, recalled a distant relative, neighbor, or acquaintance offering the possibility of working beside them in Bahrain's armies. The Baloch were recruited for Bahrain not by an official

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<sup>26</sup> Bahrain Center for Human Rights "The Bahraini Authorities Recruit Mercenaries from Makran Town, Pakistan" June 7 2009. <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/2902>

<sup>27</sup> Chapter 4.

recruiter, foreign labor recruitment firm, or a bureaucratic agency of any kind, but by another Baloch individual from Bahrain. Everyone I talked to had known a Bahraini mercenary from before they became a mercenary themselves. Textual records suggest that Baloch presence within Bahrain's military can be traced back to the first formal security force, Bahrain Levy Corps formed in the 1920s.<sup>28</sup> The Baloch in Bahrain claim they have been the protectors of the ruling family since the arrival of the Al-Khalifas on the island.

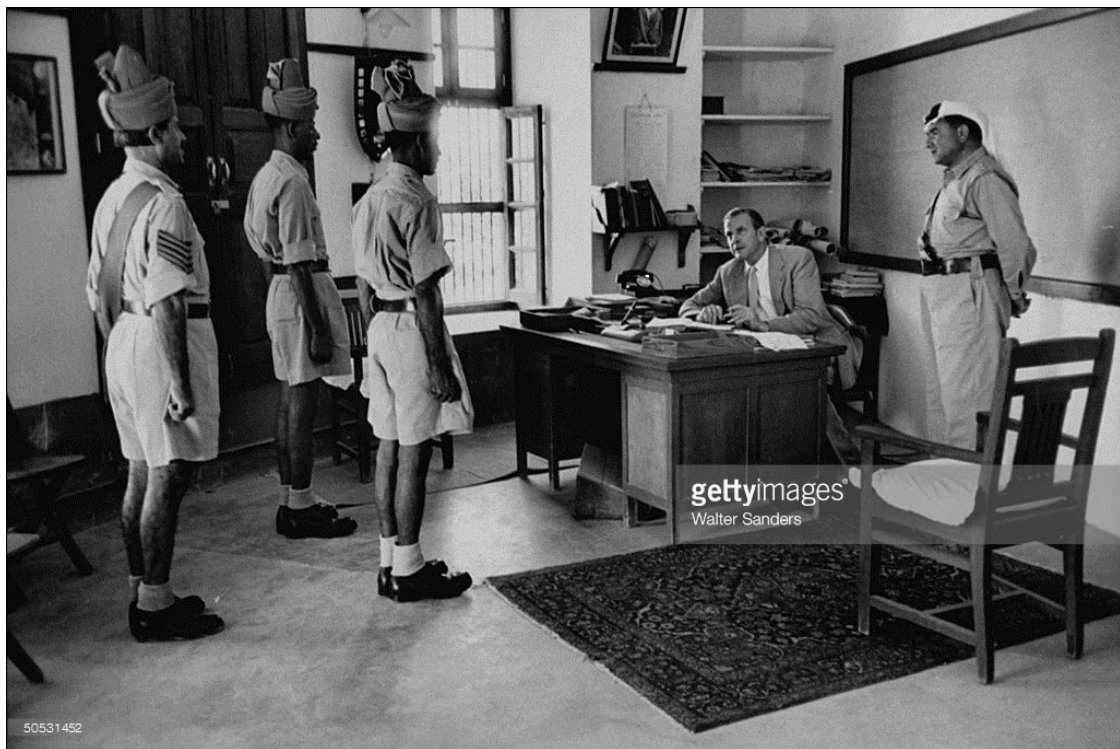


Figure 12: Baloch levy soldiers with the British political agent in Bahrain<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Chapter 2.

<sup>29</sup> Source: Sanders, Walter. Gettyimages. July 1954.

After fieldwork in Bahrain, I followed connections suggested by Baloch mercenaries to UAE, Oman, and eventually Tanzania and Kenya. Bahrain, I realized, was not the only Persian Gulf state with a historical record of recruiting Baloch. Baloch soldiers had been part of the Omani contingent that took over Fort Jesus in Mombasa in the 17th century. They were again part of the Sultan's army that reclaimed the fort a century later. Baloch soldiers constituted over 60% of the Sultan of Oman's forces in 1964.<sup>30</sup> Besides Oman and Bahrain, other Gulf states such as Kuwait, the UAE (the Trucial States), and Qatar, have also retained sizeable contingents of Baloch mercenaries in the twentieth century. However, other than Bahrain, the other Gulf states have in the last two decades drastically reduced the size of foreign mercenaries. Naturalized Baloch, though, still form an influential faction within these various national armies.



Figure 13: Sultan of Oman's army in Zanzibar<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Peterson, J. E. "The Baluch Presence in the Persian Gulf." *Sectarian Politics in the Persian Gulf* (2013): 229-44.

<sup>31</sup> Source: Kadu, Jaffer 'Baloch in East Africa'. Unpublished. 2013.



Figure 14: The Commander of the Royal Army of Oman Matar Al Balushi in Pakistan<sup>32</sup>



Figure 15: Two Baloch soldiers from the Qatari Army<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Source: Haroon, Asad "Commander of Royal Army of Oman calls on COAS". Dispatch Newsdesk. May 28 2014. <https://dnd.com.pk/commander-royal-army-oman-calls-coas/67994>

<sup>33</sup> Source: Balochi Zind Magazine (Noshki, Chagi) "Baloch in Qatar". Published in Quetta, Pakistan. March 23rd 2013.



Figure 16 Crown prince of Dubai offering condolences to the family of two Baloch soldiers who died in the line of duty in Yemen in 2015<sup>34</sup>

The outsourcing of Bahraini National Guard jobs to a subsidiary of the Pakistani Army could be made sense of by intercalating the three perspectives— Bahraini, Pakistani, and international--highlighted earlier. The continued recruitment of Baloch through their own informal networks in various parts of the world was more difficult to explain. Compared to the mercenaries being sent by the Fauji Foundation, the Baloch coming through informal networks had relatively sparse resumes. Very few of them had any prior military experience, on account of the fact that Baloch have never been a sizeable presence in either the Pakistani or Iranian army. As opposed to the retired

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<sup>34</sup> Nicholson, Julie “ Sheikh Mohammed and Sheikh Hamdan offer condolences to Emirati families - in pictures” The National, UAE. September 13 2015.  
<https://www.thenational.ae/uae/government/sheikh-mohammed-and-sheikh-hamdan-offer-condolences-to-emirati-families-in-pictures-1.126307#2>

Crown prince of Dubai offering condolences to the family of Ali Hussein Hassan Al Balushi and Saeed Ahmed Al Marri who died in line of duty in Yemen in 2015.



soldiers promised by the Fauji Foundation, Baloch mercenaries lacked prior military training. Despite these facts, while various Gulf regimes have experimented with recruitment from other Arab countries such as Yemen, Jordan, Egypt and Syria at various points over the previous century, it is the Baloch who continue to be the stable constants.<sup>35</sup>

Compared to these other Sunni, Arab mercenaries, Baloch were culturally 'non-Arabs' and seldom spoke Arabic. Moreover, Baloch mercenaries did not come with the backing of any recognized state. With independent Balochistan being only a Baloch separatist dream, there was no state willing to take responsibility for the actions of Baloch mercenaries. Baloch mercenaries were thus untrained, inexperienced, could not be easily assimilated into the Arab states of the Persian Gulf, and did not have a foreign state's guarantee. There was no official policy in any of the Gulf States expressing a preference for the recruitment of Baloch in the military. Yet, informally recruited Baloch mercenaries continued to be a recurrent presence in the Gulf States despite there being alternative options that seem better, at least on paper. Baloch soldiers continued to fill the ranks of modern Gulf armies in the twentieth century, even as other states around them nationalized their military forces and established citizen-armies as the international norm.

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<sup>35</sup> Chapter 4.

While the high politics of intra-state military relations that I had started with in following the advertisement led to black boxes that could not be opened through ethnographies, Rafiq opened a temporally thick and spatially dispersed arena of research. It allowed me to explore a historically longer and geographically broader puzzle of continued Baloch mercenary presence in the Gulf. At a very basic level, this dissertation tries to answer one simple question: How did Baloch mercenaries continue to find a place in the armies of the Gulf during the twentieth century?

From the perspective of the Gulf States the question can only partially be answered by pointing to Baloch as cheap and disposable means of violence. For a more holistic explanation, the dissertation turns to the perspective of mercenaries themselves. For the Baloch, their presence in Gulf armies is part of a much longer historical tradition of conquering without ruling. As the first chapter will highlight, Balochi epic tradition is replete with folkloric Baloch heroes who conquered territories beyond Balochistan yet did not inscribe rule in their own name. For example, an epic hero from the 16th century, Shahdad Chota, is said to have conquered East Africa only to hand it over to the Omani Ya'arubi dynasty. Around the same time, another epic figure, Chakar Rind conquered Delhi, but abdicated the throne on behalf of the Mughals.

While the phenomenon seems counterintuitive, it makes sense according to the Baloch logic of expanding as an empire in another's name in one direction, in order to open doors for Baloch in a different direction. For example, Chakar Rind's conquest was followed by large-scale migration of Baloch cultivators from the harsh territories of

Balochistan to the fertile agricultural plains of Sindh and Punjab in India. Similarly, Shahdad Chota was joined by diasporic Baloch communities looking to expand their Indian Ocean trading portfolio. To generalize this path of Baloch soldiers pivoting into other fields, I argue that the Baloch were portfolio mercenaries, who conquered in another's name in order to create social, economic, and political opportunities for other Baloch: whether agricultural ones, in the plains of Sindh<sup>36</sup> and Punjab, or commercial ones in the Western Indian Ocean littoral.

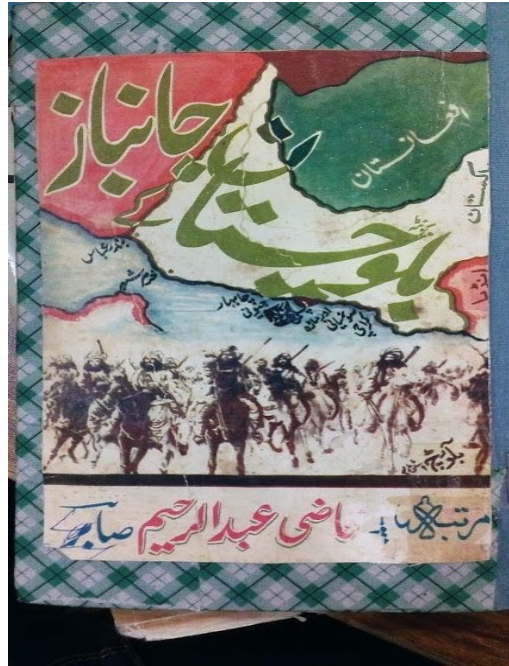


Figure 17: Cover of a local publication documenting the various Baloch conquerors<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Sindh was the only place where Baloch conquerors, the Talpurs, actually overthrew the Kalhora regime they were working under to establish themselves as rulers.

<sup>37</sup> Sabir, Kazi Abdul Rahim 'Balochistan ke Jaanbaaz [brave warriors]'. Balochi Adabi Board Karachi. 1982.



Between the 16th and the 18th centuries, Baloch portfolio mercenaries thus opened for themselves a broad geography that stretched from Persia to Delhi by land and from Gujarat to East Africa by sea. By not conquering in their own name, Baloch maintained internal solidarity even as they marched under different flags. Through a shared commitment to facilitating each other's social mobility, Baloch fashioned flexible networks critical to the functioning of several states without being bounded by any one of them. Informed by kin relations spread across multiple empires, Baloch networks could reorient themselves toward changing political currents, switching allegiances when needed, and thus outlast the very empires they served.

The diverse geography of Baloch networks, however, was engulfed in the 19th century by the single banner and universal ambition of the British Empire. Although the British themselves were dependent on local, non-British soldiers, they introduced to the region a novel bureaucratic military recruitment apparatus and the ideal of full-time professional soldiers constrained to the frontlines and barracks. Following these changes, Baloch could no longer go about conquering land and negotiating through it conditions of their social, economic, and political advancement.

Yet, colonial transformations were neither irreversible nor all encompassing. Baloch networks carved a niche for supplying soldiers in areas of indirect rule such as Bahrain where the British preferred not to rule in their own name. By self-administering recruitment of bottom-tier policing jobs, Baloch networks allowed the British, and later Americans, to discreetly engage the top military tier without direct involvement in the

whole apparatus. Baloch thus continued to be part of formal twentieth century armies of Gulf States by offering them a stable and readily available supply of military labor without implicating any foreign or imperial state. Informal Baloch networks allowed Persian Gulf states to obviate the need for signing formal defense pacts with an allied country. To obtain military labor they simply had to engage the transnational social networks of the Baloch.

Baloch continued to willingly join armies in the Gulf, I argue, because they saw in them the potential to build their own portfolios that extended well beyond the role of soldiering. As portfolio mercenaries for whom soldiering was only a stepping stone for other ends, Baloch did not limit their role to being officially recognized rank and file within a formal military. As part of a modern bureaucratic twentieth century military, Baloch could no longer receive land tenure and regional sovereignty through conquest. Yet they could use their position within the military for various ends such as building a reputation amongst the Baloch community for being a 'jobber' who could help other Baloch find employment. They could use their position as guards outside sea, air and land ports to build careers in international trade. They could also cash in on their close proximity with the political elites they were hired to protect, to build a political portfolio both within and beyond the recruiting state. The chapters in this dissertation will detail some of the opportunities that opened up to the Baloch who started off as mercenaries.

Baloch continued to find a way into the protection forces in foreign states and pivot from it to other portfolio careers, I argue, because of their ability to constantly

draw on their historically established and geographically diversified networks. When placed against official sovereign states with a functioning bureaucracy, a sizeable national budget, and surplus of armaments; Baloch appear as marginal characters with limited leeway in speaking back to the state. While the Baloch networks might not have the same economic, political, or coercive cache as the states that recruited them, they had one critical advantage to leverage in negotiations with states in the twentieth century—they were not bounded by political boundaries. Baloch networks could reach into places where states were either unwilling or unable to. Baloch used the advantage provided by historically attuned transnational social networks to expand into arenas of the ‘protection industry’ that were not state monopolies. They could turn from being soldiers to private arms traders moving arms between licit and illicit arms market (chapter 2). Also, instead of officially joining a foreign military as a soldier recognized by the state, they operated as deniable proxies expanding state order beyond its borders (chapter 3). They could offer states stable access to resources located outside its borders without official international treaties (Chapter 4). They could connect states with labor colonies in cities abroad without building a cascading hierarchy of intra-national bureaucratic structures (chapter 5).

Baloch thus continued to be a prominent part of Gulf armies by constantly building on their reputation and practices developed as conquerors who do not rule (chapter 1). As military reforms pushed by the colonial regime limited their role within the formal bureaucratic military structure, Baloch continued to move within the

transnational protection industry by slightly transforming their nature of work to become licit/illicit private arms traders (chapter 2) and parapolitical proxies (chapter 3). Even in the century of citizen-armies, they helped stabilize the regime in Bahrain through a flexible mercenary supply network that could efficiently adapt itself to larger changes within the national and international political structures. Baloch continue to mobilize their kin networks in the service of Gulf States not out a sense of national duty, but in recognition of a symbiotic relationship. By working as mercenaries in the Gulf, they built their own portfolios for expanding their political, economic and social status in places beyond the Gulf.

The phenomenon of Baloch mercenary recruitment in Gulf States during the twentieth century provides us with a unique vantage point for rethinking the ways in which states expand their political order in places outside the ambits of its territorial monopoly over violence and shore up its internal order using resources from beyond its borders. It allows us to observe the how historically shaped transnational non-state networks continue to allow twentieth century states to consolidate their internal order and express political order beyond its borders. It traces the various ways in which contemporary relationships between states and non-state networks are structured on existing historical patterns.

# 1. Conquerors without History

## 1.1 Introduction

In 1959, Balochi Dunya published an insightful letter from a recent subscriber, titled 'Raees Dadullah s/o respected Raees Gohram Baloch, from Doha, Qatar via Karachi, Pakistan':

Perhaps, Baloch are the only qaum in the world from whom others have benefited during every historical period. Despite being very powerful militarily and disciplined under a tribal structure, Baloch couldn't do anything for themselves. Nor did the powerful other tribes receiving Baloch support, ever think of Baloch people. Their crowns and thrones were invariably the result of Baloch bravery and fortitude, yet this favor was never returned. It would be hard to find either in India or Iran a war in which Baloch did not earn the right to receive the highest accolade for their display of manliness. But is this not ingratitude that one cannot even find a mention of this brave qaum in either Iranian or Indian tazkiras. It remains an undeniable fact during the battle of Panipat it was the Baloch who secured for Humayun the crown and throne. Later, it was Baloch under the leadership of Ghazi Naseer Khan again who overpowered Sikhs into submission, but the victory crown and the garlands of accolades were handed over to Afghans and Iranians. And the history of Baloch people remained limited to seeing them as illiterate nomadic tribes, not even touched by the winds of culture and social etiquettes.<sup>1</sup>

In Indo-Persia there is a long-established tradition of memorializing conquerors in written chronicles called Fatehnameh (Narratives of victory).<sup>2</sup> Those who control the

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<sup>1</sup> Dadullah, Raees. 'Letters from Baloch across the seas' in Balochi Dunya Magazine. Editor Chakar Rind. March 1959. p.11-13

<sup>2</sup> Fatehnameh as a genre grew through the unique interaction between the pre-Islamic Persian epic Shahnameh and Sira texts documenting the early victories of Prophet Muhammad. (See: Asif, Manan Ahmed. A Book of Conquest, Harvard University Press, 2016. p.62). Texts within the genre mobilized tropes and characters from within Shahnameh to narrate a history of the contemporary conquests, adventures, and palace intrigue (Manan). More importantly, they served as source of legitimacy for aspiring kings who tried to make themselves more king-like by retelling themselves as continuing legacies of the past. See: Donner, Fred M. The early Islamic conquests. Princeton University Press, 2014.

sword yield the pen. Upon ascending to the throne, the renowned Mughal king, Akbar, commissioned copies of 'Humayunnama' to celebrate his father's successes and establish the context for his own conquests.<sup>3</sup> He had these texts illustrated, copied, and disseminated — the circulation of which helped conquerors gain recognition as the sovereign. Conquerors transitioned into rulers through crafting these narratives to text. The letter above ascribes onto the Baloch past a strange condition, replete with conquerors who do not get written into history. It indicated that Baloch could yield the sword but not the pen.

Balochi oral folklore features narratives of valiant conquerors winning against all odds to capture territory beyond their homeland. In this regard, Baloch narratives are not dissimilar from the better recognized Fatehnamehs of famous conquerors. Though unlike the other conquerors, Baloch conquests are not memorialized in textual and material form. Narratives of their conquest circulate in oral form alone. Moreover, the Baloch carry these narratives of past conquerors with them throughout various parts of the world.

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<sup>3</sup> After assuming the throne, Akbar invited his aunt and sister of the second Mughal emperor, Humayun — Gulbadan Begum — to come to Agra from Kabul and chronicle his father's victory. Gulbadan Begum used the chronicle of her father, Babarnama, as the model, and saw her text in literary and historical continuity. Later, the same form was borrowed by the courtly poet, Abul Fazl, to compose Akbarnama. See: Begum, Gulbadan. "Humayunnama", In *Three Memoirs of Homayun*, edited by Wheeler M. Thackston, 1:1-68. Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2009.

I heard the popular story of Shahdad Chota, a native of coastal Balochistan, besieging the Portuguese inside their own Fort in Mombasa while doing fieldwork with the Baloch community in East Africa. The siege lasted two years and ended with the Portuguese forsaking the entirety of the East African coast. Despite the achievement of defeating one of the largest global empires in history, Shahdad Chota is not mentioned in textual histories of East Africa and lives only in the memory of the Baloch community in East Africa and beyond.

In places like Zanzibar, Dar Es Salaam, and Mombasa, Shahdad Chota remains the originary Baloch in Africa. Many trace their own descent through him. Shahdad is one of the most commonly used name for children born to Baloch parents in East Africa. I attended an annual gathering of the Baloch Community of Tanzania<sup>4</sup> with over two hundred Baloch attendees. Many of the speakers at the conference began their story of Baloch in East Africa with Shahdad Chota. One of them, Jaffar Kadu also authored a self-published book, *Baloch Community of East Africa*,<sup>5</sup> which further claimed that Shahdad Chota also remains the hero Baloch community needs to reinvigorate the withering networks between East Africa and Balochistan. In other words, Kadu suggests

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<sup>4</sup> The event was organized in a large event space in Dar Es Salam on 6th October 2012.

<sup>5</sup> At the time I met with Jaffar Kadu (October 2012), the book had not been published. However, Kadu was kind enough to print out a copy for me. The book is divided into two parts. The first part is on Balochistan and the second half is on Baloch in East Africa. The later half of the book, starts with the story of Shahdad Chota, the conqueror of Fort Jesus, and goes on to give snapshots of lives of various prominent Baloch in East Africa. It ends with poetry written by him and his children on Balochistan. The first half of the book contains background information on Balochistan. Much of this information seems to have been pulled through a cursory google search; to which Jaffar Kadu himself admitted.

that through the mutually recognizable figure of Shahdad Chota, the Baloch community in East Africa can once again come together from its long lost, but not forgotten, family in Balochistan.

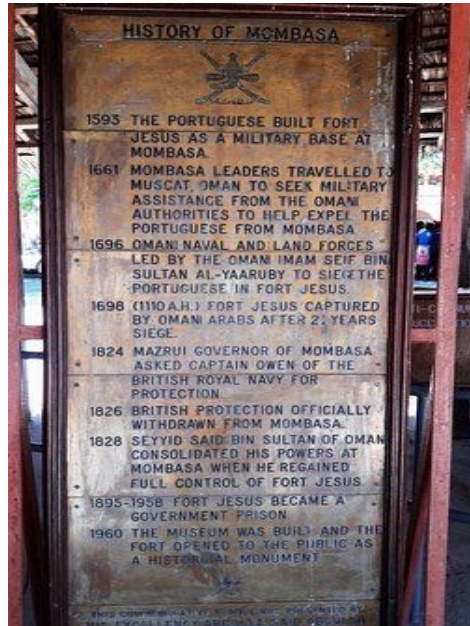


Figure 18: Plaque located on the entrance of Fort Jesus Mombasa<sup>6</sup>

Shahdad Chota's conquests across the Indian Ocean finds a parallel on land in Chakar Rind— popularly known as the 'Great Baloch'. Chakar Rind is said to have conquered Delhi during the second battle of Panipat in 1556. In textual sources, the

<sup>6</sup> One of my Baloch informants in Mombasa took me to tour Fort Jesus, the site of Shahdad Chota's conquest. Here he pointed to a plaque containing the timeline of the Fort's conquerors. It begins with a Portuguese building in 1593. A little less than a century later, the Ya'arubi ruler Sayf Bin Sultan laid the Fort under siege with the collaboration of local leaders of Mombasa. The siege lasted for two years. During this period, according to my informant, control was largely in the hands of the Baloch general, Shahdad Chota. In fact, even after the eventual conquest, a majority of the Fort's inhabitants remained Baloch until 1895, when it was converted into a prison by the British. Yet, at no place in the fort did we find any mention of its Baloch conquerors.



second battle of Panipat was fought between the Afghan conqueror Sher Shah Suri and Mughal claimant Humayun.<sup>7</sup> In Baloch narratives there was a third contestant, Chakar Rind, who had made way to Panipat by conquering other cities, like Sibbi (Balochistan) and Multan (Punjab), en route. In textual histories, the Battle of Panipat launched the victor to the status of emperor of India. In oral narratives of the Baloch, Chakar Rind won the battle but for various reasons did not elevate himself to the status of emperor and instead handed the throne of Delhi to the Mughal king, Humayun.

For those looking for Chakar Rind's conquest in written primary sources, there exist but a few passing references in written narratives of the other two contestants at the Battle of Panipat. The Mughal king Humayun's *tazkira* mentions an unnamed Baloch commander, believed to be Chakar, as part of the army fighting against the Afghans. In *Tareekh-e-Sher Shahi* there is mention of Chakar Rind, a marginally important feudal landholder in Sathgarah.<sup>8</sup> There is no record in textual sources of a Baloch named Chakar Rind conquering Delhi.

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<sup>7</sup> Besides in the *Humayunnama*, the event is also extensively narrated in Sher Shah Suri's chronicle. See: 'Abbās Khān Sarvānī, H. M. Elliot, and John Dowson. 2006. *Tarikh-i Sher Shahi*. Lahore: Sang-e-Meel Publications.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* p. 398



Figure 19: Poster for the 'Celebration of Chakar Rind' festival at his tomb<sup>9</sup>

However, Chakar Rind is instrumental in shaping the Balochness of the Baloch living in Punjab. Ancestors of Chakar Rind have been organizing an annual 'Urs mela (festival organized on death anniversaries)<sup>10</sup> for the last five years, in memory of the Great Baloch at his tomb in a small central Punjab village of Sathgarah. Through the festival, Chakar Rind's shrine has become a central point for Baloch in Punjab to aggregate. The magazine quoted at the beginning of the chapter, *Balochi Dunya*, was run by Chakar Rind's namesake Chakar Rind (II). Chakar Rind (II) used the magazine's platform to launch a campaign to restore and upkeep Chakar Rind's (I) shrine. He saw

<sup>9</sup> The poster was produced by the organizers of the annual festival. The image used is a typical caravan scene, with one notable peculiarity that the animal being used is a horse rather than a camel. Horses were considered more important for imperial expansion, while camels were the vehicles for social expansion.

<sup>10</sup> 'Urs celebrations are a common feature of most renowned saint shrines across South Asia. Despite being organized on the death anniversary of the saint buried in the shrine, the event is normally very festive. Followers of the saint gather at the shrine on this day to celebrate the union of the saint with God. See: Green, Nile. *Making space: Sufis and settlers in early modern India*. Oxford University Press, 2012.

in this campaign the potential to bring the Baloch community outside Balochistan under a single historical leader. Through the legacy of Chakar Rind the Great, Baloch who had lost use of their native language and had assimilated elsewhere could once again be shown the value of coming together as Baloch.<sup>11</sup>

Disputed conquests, absent in written texts but active in oral memory, continue as part of Baloch history. Despite the 20th century ethos of meticulously maintaining state records, Baloch conquerors continued to fall through the cracks of history. For example, within the oral histories of Baloch in the Persian Gulf, one of the most popular 20th century conqueror is Mirza Barkat. In Sharjah, I met Barkat's grandson, who narrated his grandfather's story of leaving his hometown in Iranian Balochistan.<sup>12</sup> He relayed, in great detail, the story of his grandfather as he captured the town of Deira from the Qasimis, across a narrow canal from Dubai. Upon conquest, the then ruler of Dubai offered Barkat the opportunity to establish one of the ruling tribes on the Trucial coast. Barkat declined the offer.<sup>13</sup>

Within Baloch narrative, Barkat is still credited for the fact that Deira today is part of Dubai and not its own separate Sheikhdome. However, there are no written

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<sup>11</sup> Editorial. Balochi Dunya Magazine. Editor: Chakar Rind. February 1962 issue.

<sup>12</sup> I met Mirza Barkat's grandson a few times in January 2014. The grandson himself works in a private Bank in Dubai.

<sup>13</sup> The grandson claims that his family still has a letter written by the rulers of Dubai, acknowledging the efforts of Mirza Barkat. The letter along with other documents collected by Mirza Barkat, according to the grandson, are in the safe custody of his uncle and the son of Mirza Barkat in Muscat. Despite many attempts at contacting the uncle in Muscat, I was unable to obtain these documents.

histories ready to corroborate this claim. The only textual sources where Mirza Barkat appears are colonial records of the illegal arms trade. These records mention Mirza Barkat as a local chief, in the Iranian parts of Makran, accused of assisting illegal arms traders despite taking money from the British to prevent it.<sup>14</sup> Beyond this information, one finds only passing reference to Baloch soldiers in skirmishes between rulers of Abu Dhabi and Dubai in 1946.<sup>15</sup>

For the Baloch in the Persian Gulf, Mirza Barkat's achievements are not in doubt. They rely on the high status of Mirza Barkat's family as proof. His ancestors are considered amongst the most politically significant Baloch families in the Persian Gulf. One of his sons is a higher up in the municipal government of Dubai. In Fujairah, the Barkats are one of the most important land-owning families. Another branch of his family holds important positions in the Omani military. Importantly, the rewards of Mirza Barkat's conquest are not limited to his direct descendants. His emphatic victory created space in the Persian Gulf for other Baloch people. Faqeer Shad wrote *Miras* (Heritage), one of the most comprehensive collection of Balochi epics.<sup>16</sup> He contends that figures like Mirza Barkat were instrumental in allowing Baloch throughout the Gulf to

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<sup>14</sup> File 13/7 'Illicit Trade of Arms and Ammunition' [152r] (303/372), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/5/48

<sup>15</sup> Coll 30/105(1) 'Trucial Coast. Dubai Affairs: Hostilities between Sheiks of Dubai and Abu-Dhabi in respect of Ghanadhah (abu-Dhabi-Dubai Camel Dispute), British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/L/PS/12/3828

<sup>16</sup> Like Jaffar Kadu, Faqeer Shad had not published his book at the time I met him in Bahrain in December 2014. However, parts of the book had earlier been published by the Baloch Academy Press Quetta in 2002.

openly celebrate their Balochness. He insists that it was because of the bravery of people like Mirza Barkat that he found employment in the Bahraini police, which eventually allowed him to put together his collection of epics.<sup>17</sup>

Within Baloch oral history, Shahdad Chota, Chakar Rind and Mirza Barkat are not peculiar figure. Baloch recollection of the past is replete with references to conquerors who do not manage to get themselves written into history.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, literary figures like Jaffar Kadu, Chakar Rind (II) and Faqeer Shad are not unique in mobilizing the legacy of these conquerors to both understand and improve the position of Baloch communities outside Balochistan.<sup>19</sup> Baloch conquerors might not have been able to write themselves into the past, but they allow for the Baloch outside of Balochistan to write themselves into the present.

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<sup>17</sup> Detailed discussion in the conclusion.

<sup>18</sup> Other examples:

irnaturalHammal Hoth: At the end of the 15th century, the Portuguese empire at its peak started raiding Balochistan on suspicions that locals in the area were harboring Ottoman naval captains. The resistance to the Portuguese was led by Hammal Hoth, who took the war to Portuguese in other parts such as Muscat. Hammal eventually was captured and put to death. There is still a memorial in his name in Goa. The first Balochi feature length film was based on the epics of Hammal Hoth.

Mirani and Jalali: There are two forts still standing in Muscat by the name of Al-Mirani and Al-Jalali. While there is no clear records on who the two figures after whom the forts are named, but in Balochi folklore Mirani and Jalali are recognized as heroes who like Hammal defeated the Portuguese in Muscat. The Baloch in Muscat often claim belonging within Oman through these forts.

<sup>19</sup> Most of the online social network communities ran by Baloch outside Balochistan constantly publish articles and posts on their forgotten forefathers who conquered land in order to open lands outside Balochistan for the Baloch society. Example of such online forums on Facebook include: 'Indian Baloch', 'Karachi Indigenous Community', 'Al-Balushi', 'Deraghazi Khan Baloch', 'Rinds of Punjab', and 'Worldwide Baloch History'.

When woven together, these narratives of Baloch conquest present an impressive geography that extends along both the western Indian Ocean coastline and the territorial plains of Indo-Persia. Along the shore, Baloch conquest connects Gujarat, Sindh, Persian Gulf, and East Africa. On land, they extend across Balochistan into the plains of Sindh and Punjab, reaching all the way north to Delhi.<sup>20</sup> Baloch narratives of conquests bring together a vast geography on par with the largest empires in the region's history. However, unlike narratives of other imperial expansion, the Baloch conquests remain outside of state histories, as seen in textbooks, plaques, and museums.

While absent from textual and material histories, the memory of these conquerors lives through the Baloch community living in the various areas of conquest. The map of Baloch conquest overlaps with the geography of Baloch communities outside Balochistan. Currently, there are more Baloch living outside of Balochistan than in Balochistan.<sup>21</sup> The numerous cities around the Western Indian Ocean are numerically

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<sup>20</sup> According to the editor of the Indian Baloch Facebook page: "The most important Baloch colonies in #UttarPradesh are those of Amirnagar, Garhi Abdullah Khan(Kachhi Garhi), Garhi Pukhta(Pakki Garhi), Jasoi and Baghra in Muzaffarnagar District they all villages were rewarded by Aurangzeb to four brothers Sher Khan, Amir Khan, Bairam khan, Hashim Khan and their sister's husband Abdullah khan they all were from baloch families. They settled in the district during the rule of the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, and rose to prominence as the Mughal Empire disintegrated. Another two prominent Baloch families were those of Tajpuri and Jhajhar, in Bulandshahr District. The Tajpuri Baloch are descended from Nahar Khan, who is said to have from Seistan during the rule of Alauddin Khilji. Nahar Khan was latter appointed governor of Deccan, and his son Sardar Khan founded a settlement in Ganaura Shaikh, and the family rose to some prominence during the rule of the Aurangzeb. While the Jhajhar family claim descent from Syed Mohammad Khan, a Leghari Baluch, who was granted a jagir by the Mughal Emperor Humayun. They played a key role in the post-Mughal history of the Doab region, but began to decline with the rise of British power in the 19th century."

<sup>21</sup> As per the latest census in Pakistan (2017) the Baloch population in Balochistan is 6.86 million.

small, but socially prominent Baloch Diasporas, including Mombasa (Kenya), Bahrain, Sharjah (UAE), Muscat (Oman), Karachi (Pakistan) and Jamnagar (India). Additionally, a significant number of local tribes claim Baloch descent in the territorial areas adjacent to the East of Balochistan, namely Sindh and Punjab as well as costal border areas on the Batinah coast in the Persian Gulf.<sup>22</sup> There exists small Baloch neighborhoods and villages in areas as far east as Delhi.<sup>23</sup>

The Baloch living across these different territories have little in common with each other. Since at least the 15th century, Baloch people have moved in various directions under different socio-political conditions.<sup>24</sup> Overtime, Baloch in different areas developed distinct cultures and modes of representation. In some areas they maintained a distinct Baloch culture across centuries, while in others they developed a hybrid culture, or even a Baloch culture hyphenated with the local society in which the local and Baloch culture stand as separate but interconnected elements. In terms of language, they continued to speak Balochi in some areas, but in others switched to a creole language or became bilingual by adopting the language of the locals.

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The Baloch population in Karachi alone is close to half a million.

<sup>22</sup> The Baloch population in Southern Punjab is over 4 million. Additionally, the Baloch population in Oman is close to quarter million. (Peterson, J. E. "The Baluch Presence in the Persian Gulf." *Sectarian Politics in the Persian Gulf*. London: Hurst (2013).

<sup>23</sup> For a detailed history of Baloch in India, see: Aziz, Ahmed. *Balochan-e-Hind*. Book Club Press. Karachi. 2002

<sup>24</sup> Amongst the earliest Baloch settlers outside Balochistan were the Dodai chiefs who established their own chieftainship through grants offered by the Langh's in Multan. See: Biggs-Davison, John. "Dera Ghazi Khan: The Baloch tribal area." *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society* 37, no. 3-4 (1950): 284-292.

As a result, the Baloch in present-day Mombasa and Multan share little in common, despite the former being the site of Shahdad Chota's conquest and the latter a stopover point for Chakar Rind before he proceeded to Delhi. They dress and speak differently, with neither speaking Balochi. They are socially organized in dissimilar ways, each concerned with their own distinct political questions. In fact, the only thing they share is their tendency to trace their presence outside Balochistan through an originary conquest. Baloch conquests might not have brought together an expansive Baloch state in the past, but they continue to tie together a Baloch society spread across space in the present. Baloch conquest narratives remain instrumental to attempts at connecting differentiated Baloch geographies.

## ***1.2 Top-down conquest versus bottom-up oral histories***

In this regard, Baloch are part of a larger historiographical tradition of using conquest narratives to forge similarities across time and space. In both academic and popular histories, conquests mark geographic and temporal boundaries of a unit of study, within which one can trace continuities in state structures and social practices. South Asian historiography, for example, demarcates the Mughal and Colonial rule into two distinct time periods, distinguished on each end by conquests and counter conquests. The Mughal period begins with the conquest of Babar and ends with the conquests by their rivals, like the British Empire. Within the period demarcated as Mughal or Colonial, there were several discontinuities in structures of state and society. Yet all dramatic transformations can be studied as part of these time periods. Fragments



of time marked by conquests on both end provide history with stable temporal units of analysis within which a continuity can be assumed without the labor of proving it.

Similarly, the geographical space of India is outlined by the reach of its conquerors. Imperial maps were never stable representations, as empires constantly expanded and retracted. Geography that lays within the limits of the furthest conquest is assumed as part of a shared imperial space. The maps of Area Studies are perhaps the clearest articulation of conquest geography being elevated to the status of a unified space. Despite regional and local difference, India, for example, remains a recognizable object of investigation because conquest narratives have rarefied its boundaries. Conquest narratives, in this regard, are instrumental in shaping our sense of the past. They offer periods of time, with clear outlines of spaces, within which one can assume continuity and order.

Of late, conquest driven state archive based historical narratives have faced criticism for privileging a top-down view of the past.<sup>25</sup> Conquest narratives present history only from the viewpoint of the conqueror. Conquerors monopolize the pen by controlling the sword. Upon conquest they force onto societies a continuity of order that

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<sup>25</sup> See: Stoler, Ann Laura. "Colonial archives and the arts of governance: on the content in the form." In *Refiguring the archive*, pp. 83-102. Springer Netherlands, 2002. Also, see: Pandey, Gyanendra, ed. *Unarchived Histories: The "mad" and the "trifling" in the Colonial and Postcolonial World*. Vol. 10. Routledge, 2013. Furthermore, see: Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. *Silencing the past: Power and the production of history*. Beacon Press, 1995.

has categorized different things under the same name; as a kind of political and social shorthand.

The continuities within time and space of conquest are then only impositions of the powerful trying to forge unity where there may be none to capitalize on. In hopes of finding alternatives to top-down view of conquest narratives, historians turned to non-textual oral sources and ethnographic methods<sup>26</sup>. While oral histories have long been recorded and analyzed, only recently have they emerged out of the 'folk' category. Oral histories, as Shahid Amin argues, are alternative histories, not alternatives to history.<sup>27</sup> Inspired by ethnographic methods, oral historians search for alternate history in folklore, epics, poetry, religious prayers and personal narratives.<sup>28</sup> They treat these sources as a legitimate reservoir to the past. Even if these sources do not meticulously maintain year by year records, they represent the past as experienced by those within the society. Oral sources might not be corroborated by other texts and citations, but they garner reliability by being circulated within a society over and over again.<sup>29</sup> Oral

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<sup>26</sup> The move towards combining bottom-up anthropological methods with a top-down historical narrative was first suggested by Bernard Cohn in his monumental article, see: Cohn, Bernard S. "History and anthropology: The state of play." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (1980): 198-221. Several scholars from both sides of the anthropology and history divide have since built upon Cohn's suggestion to articulate an 'ethnohistorical' methodology.

<sup>27</sup> Amin, Shahid. *Conquest and Community: The Afterlife of Warrior Saint Ghazi Miyan*. University of Chicago Press, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> For some exciting new works within this field see: 'Brown, Vincent. *The Reaper's Garden: Death and Power in the World of Atlantic Slavery*. Harvard University Press, 2008',

<sup>29</sup> Amin, Shahid. *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992*. Univ of California Press, 1995.

histories offer a bottom-up view of the past through the eyes of those who control neither the pen nor the sword.<sup>30</sup>

Oral histories in many ways are the mirror opposite of conquest narratives. Oral histories present a bottom-up view while conquest histories present a top-down approach to the past. Conquest narratives privilege the perspective of the powerful and oral histories place the powerless at its center. Conquest narratives glorify the successful campaigns of the conquerors; oral histories celebrate the resistance to such campaigns. Conquest narratives forward an expansive outlook of foreign conquerors attempting to bring broad swaths of territory under their rule. Oral histories present an 'indigenous' history of natives from within a small local space. Conquest narratives speak of state expansion, while oral histories highlight the social life of locals. Conquest narratives name different things under the same name, oral histories give different things their distinct local names.

The stark opposition between oral histories and conquest narratives leaves Baloch oral conquest narratives in a strange in-between place. On the one hand they read just like any other top-down emperor's conquest narrative. Like other narratives of conquerors conquering lands abroad, Baloch conquest narratives also speak of Baloch men traveling outside Balochistan to lay claim to land to which they were not locals. The

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<sup>30</sup> Abrams, Lynn. *Oral history theory*. Routledge, 2016.

content of the epics is replete with retellings of their victorious forefathers wielding a sword.

On the other hand, Baloch narratives circulate just like other bottom-up oral histories. Despite claiming control of the sword, Baloch did not come to monopolize the pen. Their mode of dissemination closely resembles other oral histories: spread through multiple retellings within a horizontal society. Baloch conquest narratives tie together different places and times, but they do not aggregate them under a single banner of a Baloch state.

How then should we read these oral conquest narratives in particular and the expansion of Baloch society in general? Given their content, should they be read as top-down narratives, along with reading the spread of Baloch people as state expansion? If so, how do we explain the fact they controlled the sword but not the pen? Alternatively, due to the way they are circulated, should these narratives be treated as bottom-up oral histories? Then how do we understand the circulation of both Baloch narratives and people beyond the geography of local preservation as the proper domain of bottom-up oral histories?

### ***1.3 In-between narratives of portfolio mercenaries***

It is the contention of this chapter in particular and the dissertation in general, that Baloch conquerors conquered without naming the conquered territory in their own name. As a result, while the conquest itself is known through Baloch oral narratives, but the conquerors themselves go unrecognized in state histories.

The most recent accounts of Baloch conquest without history comes from the 2011 Arab Spring protests. As flames of popular uprising against authoritarian rulers in the Middle East caught on in Bahrain, the small ruling Sunni elites found themselves besieged by a Shia majority. According to the Baloch in Bahrain, the Shia majority would have been successful in overthrowing the regime had it not been for Baloch soldiers. It was because of Baloch soldiers bravely holding their positions outside key sites and infrastructures that the regime survived. However, much like the endeavors of Baloch in the past, their efforts went unrecognized.

One of Baloch police officers who served on the frontline of the uprising took me to visit a new exhibition in the Bahraini military museum commemorating this recent victory. The museum itself contained several paintings recreating historical battles. Despite the fact that Baloch were instrumental in most of them, they were not named anywhere. The exhibition on the Arab Spring, like other sections, had on display a series of photographs of the Bahraini security forces and pro-government marchers. My guide found himself, or rather the back of his head, in one of the photographs with a large number of police officers encircling foreign embassies. Recalling the moment, he claimed that the picture was from the early days of the uprising. Backup forces had not yet arrived from abroad. Despite being ill-equipped and outnumbered, Baloch managed to keep control of most strategic sites. The picture had mentioned no names.

A few days later, the same guide took me to visit his friend Faqeer Shad. Shad, while a police officer himself, was better known in Baloch circles for compiling the most

comprehensive collection of Balochi epics in a book titled *Miras*, or *Heritage*. Shad claims that many of the epics, dating all the way back to the 16th century, had never before been committed to text. Through *Miras* Shad believes he has preserved Baloch history spread across a broad geography that likely would have been lost with the passing away of an older generation of Baloch people. For Shad, the fact that history of conquest lives only through Baloch oral retelling, and not other textual sources, is not surprising. According to him, Baloch conquest is not written down under Baloch names, because Baloch people did not conquer in their own name. Baloch instead conquered on behalf of other political actors and empires. Chakar Rind, for example, conquered Delhi for the Mughals. Shahdad Chota conquered Mombasa for the Omanis. Similarly, Mirza Barkat conquered Deira for the ruling family of Dubai. Even the Baloch on the frontlines in Bahrain are conquering in someone else's name.

Shad's claim finds support in the fact that, while Baloch conquerors remain absent from non-Baloch textual sources, Baloch soldiers are recurring characters. Baloch feature prominently in both colonial records and earlier *Fatehnamehs* and other imperial chronicles, as generals, military suppliers, raiders, foot soldiers, fort guards and freelance mercenaries.<sup>31</sup> Chronicles of the Mughal king, Humayun, a contemporary of Chakar Rind, mention the presence of Baloch soldiers in the retinue that conquered

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<sup>31</sup> Kolff mentions that all around the Indus River there were small Kasbas of Baloch that acted like military entrepreneurs, selling their military service to caravan traders and kings alike. See: Kolff, Dirk H.A. *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market of Hindustan, 1450-1850*. Vol. 43. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Delhi.<sup>32</sup> Histories of the Omani Ya'arubi Empire mention a military general in their army by the name of Shahdad b Shadi Al-Balushi leading the charge on Fort Jesus in Mombasa<sup>33</sup> Similarly, twentieth century colonial records from the Persian Gulf do not mention Mirza Barkat's conquests, but they do list Baloch as the single largest ethnic group in the police and military.<sup>34</sup>

Wary of the essentializing theory of 'martial races' inscribing a cultural proclivity towards violence onto Baloch people, Faeer Shad insists that military service was not an end in itself. Military service was instead just the means towards other social ends. Military service abroad offered access to political and economic resources that could be mobilized towards furthering the interests of the Baloch society. For instance, in return for his services to the Mughals, Chakar Rind received large land grants in Punjab, upon which he settled other Rinds. Many of these Rinds are still large landowners in Punjab.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Shahdad Chota opened for other Baloch opportunities in managing and guarding trade caravans. Some of the leading transport and logistics firms in East Africa are still owned by Baloch.<sup>36</sup> Mirza Barkat set a precedent of hiring mainly Baloch people

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<sup>32</sup> Humayunnama. Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Kitab al-zunuj p. 241. As quoted in Bhacker, M. Reda. 1992 Trade and empire in Muscat and Zanzibar: roots of British domination. London: Routledge.

<sup>34</sup> Nicolini, Beatrice. "The Baluch role in the Persian gulf during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries." Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East 27, no. 2 (2007): 384-396.

<sup>35</sup> Gilmartin, David. Blood and water: the Indus river basin in modern history. Univ of California Press, 2015. [Chapter 2]

<sup>36</sup> A published diary of a Bohri trader written in early 20th century has several mentions of their business links with Baloch transporters [See: Salvadori, Cynthia, and Judy Aldrick. "Two Indian

in the police and militaries of countries that had earlier not been dependent on Baloch, like UAE and Bahrain. The fact that Baloch today constitute the largest ethnic group in Bahrain's security apparatus is part of this legacy.

Through military service in foreign states, Baloch expanded across the Western Indian Ocean littoral and the territorial plains of Sindh and Punjab. As they spread they took on different roles beyond military labor. Some received land grants and became landowners or peasants on farms of feudal landowning Baloch. Others took on mobile careers as traders, transporters and caravan guards. Yet others built political legacies as governors, advisors, and even kings themselves. For example, the Baloch subtribe of Talpurs started off in Sindh as the military retinue of the Kalhoras, but later overthrew them to become kings themselves.<sup>37</sup>

The recurring life arc — of Baloch starting as soldier abroad and proceeding into other lines of work — can be aggregated under the ideal type of 'Portfolio Mercenaries'.<sup>38</sup> For portfolio mercenaries, soldiering was just one temporary activity

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Travellers: East Africa 1902-1905." Trans. Vimla Chavda and Shariffa Keshavjee. Mombasa: Friends of Fort Jesus (1997). In present day East Africa, one of the most renowned expert on logistics and transportation is Issa Baluch, who even published his own book on the topic [See: Baluch, Issa. Transport logistics: past, present, and predictions. Winning Books, 2005.]

<sup>37</sup> See: Mehr, Ghulam Rasool. "Tarikh-i-Sindh: Ahd-i-Kalhora." two volumes, Sindhi Adabi Board, Hyderabad (Sindh) (1958): 142-143.

<sup>38</sup> The concept is derived from the category of 'Portfolio Capitalist' developed by Subrahmanyam and Bayly in order to move beyond the understanding of a merchant as someone whose activities were limited to trade and commerce alone. They write: "Our primary purpose is to distinguish various sub-groups or types within the rather amorphous heading of 'merchants', and to argue that at least some of them were able to straddle the worlds of commerce and political participation. The existence of such persons, who are here designated by the term 'portfolio capitalist', militates—we are aware—against certain long-cherished notions concerning the



within a broad portfolio of options— including trade, agriculture and politics. Moreover, being a mercenary was merely the means to achieve other social ends. Portfolio mercenaries expanded a state in another name in hopes of building a name within the Baloch society. Historical characters like Rind, Chota, and Barkat are cherished heroes, not because they expanded states ambit, but because they facilitated the mobility of other fellow Baloch. Portfolio mercenaries can thus be placed at the center of two different movements: a foreign empire expanding one way and Baloch society moving in the other direction.

#### ***1.4 Rethinking mobile state and society***

States expand with guns and societies move without them. This assumption forms the basis of the distinction between mobile states and societies.<sup>39</sup> Those with guns conquer and write themselves as rulers through top-down histories. Those without guns integrate, collaborate or maintain distance with native societies. Without access to resources that come with top-down conquests, they preserve their past through bottom-up oral histories.

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separation of mercantile activity and military and political power in 'traditional' (which may be read as 'precolonial') India. [Subrahmanyam, Sanjay, and Christopher A. Bayly. "Portfolio capitalists and the political economy of early modern India." *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 25, no. 4 (1988): 401-424.]

<sup>39</sup> In cases where state and society both are bounded within a given territory, the distinction between the two is consolidated through legal frameworks, bureaucratic structures and cultural enactments; all developed through sustained interactions over a long time within a bounded space. In the case of mobile state and society, the difference between the two is boiled down to the fact that one moves with gun and the other moves without it.

Baloch conquerors who do not rule destabilizes this neat division between mobile states and societies. Portfolio mercenaries moved by using guns in one direction and moved without using them in another. They expanded a state in another's name in one part of the world, to mobilize Baloch society in another part. Baloch mobility holds important clues to understanding the expansion and consolidation of several states dependent on Baloch mercenaries — Mughal of India, Langhs of Multan, Kalhoras of Sindh, Princedoms of Gujarat, Ya'arubi Imamate and Al Bu Said Sultanate in Oman and East Africa, the British Empire, and even modern city-states in the Persian Gulf. At the same time this mobility also tells of an often-ignored history of a society spread across various geographies.

The relationship between state and society remains at the heart of social sciences. However, theoretical models for understanding this relationship have largely been based on the state and society as it existed in Europe.<sup>40</sup> The peculiar feature of the state-society relationship in Europe was that it developed within a bounded territorial space.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial thought and historical difference*. Princeton University Press, 2009.

<sup>41</sup> Victor Lieberman divides the Eurasian landmass into two separate zones: protected rimlands and exposed zones. The rimland consisted of Western Europe and South-East Asia, while the exposed zones were essentially the entire muslim world that laid in between (Lieberman himself does not call it the 'muslim world'). As a result of their geographical position, according to Lieberman, both these spaces followed different trajectories of historical development. The rimland areas, cut off from the rest of Eurasia, were able to experience a continuous indigenous historical trajectory within a bounded geography. In the exposed zones, however, history never accumulated within the same territory. Due to constant circulation of conquerors, migrants, and goods, historical developments — such as the development of the state — was not bound to land. [Lieberman, Victor. *Strange Parallels: Volume 2, Mainland Mirrors: Europe, Japan, China, South Asia, and the Islands: Southeast Asia in Global Context, C. 800-1830*. Vol. 2. Cambridge

Consequently, both state and society came to be recognized by the same name used for the territory they lived in.<sup>42</sup> For example, the English state represents the English society living inside the territory of England.

Theoretical models developed to understand state and society named the same name and thus came to assume a direct one-to-one correlation between the two.

Consequently, other states and societies beyond the immediate territory were considered as external influences only tangentially influencing the internal relationship between state and society.<sup>43</sup> There remains a stark lack in social science of theoretical models that treat external states and societies as essential elements of an internal order.<sup>44</sup>

Conquerors who do not rule, or portfolio mercenaries, offer us a unique vantage point from which to rethink the state and society relationship. Like other social science theories, it ties together state and society into a dialectical relationship. Yet it does not subsume one into the other or make the relationship exclusive. The state and society represented by portfolio mercenaries are known by different names. The geography of the states represented by the portfolio Baloch overlaps but does not fully cohere with the

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University Press, 2003.]

<sup>42</sup> Ho, Engseng. "Names beyond Nations." *Études rurales* 3 (2002): 215-231.

<sup>43</sup> For a key exception see: Bayart, Jean-François. "The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly (trans Mary Harper, Christopher Harrison & Elizabeth Harrison)." (1993).

<sup>44</sup> While studies on global phenomenon like capitalism, colonialism, (neo) liberalism, (post)modernism, and imperialism treat external influences as powerful forces in the internal state-society relationship, they overdetermined the power relationship between the internal and external. The external almost always has its origins in Europe and works by bulldozing through older relationships between state and society. External influences in this configuration act as outside impositions that suppress and transform earlier relationships between state and society formed internally through interactions in a bounded space.

geography of Baloch outside Balochistan. Similarly, the history of Baloch societies' expansion and the expansion of these other states were part of a closely related story, without being one and the same thing.

The dual movement of conquerors who do not rule lies at the heart of this dissertation. It traces the expansion and consolidation of foreign states, as well as the movement and settlement of Baloch society as part of an interrelated historical process. Through this unique combination of state and society, this study looks to formulate a conceptual model better suited for the mobile world of the Indian Ocean and Indo-Persia. It asks: how does the mobility of a society situated beyond a state's boundary shape political order? Similarly, how does the simultaneous influence of various states order a society spread across political boundaries?

## ***1.5 Three modes of mobility***

### **1.5.1 A historiographical problem**

Before we proceed to these questions, a historiographical problem needs to be addressed—of there being too much history. Mobile portfolio mercenaries in their various avatars appear within and outside state machineries in various parts of the world. As mercenaries, the Baloch fought within armies of the Mughals Empire, the Omani Thalassocracies, British Colonial Empire, small kingdoms in Sindh and Punjab, and even modern-day nation-states of Bahrain, Oman and UAE. As portfolio actors, they were involved in socio-economic activities including but not limited to trade,

agriculture and transportation. As mobile people they traversed boundaries of cities, provinces, states and even regions.

Baloch moving in different directions over an extended period of time, cut across a range of distinct historical canons. Portfolio mercenaries are part of various discrete historical traditions, ostensibly with little connection to each other. They emerge in histories of Medieval Indian empires, move into the Indian Ocean world of trade and commerce, reemerge in records of Colonial expansion, and finally continue into the story of the post-oil boom Persian Gulf. The history of Baloch portfolio mercenaries thus implicated various geographical spaces and time periods bound in different boxes, each with its own set of experts and literature.

Anthropological monographs often open with a historical background chapter. The opening chapter situates the central object of investigation into a longer history, allowing readers to perceive changes detailed later. Given the wide dispersal of the Baloch, how do we outline their proper historical context? This chapter attempts to solve the problem of unwieldy Baloch history. Instead of trying to place Baloch within discrete historical traditions of the various times and places they occupied, the chapter traces the connected world of mobile Baloch. Rather than placing Baloch within a clearly defined spatial and temporal box, the chapter follows mobile Baloch across space and time.

Empirically, I trace the mobile world of Baloch through the in-between oral conquest narratives. The chapter understands conquest narratives as co-creations of the

conqueror and the narrator.<sup>45</sup> Conquest narratives are neither simply factual retelling of a past, nor are they just symbolic creations of contemporary narrators. They instead are historical artifacts shaped by their retellings across centuries. Conquest narratives, I argue, can reveal to us both the nature of initial expansion and transformations over time. Oral narratives of conquest are at once primary sources of state expansion in space and social transformations in time.

In particular oral narratives bring into focus three different Baloch conquerors, Chakar Rind, Shahdad Chota, and Mirza Barkat, and three Baloch narrators based outside Balochistan— Chakar Rind (II), Jaffar Kadu, and Faqeer Shad. The conquerors and narrators offer a rough spatial and temporal scope of the mobile Baloch world. Temporally they begin in the 16th century, the heyday of large medieval Mongol empires. They continue into the period of decline for Mongol empires and the rise of oceanic trade and later the Colonial empires. As the narratives of Bahraini soldiers in the contemporary period highlight, conquest narratives continue even in our world of nation-states. Geographically they stretch on the one hand from Persian Makran to Delhi; and on the other hand, they extend across the Western Indian Ocean.

More importantly, oral conquest narratives allow us to dissect the mobile Baloch world conceptually. The three conquerors discussed in this chapter, despite sharing certain elements, were not identical figures. Together they reveal that not all conquests

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<sup>45</sup> Amin, Shahid. *Event, Metaphor, Memory: Chauri Chaura, 1922-1992*. Univ of California Press, 1995.

are the same. Some conquests were temporary; in which conquerors moved on after conquest. At other times conquerors settled down and established rule in the area of conquest. At yet other moments, conquerors continued to move back and forth between sites of conquest; tying them together in the process to a shared network.

Borrowing from anthropological theories of mobility, this chapter categorizes the different modes of conquests into three categories: nomadic, frontier, and diasporic.

Nomadic conquerors move on after conquest without inducing structural changes.

Frontier conquerors make the area of conquest their permanent settlement and adapt to hybrid modes of rule that take into account the local circumstances and societies.

Diasporic conquerors conquer in order to bring new areas into its own network of conquered cities. The same model can be extended to studying how mobile societies change over time. Nomads move as an enclosed tribe immune to outside influences and maintain their original social structures across time. Frontier groups settle in the new lands and overtime meld together with locals to form hybrid societies. Through patterned circulation over long periods of time, Diasporas develop linked societies disconnected in space but connected via regular exchanges.

The three conquerors and narrators driving the chapter showcase these different modes of mobility in action. Together they paint the mobile Baloch world both in its original instance of expansion, and the social transformation it has seen over time. The different modes of mobility conceptually categorize the Baloch world without drawing rigid boundaries. They help us formulate a conceptual model for understanding the

Baloch world without aggregating it into a single homogeneous space, nor dividing it into an infinite number of local sites. Moreover, these modes of mobility fit well with the in-between position of Baloch past. They allow us to treat Baloch movement as both expansion as state and society in the same instance.

### **1.5.2 Nomadic mobility**

Balochi folklorist Sabir Badal Khan argues that Baloch have preserved their history across centuries without the use of texts by rendering oral history into verses:

All their history was preserved in verse narratives, called sayr as a genre, but daptar sayr as a sub-genre when it comes to verse narratives containing historical material.... Baloch tribal poets known as rezwar sair in Eastern Balochistan and zangisahi in the rest of Balochistan, were well versed in the past history of the Baloch in general and that of their patron's tribe in particular. Their main task was to compose verses on any event of some importance in order to keep the record for the coming generations as well as to propagate it to the near and far lands and tribes."<sup>46</sup>

Just like other Medieval kings sanctioning courtly histories, Baloch chiefs ordered poets to compose verses on important events, people, genealogies, and chiefly qualities. While the Medieval kings preserved and propagated their tazkiras in texts, circulation of Balochi epics depended on nomadic bards. Nomadic bards travelled between various Baloch populations, both within and outside Balochistan, taking with them daptar sayrs containing important aspects of the Baloch past.

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<sup>46</sup> Khan, Sabir Badal. Two Essays on Baloch History and Folklore: Two Essays on Baloch History and Folklore. Vol. 5. Università di Napoli, "l'Orientale", 2015. p.15



Faqeer Shad, a Bahraini police officer and collector of Balochi epics, argues that recitation of Balochi epics is a central feature of all Baloch social events, including birth, coming of age, marriage and even death. Bards, according to Shad, would be invited to perform at these events, even if they took place outside Balochistan.<sup>47</sup> He further claims that even those Baloch who, having moved abroad, lost their Balochness could quickly reconnect with their lost past by inviting bards to perform at events. Consequently, the bards themselves were constantly traveling from one place to another, singing epics about a Baloch past. Through the movement of bards, Baloch populations living in different parts of the world could share a similar imagination of their past.

Brian Spooner, one of the earliest anthropologists to work on Baloch nomads, argues that the reverence for nomadic lifestyle was not the result of primordial cultural values. Instead, it was in recognition of the important role nomadic groups played in producing a Baloch world

The significance of the nomads for the future development of Balochistan far outweighs their number or their economic contributions. They are the only people who use or are ever likely to use some 90 percent of the territory of Balochistan. Without them the greater part of the population would be marooned in isolated oases, which on their own do not have the resources to be economically independent....With the nomads, the Baluch population as a whole forms an interdependent social and cultural, as well as economic and political network covering the whole of the area.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Shad himself often invited these bards to come and stay at his house during tours in the Persian Gulf.

<sup>48</sup> Spooner, Brian. "Nomads in a wider society." *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 8, no. 1 (1984). p.63

Nomadic Baloch, according to Spooner, produced a Baloch culture across differences of locality and tribe. Without them, Baloch populations living in pockets would have diverged culturally. Over time, tribes living in different places would have developed distinct collective representations. Without nomads, populations in 'isolated oases' would have strengthened local place-based or tribal identities at the cost of a supra-Baloch identity. In support of his argument, Spooner points to the fact that only nomadic groups in Balochistan use the last name 'Baloch'. Everyone else has either tribe, family, or hometown as their last name.<sup>49</sup>

In order to connect population pockets into a unified Baloch cultural space, nomadic groups had to themselves remain Baloch across their travels. As the propagators of Baloch culture and the link between different Baloch societies, they had to preserve their own sense of Balochness in both time and space. In order to do so, nomadic tribes moved as an enclosed self-sufficient village able to reproduce itself each generation with minimal changes.

Materially, nomadic tribes adapted various practical techniques— of quickly packing and setting up their living spaces, identifying necessary material sources and carrying them on animals, charting out available natural resources— that allowed them to move without the need for goods from other tribes. Socially, nomadic tribes had a

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<sup>49</sup> "[the term] Baluch, was adopted by settled populations to referred to bands of nomadic pastoralists who roamed the uncultivated land in their vicinity, regardless of their supposed racial origin or the language they spoke." [Spooner, Brian. "Politics, Kinship, and Ecology in Southeast Persia." *Ethnology* 8, no. 2 (1969): 139-152.]

strong preference for endogamous marriages with patrilineal cousins travelling with the mobile village. Organizationally, the nomadic tribe was integrated under a hereditary chief said to be first amongst equals; dividing resources within the tribes and adjudicating on disputes internally without recourse to an outside state.

These material, social, and organizational strategies passed along generations, allowing nomadic tribes to preserve themselves by minimizing outside influences. Nomadic tribes sustained themselves by rearing mobile animals that could be used for hides, milk, and meat. However, the output from animals was not very stable. Nomadic tribes often encountered sharp decline in animal herd through famine, loot and diseases. In such situations they opened themselves to interaction with settled tribes through the practice of raiding.

The practice of nomads raiding and moving on was a ubiquitous feature of the medieval Muslim world. As the historian Karen Barkey points out, raiding was not simply a disruptive practice standing in the way of the normal order of things.<sup>50</sup> Instead, it was integrated into the political order as a systematic element. Settled tribes could pay raiding tribes a protection fee in order to discourage raids by the nomadic protectors and their related tribes. Additionally, empires outsourced tax-collection to nomadic raiding bands to share with them in the profits through extraction. Within popular imagination, even the spread of Islam across Indo-Persia is read through the folkloric

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<sup>50</sup> Barkey, Karen. *Bandits and bureaucrats: the Ottoman route to state centralization*. Cornell University Press, 1994.

raids of Ameer Hamza. Though the historical Ameer Hamza, a paternal uncle to the Holy Prophet Muhammad, lived and died in Arabia, in popular memory he conquered a geography stretching from Greece to Ceylon through whirlwind raids.<sup>51</sup>

The epics of Chakar Rind, the Baloch conqueror, begin with him claiming Baloch to be descendants of Ameer Hamza. The epics proceed to call on Chakar Rind's followers to pack their tents, load their horses and camels, and forsake their homeland in the spirit of Ameer Hamza.<sup>52</sup> Following their departure from their native lands in Southern Balochistan, Chakar Rind and his followers conquer the city of Sibbi, located on the frontiers of Sindh and Balochistan. After Sibbi, Chakar raided and conquered parts of Sindh. He then attempted to raid parts of Southern Punjab, ruled by another Baloch tribe, but failed. From there Chakar Rind moved to Multan where, rather than raiding, he came to a mutual agreement with the Langh's and used their connections with the Mughals to join Humayun's raiding party that conquered Delhi.<sup>53</sup>

Within the pantheon of Baloch conquerors without history, Chakar Rind is not the only one to have a track record of departing after conquest. Jaffer Kadu, the author

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<sup>51</sup> Moin, A. Azfar. *The millennial sovereign: sacred kingship and sainthood in Islam*. Columbia University Press, 2012. p.45-46

<sup>52</sup> Shad, Faqeer. *Miras*. [unpublished]. Also, according to an epic recorded by Sabir Badal Khan, Ameer Hamza was separated from the Prophet Muhammad during a hunting trip and he stumbled into koh-e-kaf (the mythical homeland of ghosts and fairies). In the land of the ghosts, Hamza married a fairy who went on to bear his child. All Baloch, in this particular iteration of the epic, are descendants of this child. [Khan, Sabir Badal. *Two Essays on Baloch History and Folklore: Two Essays on Baloch History and Folklore*. Vol. 5. Università di Napoli, "l'Orientale", 2015. p.34-35]

<sup>53</sup> *Miras* [unpublished].

of History of Baloch in East Africa, claims that Shahdad Chota departed back to Makran after conquering Fort Jesus. Similarly, Mirza Barkat's grandson argues that his grandfather was offered his own emirate in Deira. As the rightful conqueror, he was expected to establish his own kingdom alongside the several other small states in the region. However, according to his grandson, Barkat was not greedy for power. He instead just dreamt of being reunited with his homeland, and hence moved back. Interestingly, he came back to the Gulf a few years later to assist the Omani ruling dynasty of Al Bu Saidi's in crushing the rebellion in Dhofar. After another successful conquest, he moved to Sharjah where he later passed away.<sup>54</sup>

Even amongst the current generation of Baloch conquerors in Bahrain, the island-state is seen only as an interstice en route to a better life for the generation to come. For the Baloch in the Bahraini security apparatus, an ideal life plan includes obtaining Bahraini citizenship upon retirement. The Bahraini passport, which is much more conducive to mobility than a Pakistani one originally held by the Baloch, opens business opportunities in the thriving economy of the Gulf States, with laws heavily favoring Gulf passport holders in business interactions.<sup>55</sup>

Yet, the Baloch involved in local electoral politics in Bahrain are strongly opposed to the strategy of moving on after giving years of their life to the cause of the adopted state. They feel that Baloch soldiers who put their life at stake in defense of

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<sup>54</sup> Interview with Mirza Barkat's grandson.

<sup>55</sup> See Chapter 5.

Bahrain should demand more from their adopted state than just a passport. They should ask to be recognized as a pillar of the state, just like the royal families. Because the Baloch move on after service, today there is so little Baloch representation in the formal political sphere. As one of the opponents of the constant movement strategy argues, “this policy of conquering and moving on has reduced Baloch to security guards who can be easily replaced. Had we grounded ourselves to one place and forced other to recognize the significance of the role Baloch play, we would have been kings.”<sup>56</sup>

A rolling stone gathers no moss. Raiders, unlike rulers do not write themselves into history. They conquer and move on. Rulers, on the other hand, set up structures of rule under their own name after conquest. Rulers realize the importance of not just conquering through force alone, but slowly writing themselves into the history of the region. Raiders do not write themselves into history. They do not need to ground themselves as the sovereign through history-making, they need to just raid and move on. As nomads, raiders move with a light footprint. Their raid can gain momentary significance, but in a longer timeframe they do not induce broader changes. Raiders, unlike rulers, do not write their name in history.<sup>57</sup>

Small raiding bands might not make themselves into history, however, the greatest of the raiders do. Alexander the Great, for example, continues to be cherished

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with a Baloch ‘Sheikh’ in Bahrain who ran a Baloch Welfare Organization and sought his way into the Bahraini ruling elite. [12/10/2015]

<sup>57</sup> For a detailed reading of the multiple social roles played by ‘raiders’, see: Wagner, Kim. Thuggee: banditry and the British in early nineteenth-century India. Springer, 2007.

for conquering a vast territory over which he could never establish rule. Many of the histories of Balochistan begin with Alexander's conquest as one of the earliest mentions of the region in global history.<sup>58</sup> Having entered through Sindh with plans of conquering India, Alexander moved westward along the coast of Makran to enter the region then known as Girdosia.

Chakar Rind's title of Chakar-e-Azam (Chakar the Great), is coined after Sikander-e-Azam (Alexander the Great).<sup>59</sup> Chakar Rind's area of conquest might not have been as great as that of Alexander, but it was impressive nonetheless. His conquest of Delhi alone perhaps put him in the same league as Alexander. For such conquerors, official written histories of their conquests were less important than the oral myths that circulated around them. They were known less through texts, and more through oral retellings of their feats that long continued to shape popular memory.

Just like Sikander-e-Azam, Chakar-e-Azam continues to live on in the memories of people retelling stories of his great conquests. His epics constitute a large portion of Medieval Balochi poetry. The Rinds, claiming descent to Chakar Rind, are the largest single Baloch tribe and are currently spread across the world. Books on Chakar Rind continue to be written and circulated with pride amongst Baloch circles as a celebration

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<sup>58</sup> Almost all histories of Balochistan mention the raids of Alexander the Great in Balochistan. For example, see: Dashti, Naseer. *The Baloch and Balochistan: A historical account from the beginning to the fall of the Baloch State*. Trafford Publishing, 2012. p.18

<sup>59</sup> The first textual reference to Chakar Rind as the 'Great Chakar Rind' come from: Baluch, Muhammad Sardar Khan. *The Great Baluch: Life and Times of Ameer Chākar Rind, 1454-1551 AD*. Baluchi Academy, 1965.

of their collective glorious past. The Sibbi Mela at Chakar Rind's fort and the Chakar Rind Mela in Satgarah are amongst the most prominent events on the Baloch cultural calendar. Chakar's awe-inspiring conquests even in the present remain central to a Baloch cultural imagination. There is even a popular drama serial produced by the Pakistani state television based on the epics of Chakar Rind that depict him as principled warrior and leader of the Baloch.<sup>60</sup>

### **1.5.3 Frontier mobility**

According to the editor of *Balochi Dunya*, Chakar Rind did not endlessly move as a nomad. After successfully conquering Delhi, Chakar Rind received large land grants in Punjab as reward for supporting Humayun's campaign. These tracts of lands elevated Chakar Rind to the status of Hakim, or regional ruler. As the Hakim, Chakar Rind was able to distribute land in Punjab amongst his tumman or battalion of ten thousand followers.<sup>61</sup>

Anthropologist Carl Salzmänn argues that the benefits of nomadism were always weighed against the option of settling down.<sup>62</sup> Like Spooner, Saltzman too claims that nomadism was not the result of a primordial Baloch culture. It was instead a carefully weighed socio-economic choice. In the arid zones of Balochistan with harsh terrain

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<sup>60</sup> The drama serial was titled 'Chakar-e-Azam' and was produced in 1992. The weekly serial ran on the regional channel of Pakistan Television

<sup>61</sup> Rind, Chakar. *Balochi Dunya*. Editorial. March 1962 issue. P. 6-7

<sup>62</sup> Saltzman, Philip C. "Multi-resource nomadism in Iranian Baluchistan." *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 7, no. 1 (1972): 60.



unstable for stable agriculture, nomadism emerged as the lifestyle option of choice for many Baloch tribes. However, when the nomads reached the fertile Indus river plains they saw the opportunity for a sedentary life. Baloch tribes who reached agricultural areas of Sindh and Punjab suitable for settled agriculture, settled down and gave up their nomadism.<sup>63</sup> A significant portion of the population living around Indus River banks in both Sindh and Punjab claim descent from nomadic Baloch.

The editor of the Balochi Dunya, Chakar Rind (II), belonged to one such family in Punjab that had left Balochistan in search for better pastures around the same time as Chakar Rind the Great. Chakar Rind's (II) father, Maulana Noor Muhammad Faridi, a renowned historian of Multan, was known for his text *Tareekh-e-Multan*, considered to date one of the most authentic local histories of Multan.<sup>64</sup> As Faridi points out, the local history of Multan has always been tied to the arrival and settlement of non-locals from across the Muslim world.<sup>65</sup>

At the time of Chakar Rind's conquest, the city of Multan was a major hinterland trade entrepot under the native Langh dynasty. The Langahs had outsourced the protection of Multan to Dodai Baloch, who received large land grants in Southern Punjab. Beyond Multan, much of the Langah territory was directly ruled by Baloch. The

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<sup>63</sup> Gilmartin, David. *Blood and water: the Indus river basin in modern history*. Univ of California Press, 2015. [Chapter 2]

<sup>64</sup> Farīdī, Nūr Ahmād Khān. 1971. *Tārīkh-i Multān*. Nūr maḥal, zīla' Multān: Qaṣar alāḍab.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. p.12

region, even today, is named after the original Baloch conquerors — Dera Ghazi Khan.<sup>66</sup>

Like the Great Chakar Rind and Chakar Rind (II), the history of Multan is thus inextricable from that of Baloch.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> "The Rajput tribe named Langah, long since converted to Muhammadanism, had established an independent kingdom at Multan under their chief Bai Sehra (a.h. 847 = a.d. 1443), who took the title of Qutbu'd-dm. He was succeeded in a.h. 874 by his son, Shah Husain, who reigned till a.h. 908 (a.d. 1502). It was during his reign that the first settlement of Baloches in the Panjab was made by Malik Sohrab Dodai, who came to Multan with his sons Ghazi Khan, Fath Khan, and Ismail Khan, and a large number of Baloches. Shah Husain encouraged them and gave them a jagir extending from Kot Karor to Dhankot, evidently on condition of military service. Other Baloches, hearing of this, came flocking in, and gradually obtained possession of the whole country between Sltpur and Dhankot—that is to say, the present district of Muzafargarh between the Indus and the Chanab." [Dames, Mansel Longworth. 1904. *The Baloch race. A historical and ethnological sketch*. London: Royal Asiatic Society. p. 62-63]

<sup>67</sup> The renowned medieval historian of India, Muhammad Qasim Hindu Shah, who was better known as Firishta, also mentioned Chakar Rind in his volume on Kings of Multan (part of of his larger opus *Tarikh-e-Farishat* ). According to Farishta, Chakar Rind's son was the first to bring Shiism to Multan. Multan even today has a large percentage of the Shia population.



Figure 20: Cover of Balochi Dunya magazine (March 1959) with a Sufi shrine in Multan

Centuries after Chakar Rind's death, Multan went on to become home to the first Baloch cultural magazine, Balochi Dunya. The magazine was inaugurated by Maulana Noor Muhammad Faridi in 1958 and was made popular by his son Chakar Rind (II), who took over in 1960. Under the editorship of Chakar Rind (II), the magazine became a primary guide to the history and culture of Baloch outside Balochistan. The monthly Balochi Dunya published letters, genealogies, epics and histories written by other Baloch

living in parts beyond Balochistan. Due to the frequency of publication and its wide geographical scope, Balochi Dunya is still considered to be one of the most important source for the history of Baloch expansion.<sup>68</sup> It contains ethnographic snapshots and historical narratives of various Baloch populations from beyond Balochistan.

The magazine was particularly popular amongst the Baloch living in other parts of Pakistan. In each issue the magazine published letters sent from its editors and often also carried lists of people who had paid their subscription charges in full. The letters to the editor and subscription lists mention readers concentrated mainly in Sindh and Punjab. Additionally, as the letter printed at the start highlights, it had a growing readership amongst Baloch that had recently moved from Karachi to the Persian Gulf.<sup>69</sup> The magazine's readership perhaps was dictated by the fact that it was published not in Balochi but in Urdu.

At the time of the magazine inauguration Urdu had recently been coined as the national language of a nascent Pakistani state. Though Urdu was the primary language of only a small minority of Pakistani citizens, it was designated as the national language because it was believed to be comprehensible by various ethnic groups across the nations.<sup>70</sup> Thinking along similar lines, Chakar Rind (II) and his father saw in Urdu the potential to bridge Baloch populations that spoke different languages. Urdu, they

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<sup>68</sup> The magazine is still being published by the son of Chakar Rind (II), Shahbaz Khan Baloch.

<sup>69</sup> The magazine frequently published a separate section on 'Letters from Baloch across the seas'.

<sup>70</sup> For a detailed analysis on the language politics of Pakistan, see: Rahman, Tariq. Language and politics in Pakistan. Oxford University Press, USA, 1996.

believed, could bring together in conversation the Baloch populations in Pakistan that had replaced Balochi with different regional languages as their primary mode of communication.

The shift from Balochi to other local languages was part of the process of what I call 'frontier mobility'. I use the term to differentiate between nomads who keep moving and those who settle in different parts of the geographical frontier. In the case of Baloch expansion, the category of 'frontier mobility' captures the process of Baloch tribes moving and settling in territorially adjacent parts of Sindh and Punjab that shared a frontier with Balochistan. While nomadic tribes maintain their original social structures over space, frontier tribes that become sedentary adapt to new social elements. In the process of settling into areas beyond their homeland, frontier tribes socialize with settled populations through trade, marriage, war, and political deal-making. The interaction over time renders the old locals and new settlers indistinguishable from the other. Their mutual exchanges produce alloy societies composed of original cultural elements of both melded together.

The process of frontier mobility and the production of alloy culture is familiar to anthropology through Edmund Leach's work on frontier tribes in the highlands of Burma.<sup>71</sup> Leach argues that in moving from the frontier towards the plains, one can trace a series of interrelated transitional alloy societies arranged on a spectrum of being most

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<sup>71</sup> Leach, E. R. *Political Systems of Highland Burma: A Study of Kachin Social Structure*. [London]: Athlone Press, University of London, 1954.

like the original nomadic society to being least like the original. In the space of Baloch frontier mobility, particularly on the Eastern border adjacent to Sindh and Punjab, we see a similar phenomenon of interrelated hybrid societies that go from being most like original Baloch societies to being Baloch only in name.<sup>72</sup>

If we map frontier Baloch societies linguistically, we see a gradual shift away from Balochi. In the border area between Sindh/Punjab and Balochistan, like in Chakar Rind's first capital, Sibbi, much of the residents are bilingual. The further we move towards Sindh/Punjab, the less common the use of Balochi becomes. In some parts of Southern Punjab and Sindh, adjacent to the frontiers, we see creole languages like Seraiki and Laasi that borrow words from Balochi but weave them into their own grammatical structures. For example, in Multan, the publishing site of Balochi Dunya and home to Chakar Rind (II), the most commonly spoken language is Seraiki. Moving further towards central Punjab and Sindh we see move away from the creole languages to Punjabi and Sindhi speaking Baloch populations.<sup>73</sup> In Satgarah, the final resting place of Chakar Rind, the population of Baloch-speaking descent converses mainly in Punjabi.

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<sup>72</sup> Barth, a student of Leach, used the model to understand the process of Pathan's on the borderland of Balochistan becoming Baloch as they moved southwards. [Barth, Fredrik. *Ethnic Processes on the Pathan-Baluch boundary*, in *Indo-Iranica*, ed. G. Redard, Harrassowitz. 1964.]

<sup>73</sup> A similar argument about the influence of Balochi on other languages (and vice-versa) can be seen in: Spooner, Brian. "Balochi: Towards a Biography of the Language." *Language Policy and Language Conflict in Afghanistan and Its Neighbors: The Changing Politics of Language Choice* 2 (2011): 319.

Placed in Multan, with various Baloch societies speaking different languages in all directions, Chakar Rind (II) saw in Urdu the opportunity to bring them all together. However, it is important to point out that for Chakar Rind (II) Urdu was only the medium. The links between these parts had actually been made long before Urdu became the national language. Urdu actually only reinvigorated connections originally built through the efforts of his namesake, the Great Chakar Rind.<sup>74</sup>

After establishing his capital in Sibbi, Chakar Rind moved towards Sindh where he met with Talpur Baloch, said to have been the protector of the Kalhoru kingdom in Sindh. From there on, Chakar moved towards Dodai Baloch's new homeland of Southern Punjab and then to Multan. In Multan he came into contact with Humayun's forces and decided to join his quest for Delhi. After conquest, Chakar Rind and his followers then settled in central Punjab. After settling in Punjab, Chakar used the connections he had built during his movement to bring together the various frontier Baloch groups settled outside of Balochistan.<sup>75</sup> According to Chakar Rind (II), his namesake laid the seeds for the first inter-tribal federation of Baloch tribes outside Balochistan.<sup>76</sup> These seeds bore fruit in the 18th century as there appeared several Baloch states, both within and outside Balochistan. The Khan of Kelat ruled over Balochistan,

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<sup>74</sup> His father, Noor Muhammad Faridi, even published a book on Chakar-e-Azam [Maulana Nur Ahmad Faridi, *Chakar-e-Azam* (Multan: Qasar-e-Adab, 1975).]

<sup>75</sup> Rind, Chakar. *Balochi Dunya*. March 1965 issue. [p8-10]

<sup>76</sup> *ibid.*

Talpurs governed Sindh, Dodai chief controlled South Punjab, and Chakar Rind's progeny managed Central Punjab.

This federation of Baloch states never came to be recognized under the same name. They were not parts of a single Baloch empire as such. Yet they formed an interrelated polity built through mobility and exchanges between a series of transitory frontier societies. They married amongst each other, they traded across this space and even came to each other's defense. Thus, socially, economically and politically they were part of shared space. This imagination of a shared Baloch polity came to inspire within Baloch nationalist circles in the early 20th century the desire for a Baloch state much larger than what we today consider Balochistan.<sup>77</sup> As the map below shows, the proposed territory of Baloch state included large parts of Sindh and Punjab. With Chakar Rind's tomb site in Satgarah being one end of the state and Hormuz the other, the proposed state would have been larger than Pakistan.

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<sup>77</sup> The plan for a greater Balochistan, as seen in the map below, was forwarded at the Baku "Congress of the People of the East" in 1918 by a Marri chief Misri Khan Baloch. In search of garnering political support for the cause of the Baloch Nation, Misri Khan had fled to the Soviet Union where he is said to have met with Lenin. [Baloch, Inayatullah. The problem of ' Greater Baluchistan': a study of Baluch nationalism. Vol. 116. Coronet Books, 1987. p147-149]



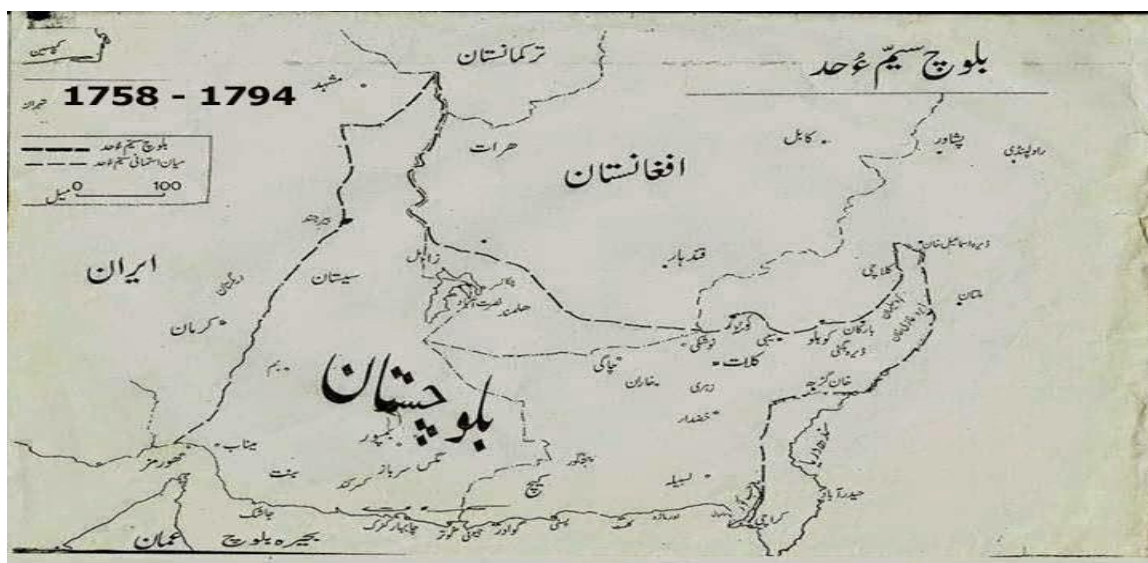


Figure 21: Map of greater Balochistan as presented at the Baku “Conference of the People of the East” in 1918

Nothing came out of this proposal. It was put forward in the early 20th century because the connected Baloch polity had all but withered away by subsequent conquests. From the West, the Baloch encountered Afghan, Persian and Central Asian raiders. On the East they faced the Mughals, Marathas, Sikhs and later the British. Chakar Rind (II) argues that the problem was not that Baloch were weaker than these new conquerors, but that they were more divided. In the quest of increasing their own power, the states lost sight of the common Baloch cause.<sup>78</sup> Instead of strengthening their Baloch ties, each of them made contradictory alliances with outside partners. For example, when Chakar Rind’s state faced Sikh invaders in the 18th century, they were left to defend themselves because their brothers in Kalat state had signed a neutrality

<sup>78</sup> Rind, Chakar. Balochi Dunya. November 1966 issue. [p 8-15]

agreement. Consequently, Chakar Rind's tomb was raided, and his state lost the glory it once had.<sup>79</sup>

The historical trajectory — of nomadic Baloch moving across the frontiers and accumulating power en route, settling down and assimilating into new hybrid identities as rulers, and eventually losing power to other conquerors — mirrors the historical model of Mongol expansion as charted by the medieval historian Ibn Khaldun.<sup>80</sup> For Ibn Khaldun this trajectory was part of the cyclical process deeply implicated in producing political order in the areas of Mongol expansion.

Ibn Khaldun argues that nomadic tribes from the frontiers of the Central Asian steppes periodically raided areas of settled agriculture, and through them began accumulating resources. Their success, according to Khaldun, was a result of the internal organic solidarity or *Asabiyya*. Organic solidarity provided nomadic tribes with mobile, disciplined, organized, selfless, and obedient soldiers able to upset much larger sedentary populations in battle. However, the more they raided, the more assets they had at their disposal, making them less mobile, and eventually leading to the settlement

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<sup>79</sup> The practice of rejecting a hybrid state identity in favor of maintaining Baloch solidarity was on display recently in the debates on the formation of a separate Seraiki province. Southern Punjab currently is the least prosperous part of the province, and is said to be neglected because most of the provinces' resources are directed towards Punjabi-speaking parts of the province. A separate province, the plan's proponents argue, will allow them to demand a greater share in resources and will allow the Seraiki-speaking population to represent themselves at the Federal scale. One of the main hurdles in their campaign is the lack of Baloch support. The Baloch living in Southern Punjab fear that a separate Seraiki province will solidify their hybrid identity, and forever close the possibility of being part of a Baloch polity.

<sup>80</sup> Khaldūn, Ibn. *The Muqaddimah: an introduction to history: in three volumes*. No. 43. Princeton University Press, 1969.

of nomadic tribes across frontiers. Here they encountered settled populations who were not part of their organic solidarity. In order to integrate these populations, frontier nomads had to develop forms of structural solidarity or political rule. Structural solidarity, however, came at the cost of organic solidarity, which made the newly settled population susceptible to raids from new tribes with Asabiyya.

Examples of this cyclical process— of frontier tribes becoming rulers by giving up their tribal identity, only to be replaced by other closely-knit tribes— can be observed all over the areas of Mongol expansion. In Medieval India, frontier tribes from Afghanistan and Central Asia frequently raided and conquered territories in India. As they accumulated wealth and power, they settled down and constituted hybrid societies in which outside social elements were left indistinguishable from local culture. However, the more powerful rulers became, the less they preserved of their original nomadic identity. Accumulating state authority and maintaining social solidarity thus presented themselves in spaces of frontier mobility as contradictory options.



Figure 22: Painting of Nawab Muzaffar Khan Baluch of Farrukhnagar (r. 1785–1810), circa 1836<sup>81</sup>

Baloch conquests never resulted in an empire as prominent as the Mongol Mughal Empire. Consequently, one can argue that they did not trade their organic solidarity for a broader imperial identity. The renowned Baloch nationalist leader Akbar

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<sup>81</sup> From Tazkira-ul-umara

Bugti argues that while Rind Baloch outside Balochistan still proudly trace descent to Chakar Rind, there are no children of the contemporaneous Mughal king, Humayun, left in India.<sup>82</sup> Since there was no great Baloch empire, the Baloch in areas of Chakar Rind's conquest still form organic social bonds through their Baloch identity. Even after centuries there are large number of Baloch in Punjab who see themselves as children of Chakar Rind; but there are no children of Humayun left in Punjab.

In a similar vein, the Great Chakar Rind's tomb in Satgarah, a small structure in a state of serious disrepair, never gained the kind of prominence reserved for grandiose tombs like those of the Mughal kings. Yet, in some ways the social significance of Chakar Rind's shrine surpassed Mughal mausoleums. For example, Chakar Rind (II) saw in the shrine the possibility of bringing together the Baloch community. Soon after taking over the editorship of *Balochi Dunya*, Chakar Rind (II) toured the entire geography of frontier Baloch mobility in order to encourage the Baloch in different areas to contribute to the restoration of Chakar Rind's shrine. The decrepit condition of the tomb, Chakar Rind (II) believed, provided a motive for the Baloch community to come together and once again build organic solidarity amongst themselves.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Preface to Muhammad Sardar Khan Baluch, *The Great Baloch (The Life and Times of Ameer Chakar Khan Rind 1451-1551 A.D.)* Quetta: Gosha-i-Adab (1965).

<sup>83</sup> Chakar Rind (II), soon after taking over the editorship of *Balochi Dunya*, began a campaign to collect funds for the restoration of Chakar-e-Azam's tomb. With this end in mind, he toured the entirety of Balochistan and even met with influential Baloch figures in other areas like Sindh and Punjab.

In a strange way, the fact that Chakar Rind's tomb was never structurally as imposing as the Mughal tombs made it symbolically more powerful. By rejecting the aspiration to become an emperor, the frontier Baloch maintained a sense of social solidarity. The fact that frontier Baloch never remained emperors allowed them to remain Baloch. Not surprisingly, in Sindh— the one place where Baloch did become emperors— the Baloch tribes rarely differentiate themselves socially from other non-Baloch tribes.

#### **1.5.4 Diasporic mobility**

Despite Chakar Rind (II)'s honest efforts, his campaign to rehabilitate the Great Chakar Rind's shrine did not succeed. In an article sent to *Balochi Dunya*, a Baloch from Southern Sindh offered a possible explanation for the lack of support.<sup>84</sup> The letter claimed that Chakar Rind was not a hero to all. The letter's author belonged to the Lashari tribe that had for thirty years fought a bloody civil war against Chakar Rind. According to Lashari tradition, Chakar Rind instigated an unending bloody civil war that led to the forced displacement of a large percentage of Balochistan's population.<sup>85</sup>

Following the civil war, Chakar Rind and his followers moved towards Punjab; and the Lashari's ventured outwards in the southeast direction along the Arabian Sea

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<sup>84</sup> Laghari, Azhar. Laghari Qabila in *Balochi Dunya* magazine February 1962 issue.

<sup>85</sup> Folklore on Chakar Rind also narrate his conflicts with the Dodai chiefs, who are said to have jealousy blocked Chakar Rind's way into the Lashari's military force in order to prevent them from earning land in Southern Punjab. [Dames, Mansel Longworth. 1904. *The Baloch race. A historical and ethnological sketch*. London: Royal Asiatic Society. p.42-43]

coastline.<sup>86</sup> Chakar Rind, as mentioned in the previous section, met on this route Baloch communities settled on agricultural land outside Balochistan. Consequently, Chakar Rind and his followers also decided to obtain their own land in the plains of Punjab. However, moving along the Arabian Sea coastline, the Lashari's encountered Baloch communities that chose a life of systematic mobility as traders and transporters. In contrast to the Baloch in the plains of Sind and Punjab, the Baloch by the sea chose not to settle down permanently in one single location. Instead, they periodically circulated between various port-towns. Through their circulation they formed a coastal Baloch society that was dispersed within various discontinuous sites.

Societies disconnected in space but connected through patterned circulation of people are known within anthropology as Diasporas.<sup>87</sup> The concept of Diasporas captures a mode of mobility distinct from both frontier and nomadic movement. Diasporas, unlike frontier tribes, do not settle down in the new place after moving out of their homeland. Yet, they also do not move without leaving behind footprints, the way

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<sup>86</sup> In the coastal area along the Sindh-Balochistan border there are numerous graveyards that are collectively known as Chaukundi tombs due to their unique grave construction style. Despite being recognized as a national heritage site, many of these graveyards are in dilapidated states. The ones that are well preserved have been rebranded as graves of the soldiers of Muhammad Bin Qasim, the earliest Arab muslim conqueror of Sindh. However, amongst the Baloch living in those areas, there are no doubts that the graves belong to the Lagharis, Hoth, Kalamati, Jokhia and Burfat. See: Lashari, Kaleem. *A Study of Stone Carved Graves*. Karachi: Sindh Exploration and Adventure Society, 1996.

<sup>87</sup> The term, though originally developed to study the peculiar makeup of the Jewish Diaspora (See "Diaspora" entry in the *American Heritage Dictionary* (Morris 1980)), has since become an established category within anthropology for studying populations that are dispersed outside of their homeland.

nomadic tribes do. Through patterned and repetitive movement, Diasporas inextricably tie together discontinuous sites into a shared commercial, cultural and political world.<sup>88</sup> For example, recent scholarship on dispersed Chinese, Gujarati, Sindhi, Yemeni, and African communities has brought to light a shared Indian Ocean world composed of cities across different continents.<sup>89</sup> As anyone who has travelled across Indian Ocean cities can testify, within this shared world cities across different countries often feel like the same place.

In the proposed map of a Baloch state (Fig. 5), the Arabian Sea is labeled as Behr-e-Baloch, or the Baloch Sea. In branding the sea as Baloch, the map draws on the fact that many of the cities around the sea have a similar Baloch feel to them. For example, if a Baloch from Karachi's Baloch majority neighborhood of Lyari was transplanted to

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<sup>88</sup> Ho, Engseng. "Before parochialization: diasporic Arabs cast in creole waters." *Transcending borders: Arabs, politics, trade and Islam in Southeast Asia* (2002): 11-35.

<sup>89</sup> Inspired by works on the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean, the Indian Ocean has emerged as a discrete area of studies. Much of the earlier works on the Indian Ocean focused on seeing the interconnection either through monsoon wind patterns and economics [For example: K.N. Chaudhuri, *Trade and Civilization in the Indian Ocean: an Economic History from the Rise of Islam to 1750* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), M.N. Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2003); Kenneth McPherson, *The Indian Ocean: A History of People and the Sea* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998)]. Recently, there has been a number of studies within both anthropology and history that highlight the diverse connections in social forms across the oceanic landscape. [See: Engseng Ho, *The Graves of Tarim: Genealogy and Mobility Across the Indian Ocean* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); Aslanian, *From the Indian Ocean to the Mediterranean*; Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons*; Himanshu Prabha Ray and Edward Alpers (eds.) *Cross-Currents and Community Networks: the History of the Indian Ocean World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Pier Larson, *Ocean of Letters: Language and Creolization in an Indian Ocean Diaspora* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Thomas F. McDow, "Arabs and Africans: Commerce and Kinship from Oman to the East African Interior," (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Yale University, 2008)]



Matrah, the Baloch majority neighborhood of Muscat, he/she could easily feel at home.<sup>90</sup>

In terms of the architecture, demographics and to some extent economic activities and languages spoken, there is little that differentiates the two neighborhoods. In fact, even if one travels into deeper waters, entering the larger Indian Ocean, the space continues to feel familiar. In Mombasa, for example, there is a street called Baloch Street, which has an eerie likeness to Mombasa Street in Karachi. Despite being continents apart, the two streets feel like they could be adjacent to each other.

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<sup>90</sup> For a detailed analysis of the Indian Ocean connections of Karachi's Baloch population, see: Suhail, Adeem, and Ameer Lutfi. "Our City, Your Crisis: The Baloch of Karachi and the Partition of British India." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 39, no. 4 (2016): 891-907.



Figure 23: 'Zanzibari' doors: in Mombasa (left) and Gwadar (right)<sup>91</sup>

If we envision a map in which distance between places is scaled not in meters but hours it took to travel before modern engines, the vast span of Indian Ocean shrinks together and the short distances across mountains and deserts expands.<sup>92</sup> Such a map,

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<sup>91</sup> Zanzibari doors are one of the most immediately apparent representations of the Indian Ocean culture. Similar styled doors can be found all over the Omani Indian Ocean geography. See: Nooter, Nancy Ingram. "Zanzibar Doors." *African arts* 17, no. 4 (1984): 34-96.

<sup>92</sup> Within geography such maps are known as isotemporal maps or isochronic maps. To my knowledge, there has not been any attempt at drawing a time-scaled global map (or even Indian Ocean). For an interesting attempt at drawing a isochronic map of Switzerland, see: Axhausen, Kay W., Claudia Dolci, Ph Fröhlich, Milena Scherer, and Alessandro Carosio. "Constructing Time-Scaled Maps: Switzerland from 1950 to 2000." *Transport Reviews* 28, no. 3 (2008): 391-413.

one could argue, more accurately represents space as experienced. For example, Karachi and Muscat, the two cities with the largest Baloch population, though part of two different regions (South Asia and Middle East respectively), are only a day trip away by sea. On the other hand, harsh terrains on the frontiers separated by a short aerial distance took weeks or even months to cross. Even the vast distance between cities like Karachi and Mombasa could be navigated within a few weeks by following the wind currents.

Jaffar Kadu, the author of a recently self-published book on the Baloch of East Africa, insists that while changing winds took Baloch from one shore to another, they did not open the doors into societies across the ocean. For that, he contends, the Baloch have conquerors like Shahdad Chota to thank. According to Kadu, Shahdad Chota's conquest of the iconic Fort Jesus cast East Africa wide open for waves of Baloch to come for centuries.

As earlier mentioned, Chota himself left East Africa soon after conquering Mombasa. However, according to Kadu, Chota was replaced by his brother coming in from Balochistan. In 1821, when the newly formed Omani Sultanate began planning to reassert themselves on the East African coast, they went to Balochistan to locate the children of Shahdad Chota.<sup>93</sup> The children of Shahdad Chota eventually recaptured Fort

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<sup>93</sup> In between these two conquests of Fort Jesus, Oman had changed hands from the Ya'arubi to the Al-Bu Saidi's. Al-Bu-Saidi's consolidation of power depended greatly on the supply of Baloch soldiers from Gwadar. In fact, the Al-Bu Saidis were able to capture Muscat only after they had been granted recruitment and port access in Gwadar. For a more detailed account of the capture

Jesus in 1698. Jaffar Kadu, himself a fourth generation East-African Baloch, claims that his great-great-grandfather was part of the contingent that retook East Africa in the 18th century, and was a descendent of Shahdad Chota.<sup>94</sup> He further adds, Fort Jesus remained in the hands of Shahdad Chota's descendants until the arrival of the British.<sup>95</sup>

According to Kadu, it is because of Shahdad Chota and his kin that Baloch are revered in East Africa even today. Due to their forefathers' services, Baloch are recognized as an essential part of East African society. Kadu narrates that often he would be mistaken for a recent Punjabi immigrant or a tourist by local Africans because of his appearance. Consequently, he is often treated as a foreigner. However, when he tells his full name, which ends with Shahdad Chota, locals familiar with the history of the area stand up out of respect. Any family with deep roots in the coastal areas, Kadu claims, would be aware of the importance of Baloch to local society in East Africa.

Baloch in East Africa were thus at once recognized as 'Baloch' hailing from the distant land of Balochistan and as locals integral to society. According to Kadu, their

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of Gwadar, see: Lorimer, John Gordon. *Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Omān, and Central Arabia*. Vol. 2. Irish Academic, 1908.

<sup>94</sup> According to Bennett, to take over Fort Jesus, Seyyid Said bin Sultan Al Busaidi hired an Iranian fleet and equipped it with Baloch, Arabs, Sindhis, Cutchis, Persian and Pathan mercenaries. [Bennett, Norman Robert. *A history of the Arab state of Zanzibar*. No. 16. Routledge, 1978.]

<sup>95</sup> An epic in verse form written by?Abdullah bin Masud bin Salim al-Mazrui, in 1876 depicts a particular event in 1875 during which the Mazruis and Baloch fought each other for the control of Fort Jesus. Within the epic we find mention of large number of Baloch living within the Fort. Hinaway, Mbarak Ali. *Al-Akida and Fort Jesus, Mombasa: The Life-History of Muhammad Bin Adbullah Bin Mbarak Bakhshweini, with the Songs and Poems of His Time*. London: Macmillan, 1950.

forefathers were able to keep both their East African and Baloch identity because of the practice of having wives in both places. Due to the difficult conditions of travel and the contingencies in the process of moving across the ocean, Baloch men like Shahdad Chota travelled to East Africa without their wife and children. Soon after arrival they would try to find a local African woman to marry and start another family in East Africa. Through these two distinct families, one in Balochistan and one in East Africa, the Baloch men could maintain both identities as separate but connected elements.<sup>96</sup>

Engseng Ho argues that Diasporas formulate a local-cosmopolitan identity that maintains the local and cosmopolitan as distinct yet connected elements. In that regards their process of identity formation is different from both nomadic and frontier societies.<sup>97</sup> Nomadic societies, by enclosing themselves from outside influence, maintain their original identity across geography. Frontier societies meld together with locals to formulate an alloy identity in which the original elements are indistinguishable. In diasporic societies, however, the foreign identity is hyphenated with that of the local society. Gulf-Baloch, Swahili-Baloch, Karachi-Baloch are popular examples of such hyphenated diasporic Baloch identities.

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<sup>96</sup> The polygamous practice of cosmopolitan men having wives in different parts of the world was not unique to the Baloch. The most famous example of such a system was of Syeds claiming descent from the Prophet Muhammad traveling to various parts of the muslim world and marrying local women without becoming fully locals themselves. By at once being married to local women and having other wives in different places, both the Syeds and the Baloch could claim to be locals and foreigners at the same time. See: Ho, Engseng. "Foreigners and mediators in the constitution of Malay sovereignty." *Indonesia and the Malay World* 41, no. 120 (2013): 146-167.

<sup>97</sup> Ho, Engseng. "Names beyond Nations." *Études rurales* 3 (2002): 215-231.

The cosmopolitan connections of Diasporas, according to Ho, were instrumental to the functioning of many local societies along the Indian Ocean. Unlike self-sufficient agricultural societies in the hinterlands subsisting off of what they produce, coastal societies are dependent on the circulation of people, goods and ideas. Societies on the coastal littoral were not complete social wholes. They instead constituted what Ho calls 'Partial Societies',<sup>98</sup> in the sense that they required resources from outside to become whole. While all societies require resources from the outside in some way, what set partial societies on the coast apart was that they recognized the foreign element as an essential part of internal social order. For example, Ho points out that the myth of foreign king remained a powerful trope for claiming political legitimacy in many places around the Indian Ocean. In contrast to the hinterland where legitimacy was sought through claims of indigeneity and groundedness to soil, legitimacy in the coastal areas laid with a foreign king married to local queen. Together they formulated the local-cosmopolitan bond and completed the formation of partial societies.

The Indian Ocean historian Reda Bhacker argues that between the 16th and 19th century the job of completing partial societies was most commonly taken up by a consortium of local-cosmopolitan Omani rulers and Gujarati traders.<sup>99</sup> The Omani Arabs provided the political legitimacy and structures, while the Gujarati traders supplied

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<sup>98</sup> Ho, Engseng. "Inter-Asian Concepts for Mobile Societies." *The Journal of Asian Studies* (2017): 1-22.

<sup>99</sup> Bhacker, M. Reda. 1992. *Trade and empire in Muscat and Zanzibar: roots of British domination*. London: Routledge.

capital and the commercial infrastructure. Together they constituted both an Omani Thalassocracy with its capital in Zanzibar and an Indian Ocean trading system that allowed for the flow of capital across various sites.

Bhacker's local-cosmopolitan consortium, I argue, under-emphasized a third actor equally important to completing partial societies— Baloch portfolio mercenaries. While Baloch themselves have not been central subjects to texts on the Indian Ocean, they remain recurring side characters in the story of various diasporas. For example, in scholarship on Diasporas in East Africa we see Baloch as fort guards working alongside Yemenis. They appear as caravan guards and trade partners of Gujaratis.<sup>100</sup> We find them serving as Omani appointed Liwalis (governors) in smaller port towns.<sup>101</sup> They were often the slave traders assigned to capturing African slaves from the interior. The (in) famous British explorer Richard Burton even mentions a Baloch serving as an advisor in the court of King Suna of Buganda in the mid-19th century.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Salvadori, Cynthia, and Judy Aldrick. "Two Indian Travellers: East Africa 1902-1905." (1997)

<sup>101</sup> For example, in the 19th century prior to British dominance, the small port town of Bagamoyo was under the control of Baloch Jemadar [Military Chief] Sabri. According to French missionaries, Jemadar Sabri had even taken on the role of Liwali (governor) of Bagamoyo and acted independently of the Omani rulers in Zanzibar. [See: Brown, Walter T. "Bagamoyo: An Historical Introduction." Tanzania Notes and Records. (1970): 69-83.]

<sup>102</sup> Burton, Richard F. *The Lake Regions of Central Africa a Picture of Exploration*. London: Longman, Green, Longman, and Roberts, 1860. (p.193). Burton has several other accounts of encountering Baloch in East Africa. As during his travels in Sindh, most of his personal caravan guards in East Africa were Baloch.





Figure 24: An exhibition at the Zanzibar Museum of Slavery mentioning Baloch as major slave traders<sup>103</sup>

With the ascendancy of the Indian Ocean British Empire in the 19th century, the system of local-cosmopolitan diaspora networks completing partial societies had to

<sup>103</sup> The text reads “the Arabs from the Gulf were prominent in the market, as were Baluch mercenaries in the Sultan’s employ”. At the same museum there was another poster of a manumission document of a slave with the last name Baloch.



undergo drastic transformations. The multi-sited British Empire simultaneously controlled ports and forts at various sites around the Ocean. Through its widespread network of officials aligned under the flag of the empire; the British offered partial societies services similar to those provided by local-cosmopolitan Diasporas. In fact, in its early days the empire closely mimicked the operations of a diaspora. They too laid local roots in new areas, while maintaining cosmopolitan connections with other areas abroad.

Over time, the British Empire either absorbed or replaced the older diaspora system. The Gujarati traders, for example, continued to operate as before by simply replacing the Omani flag with the British. On the other hand, the Omani governors and judges were replaced by British officers and bureaucrats. As for the Baloch, those occupying the top positions in the military were replaced by British army officers; but those lower down the rung were allowed to continue, albeit under very different circumstances.<sup>104</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Both the Kenyan National Archives and Zanzibar National Archives hold files detailing the process of retiring Baloch fort guards. There are neighborhoods in both Zanzibar (Saataini) and Mombasa (Makadara) which were established in the early twentieth century through the British offering these neighborhood as retirement benefits to Baloch fort guards.

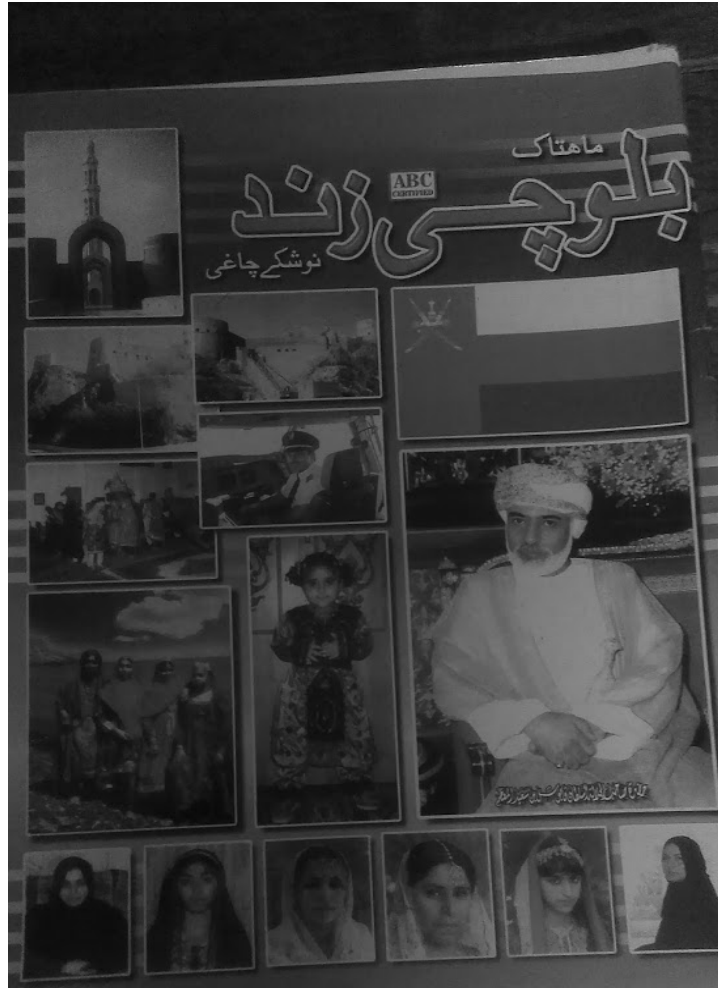


Figure 25: Cover of Balochi Zind Magazine's special issue on 'Baloch in Oman'

Jaffar Kadu argues that one of the major changes that occurred with the arrival of the British was that Baloch men could no longer keep two separate families in Balochistan and East Africa. Soon after arrival one of the regulations imposed by the British in the early 20th century was that if a Baloch was hoping to continue service in East Africa, he had to bring his family from Balochistan to show intent of settling down

in East Africa.<sup>105</sup> Alternatively, they could reject the option of settling down and choose to instead operate as mobile traders and transporters moving across space; like the Gujaratis. Consequently, the Baloch could no longer remain local-cosmopolitan figures. They had to choose between being wholly local or fully cosmopolitan.

With their families no longer in Balochistan, over the course of the 20th century many lost their distinct Baloch identity.<sup>106</sup> For instance, almost none of the Baloch remaining in East Africa today speak Balochi. For all intents and purposes, they have merged together with locals to become part of the hybrid Swahili identity.<sup>107</sup> Just like nomadic tribes could become frontier tribes by settling down in one place, Diasporas too could adapt alloy frontier identities by cutting off their cosmopolitan linkages. The loss of a distinct Baloch cultural identity amongst the Baloch in East Africa was perfectly highlighted in an incident narrated to me by Jaffar Kadu.

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<sup>105</sup> For the British, soldiers with a wife and children in Balochistan were perceived as mercenaries, while those who did not have families in Balochistan were seen as local soldiers. As the British tried to move away from mercenaries, having family only in East Africa became an important aspect of military service.

<sup>106</sup> Interestingly, during fieldwork in Bagamoyo I visited a village on the outskirts of the town that had several Baloch families. This was right around the time of the Baloch Community of Tanzania Conference. None of the Baloch living in this Bagamoyo village had been invited to attend the conference. According to one informant, the Baloch organization was run by the children of families that had been brought from Balochistan after the arrival of the British. Those in Bagamoyo were children of Baloch father and their local wives, whom they had earlier married. According to my informant, the Baloch father's severed ties with African mothers after the original families came from Balochistan. (October 2012)

<sup>107</sup> Lodhi, Abdulaziz Y. "The Baluchi of East Africa: Dynamics of Assimilation and Integration." *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 4, no. 2 (2013): 127-134.

A few years back, Kadu, who was then the head of the Baloch Community of Tanzania, was requested by the Iranian embassy to host a Nowruz festival. Since most of the Baloch in East Africa claim to belong to regions that are now in Iran, they could showcase Baloch culture as part of Iran's diverse landscape. However, by the end of the 20th century the Baloch in East Africa had completely lost touch with Baloch culture. Kadu recalls how in a state of panic he had to Google search 'Baloch culture'. Google unfortunately led him to a banned Baloch separatist group's website, on which he saw pictures of a Baloch flag. Kadu then did not know that the flag was a prohibited symbol in Iran. He thought it was just part of Baloch culture that he was unfamiliar with. Hence, he printed several large sized Baloch flags and hung them around the venue. Only when the Iranian dignitaries refused to enter, fearing the event has been sabotaged by Baloch separatist did Kadu recognize his mistake.

A mistake such as the one narrated above, would not have happened in a place like Bahrain. Every year the Bahraini government requests the Baloch Club of Bahrain, an organization similar to the Baloch Community of Tanzania, to lead a procession at the Bahrain Day parade. The Baloch club always obliges with a display of Balochi chaap by people dressed in traditional looking Baloch dresses, and Balochi music performed on traditional Baloch instruments, often by musicians invited from Balochistan. Additionally, there are speeches on the long-standing partnership between the Bahraini ruling elite and Baloch, delivered in a mixture of Balochi and Arabic. Due to ongoing circulation of population between the Makran and Persian Gulf coasts, the Baloch in

Bahrain continue to operate as local-cosmopolitans with their Baloch and Bahraini identity as separate but connected elements. Mirza Barkat's kin, unlike Shahdad Chota's lineage, still operate as a diaspora.



Figure 26: A picture of the Baloch parade in the Bahrain National Day celebration<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Each year the Baloch Club of Bahrain leads one of the largest contingent of the National Day parade. The Baloch contingency in the parade carries images of the Bahraini King and National flag. While most of those who are directly involved in the parade wear traditional Balochi clothes, others who are supporting cast often wear more 'Arab' clothing.

## **1.6 The polythetic Baloch Dunya**

The previous sections utilized three different models of mobility to conceptually understand the expansion of Baloch population beyond Balochistan. By filtering Baloch conquest narratives through models of nomadic, frontier, and diasporic mobility, the previous section provided a methodology for categorizing Baloch movement. The categorization was partially based on the different geographies of mobility; for example, diasporic mobility was more common around the Indian Ocean, while frontier mobility was more prevalent in territory divided between mountains and plains. Topography, however, does not fully explain the ways in which Baloch move in space and change over time. As we saw in the last section, diasporic populations in East Africa left without connections to Balochistan became more akin to a frontier society.

More than dividing the Baloch world into discrete geographical units, the three modes of mobility provided conceptual frames for explaining how Baloch move in space and change over time. Baloch, under each of these modes, maintain different elements of their original culture and incorporate others from societies outside. Nomadic Baloch, cyclically moving in and out of Balochistan, enclosed themselves from outside influence and maintain original cultural elements. Frontier Baloch, moving in only the direction that takes them to fertile pastures outside Balochistan. Overtime, having settled outside, they marry and mix together with other social groups to produce an alloy society. Diasporic Baloch, taking to the seas, connect port cities to form a littoral society with

Baloch as a distinct social group with separate but connected partners from other communities.

These diversified modes of mobility thus transform the Baloch in disparate parts of the Indian Ocean communities in distinct ways, thus leaving little in common between the Baloch living in different areas. Despite recent attempts by Baloch Nationalists to bring together Baloch in different parts of the world through a shared cause of creating a separate Baloch homeland, the horizontal connections between populations remain tenuous and limited. As mentioned at the start of the chapter, Baloch in Mombasa and Multan have very little in common with each other. They don't speak the same language, they trace roots to different parts of Balochistan, and their family trees do not intersect. Despite both identifying as Baloch, their understanding of who a Baloch is diverges greatly. Baloch in these two places do not have a shared bottom-up mode of representation. Placed next to each other, they appear as two distinct unrelated societies.

However, the connection between the Baloch in these two cities becomes apparent when we place them alongside a longer chain of other Baloch populations in cities like Hyderabad (Sindh), Karachi, Muscat and Zanzibar. There is no single readymade name for a space that would include all of these cities. However, starting with Baloch epics clearly reveals the connections between these places. As the previous section highlighted, the civil war between Rinds and Lasharis pushed the two related tribes out of Balochistan into different directions. Rinds moved inland towards the

plains where they connected with Baloch in the plains of Sindh and Punjab. Lasharis on the other hand moved along the coast. Here they met Baloch moving from port cities on the Makran coast to Gujarat, Persian Gulf, and even East Africa. The Baloch in East Africa might not have had any direct relation with those in Multan, but they were nevertheless related through a series of intermediary tribes like Lasharis and Rinds.

The chained indirect relationship between Baloch on the two ends of the world, Multan and Mombasa, can also be traced in a more contemporary context. Many of the Baloch in Mombasa lived in Zanzibar prior to the revolution. The Baloch in Zanzibar came to the region on ships sailing from Muscat, the other nodal point of the Al Bu Saidi Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries. Since the 19th century, Baloch have been using Karachi ports to sail to the Persian Gulf. Karachi's Baloch population is composed of two groups, one living along the port and the other in the agricultural plains on the outskirts of the city. The population on the outskirts of Karachi share with other Sindhi Baloch population the common language of Sindhi. The Baloch population in upper Sindh share with Baloch in Punjab common tribal identifications that reach all the way to Multan.

The theories of mobility mobilized in the previous section have been leading the challenge to traditional conceptualization of space. The scholarship on nomadic, frontier, and diasporic mobility challenge the idea that there is something natural about local, urban, and national societies. It argues that such spatial frameworks are instead a product of the conceptual bias in the minds of anthropologists and other academics.



While challenging conventional conceptualizations of space, I argue, the existing literature on mobile societies has not placed the concept of ‘society’ under the scrutiny of new data on geographical dispersed populations. Studies on nomadic, frontier, and diasporic mobility replace the bounded local or national space with expansive global and regional geography. Yet, they import wholesale the idea of societies developing with bounded populations in mind. Like studies on bounded societies, scholarship on mobile populations continue to work with an internalist understanding of society.<sup>109</sup>

An internalist reading of society focuses on large coherent bodies of populations and tries to locate practices, culture, tradition and power cutting across all internal elements. Particularly in a bottom-up understanding of society, a population is seen as a society on the basis of a collective representation recognized by individual members. Durkheim, foundational to the discipline of anthropology, saw society as a product of organic solidarity amongst a population that identified themselves through a shared representative totem.<sup>110</sup> The totem could be replaced by other shared modes of representation like tribe, kinship, religion, ethnicity, and territory. Anthropologists since have highlighted fissures and divisions within a society. Yet, even when focusing on various classes and status groups, ultimately the different groups are aggregated to form

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<sup>109</sup> Engseng Ho makes a similar argument about the conceptual limitations in studying partial-societies in “Inter-Asian Concepts for Mobile Societies.” (2017)

<sup>110</sup> Durkheim, Émile. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1900.

a coherent social whole of society. Social groups and populations are seen as a society when there is a common thread running across them.

Researchers of mobile societies, be it nomadic, frontier, or diasporic, continue to search for the thread that can tie together the population dispersed in space. People living in different areas are seen as part of a single society only when they share amongst themselves a collective mode of representation. The connecting thread can be language, religion, tribe, ethnicity, or genealogy. Whichever mode establishes itself as the dominant thread, it has to run across each of the individual groups seen as part of the society. For example, recent works on diaspora challenge the assumption that shared origin ties diasporic populations as a society; only to replace it with connecting threads of kinship, dialect, or sectarian identity. Hadhrami diaspora becomes a diasporic society by virtue of seeing themselves as part of shared family tree of Syeds.

Such an understanding makes it difficult to make a case for seeing Baloch in different areas, moving through different modes of mobility, as part of single society. The Baloch living in Mombasa and Multan do not have a single internist property in common. Their connection becomes apparent only when chained together by other links. The threads connecting internal society — tribe, kinship, ethnicity, language, religion, homeland — are not rendered obsolete here. However, instead seeing one of these as the basis of a social whole — a society — it places them as partial connections; connecting some places but not others. Tribal identification could tie together Baloch in some regions. In other places a common language brought Baloch closer together. In

recent years Baloch living in various parts of the world have built solidarity through a shared notion of homeland in a Balochistan divided across states and struggling for statehood itself. However, not all Baloch imagined a shared homeland as the basis of their Balochness. Some instead saw the connection in kinship ties with Baloch in other places.

Baloch populations interlinked through various partial connections can be thought of as a 'Polythetic Society'.<sup>111</sup> The concept has its origins in the polythetic classificatory system which places different elements in a single set not on the basis of a common shared property or a thread running through each of the elements. Instead it connects elements within a chain through a series of interlinked properties. It proposes that two elements in a set might not share anything in common yet can be chained together as a series of intermediary elements linked via a range of different properties.<sup>112</sup>

Hence, to see connection between distant elements in a set requires seeing them alongside all other interrelated elements. The connections between Mombasa and Multan Baloch are visible only when seen as parts of a larger Baloch world with several partially connected components. These parts can be considered part of the same society

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<sup>111</sup> James Clifford briefly mobilizes the category of 'Polythetic Society' in order to bring together various diasporic form without imposing on them a single criteria that would qualify them as a diaspora. [Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and translation in the late twentieth century*. Harvard University Press, 1997. p.249-250]

<sup>112</sup> The concept originally was developed by the linguist Needham in order to understand the relationship between the different Indo-European languages. According to Needham, there is no single property that runs across all the languages within the Indo-European family, yet there are several interlinked that connect them together. [Needham, Rodney. "Polythetic classification: convergence and consequences." *Man* (1975): 349-369.]

if we look not for the direct relationship between them, but instead trace second-hand connections through intermediate parts.

The Polythetic Baloch Dunya (world) does not occupy a stable, recognizable geography. It expands and shrinks over time. It gains new places, while losing others. Furthermore, many of the Baloch within this world do not recognize this society in its entirety. Depending on their own position, they can see the partial connection linking them directly to some areas. Polythetic Baloch Dunya is not an emic understanding of society. It requires mobile multi-sited research to trace the variegated external connection that link together various parts into a chain. Only by tracing the network in its entirety, with all its variegated connections, does the Polythetic Baloch Dunya become visible.

### ***1.7 Polythetic states?***

While the idea of societies with nothing in common being connected through a larger chain of related objects might seem novel from a bottom-up perspective of society, it is considered a standard feature of a top-down empire. For example, Seeley argues that even as the English nation spread through different modes into various parts of the world, these conquests remained parts of a shared history.<sup>113</sup> The English nation in the Americas and Australia spread as a frontier empire that developed new identities over time. In India, the hub of the empire, a small number of English people established the

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<sup>113</sup> Seeley, John Robert. *The expansion of England: two courses of lectures*. Macmillan, 1888.

‘Raj’ as a polity that was at once a located territorial state of India and part of the larger British Empire. The English people in India came to represent themselves as diasporic actors claiming to be once local to the Raj and cosmopolitan British officers. In the broader Middle East an even smaller number of English bureaucrats rotated between different posts, almost like nomads going from one place to another without being transformed through their movement.

To say that the English in Australia, India, and Iraq were part of an interconnected society does not seem like a stretch. Despite the fact that they moved through different modes of mobility and transform in different ways over time, they could easily claim to be part of the same society. The shared connections between the English colonizers were formed not through a bottom-up relationship between English societies in different parts of the world. The common thread instead comes from the claim that they were all part of a top-down expansion of the British Empire. One of the most common representations of the British Empire is of an octopus with many tentacles extending into different areas and infiltrating societies to different degrees. No matter how far they extend outwards, they remain connected through a single head of the empire recording movements and naming them the same name.

The difference between Baloch and English expansion was not just of one being bottom-up and the other being top-down. As the prevalence of conquest narratives discussed in the previous sections highlights, the expansion of the Baloch outside Balochistan is inextricably tied to state expansion. Their movement into various parts

between Multan and Mombasa was represented within Baloch memory as conquest.

However, unlike the English expansion, the conquests of Baloch could not be aggregated under a single head. Baloch conquest, unlike that of the English, did not result in named conquest.

The previous section outlined various possibilities of conquests not resulting in areas of conquest being named in the name of the conqueror. Nomadic conquerors raided and conquered only to move on to the next site. They did not engage in modalities of rule that involved naming things in their own name. Frontier conquerors settled down to establish rule but instead of naming things in their own name imported from outside, they developed hybrid identities that came at the cost of their original identities. Diasporic conquerors brought conquered areas into a larger network of circulation. Instead of labeling the conquered areas in their own name alone, they hyphenated the local names with their own.

In these different modes of conquests, conquerors not naming conquered territories in their own name appears as a choice. Conquest narratives— either in their original moment of narration or through retroactive reading— understand not-naming as a practical decision rather than a sign of their limited power. Baloch readings of conquests in the pasts do not see their forefathers as failed rulers. They instead understand them as historical figures who had goals other than building an empire.

They conquered in order to open mobility routes and socio-economic possibilities for the border Baloch society spread across different parts of the world.<sup>114</sup>

Baloch were not, however, cultivating “the art of not being governed”. Unlike the people in the Zomia highlands that Scott theorizes, Baloch were not running away from the state. They were instead running towards the state. Baloch mobility, and subsequently the shape of the polythetic Baloch society, was intimately tied to state expansion. As earlier highlighted, the conquest narratives of Chakar-e-Azam, Shahdad Chota, and Mirza Barkat closely overlapped with the story of state expansion. The state they conquered for, however, was seldom in their own name.

To call them simply military-labor would be a great disservice to the myriad roles Baloch played within and without the state. At times they were reduced to simply being cannon fodder — the disposable mercenaries fighting on the frontline for a basic livelihood. At other moments they traded in the conquest to become a *hakim*, *liwali*, *wazir*, or even to become a community leader, journalist, or a poet.

Importantly, the ambitions of portfolio mercenaries were not limited to personal social mobility. Beyond self-aggrandizement, Baloch portfolio mercenaries saw in conquering in another name the possibility of carving routes for other Baloch to follow in their name. Trajectories taken by the conquerors of the oral narratives were kept open

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<sup>114</sup> Moreover, as we see in the comparison with other empires at times following similar strategies of naming, Baloch were not the only ones conquering and not ruling, keeping *aasabiya* instead of structural solidarity, or becoming local-cosmopolitans rather than just local princes.

for centuries after the original moment of conquest. In a way, the social routes of portfolio mercenaries proved to be more resilient than the states in whose name they conquered.

While subsequent conquest by opposing forces might topple empires, they do not undo the social networks of the conquerors without states. When faced with pressures from a new empire, the portfolio mercenaries simply had to reorient themselves. When one node on the polythetic society closed, they only had to turn to another. Thus, whereas empires come and go, polythetic societies produced by portfolio mercenaries continue under different names. Baloch conquerors might not have produced a connected Baloch polity in space, but they left open the possibility of Baloch coming together in time. The different parts of the polythetic society though not brought together in the past, can yet be connected in the future.

### ***1.8 Conclusion: Faqeer Shad's Baloch Dunya through Bahrain***

The policeman-poet earlier mentioned, Faqeer Shad, claims to have brought the entire Baloch Dunya (literally the 'Baloch world') together in his book *Miras*. According to Shad, the key to bringing this world together was service in the Bahraini military.

While Shad had joined the Bahraini police reluctantly due to pressures in Balochistan, he found solace in listening to Balochi oral epics on cassette tapes he had brought from home. These tapes reminded him better days— of the time he spent as a child listening to his grandfather reciting these verses. He would often spend hours each evening listening to these tapes. The problem, however, was that he did not have



enough tapes. Since he was playing them every day, Shad had already gone through all of them within a couple of months on service. He played them on repeat, but there were only so many times he could listen to the same thing.

In order to increase his collection, Shad started asking other Baloch in Bahrain for tapes. He soon realized that he was not the only police officer who was in the habit of listening to tapes from home each night. According to Shad, almost every Baloch soldier would have at least a few tapes with them at all times. They would play it before they went to sleep, while standing bored on duty, or when they felt nostalgic about home on their days off of work.

Soon after Shad started borrowing tapes from other Baloch police, he realized that the epics they told were not the ones he had heard from either his grandfather or the tapes he brought with him. Many of the tapes contained retellings of Baloch past that he had never heard before. This difference was because of the fact that the borrowed tapes were coming from different places.

In the late twentieth century, Bahrain attracted Baloch from different parts of the world. As one of the few places that still recruits mercenaries for their state security apparatus, Bahrain has been an important node in the Baloch mobility in the recent past. As we will see in Chapter 4, the Baloch in Bahrain came from not just different parts of Balochistan, but also from the diaspora and frontier societies outside of Balochistan. Bahrain has Baloch soldiers from Sindh, Punjab, Gujarat, the Persian Gulf and even East Africa.

Faqeer Shad saw in borrowed tapes a unique opportunity to contribute to Baloch culture. According to Shad all earlier collections of Balochi epics were limited because they only contained epics from one part of Balochistan. In Bahrain he felt he had a unique opportunity to bring together tapes from all of the various sites. Faqeer realized that by transcribing tapes borrowed from Baloch coworkers from across the Baloch Dunya, he could compose the first geographically diverse compendium of Balochi epics.

Each time I met Shad, he would complain about a backache. Standing still for eight hours on his job as police had taken a toll on his back. This though, he explained, was necessary cost to pay for the opportunity to sit down in the evening transcribing and editing his book. His book project allowed him to get through the day job. His day job in turn allowed him to put together a book that brought together the social world of Baloch from across various borders.

Understanding why Faqeer Shad needed the Bahraini state and why Bahrain needed Shad requires a detour into a long history extending beyond both Bahrain and Balochistan. It requires an investigation into the order forged together by a polythetic Baloch community simultaneously involved in multiple state structures since the 16th century. It requires us to follow continuities within changing patterns of recruitment and resettlement of Baloch in roles beyond the military.



Figure 27: Faqeer Shad sitting transcribing from tapes of Balochi epics

## 2. Arms and the Arms That Carry Them

### 2.1 Introduction

For three days in 1926, between the 5th and 8th of November, Bahrain was under siege and routine life was suspended.<sup>1</sup> The British advisor to the Sheikh, along with his support staff, retreated onto the British Naval fleet anchored offshore.<sup>2</sup> Bazaars were closed down and citizens were instructed to remain indoors. The most trusted guards were deployed to guard the rifles store and ammunition depot. For three days, Baloch men had 'run amok'. The siege was led by a group of foreign mercenaries who were recruited into a paramilitary force called the Bahrain Levy Corps. The Levy force was formed in 1924 to fill the protection gap between the local police and British navy.

In 1892,<sup>3</sup> the British Empire signed a treaty of mutual protection with the ruling Al-Khalifa family, bringing Bahrain under the umbrella of British indirect rule.<sup>4</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> The primary information regarding the microhistorical case come from British Library India Office records. In particular, it based mainly on the following files: IOR/R/15/2/1213, IOR/R/15/2/1212, and IOR/R/15/2/137. Additionally, I use published diaries of Charles Belgrave (Centre for Arab Gulf Studies, Old Library, University of Exeter, in 1993-1994.)

<sup>2</sup> On 29 August Daly reported by telegram to Prideaux that anonymous letters had been received at the Agency, threatening the lives of himself, Belgrave, and the Director of the customs house (Mr de Grenier), if the Baloch Lance Naik was executed as intended.

<sup>3</sup> The British had earlier signed a protection treaty with the Al-Khalifa's in 1871. There was an even earlier treaty signed in 1860 to allow for the British Naval Fleet to park itself in Bahrain. However, it was only after the protection agreement in 1892 that the British began to take active interest in the internal affairs of Bahrain.

<sup>4</sup> Instead of establishing themselves as the only sovereign, like in areas of direct rule, the British Empire ruled places like Bahrain indirectly through local sovereigns. Through treaties of mutual recognition, indirect rule guaranteed that rule of local sovereigns would be upheld as long as they saw themselves as part of larger umbrella of colonial sovereignty, and allowed for strategic presence of the British empire.

agreement split the job of protecting Bahrain— the Al-Khalifas were only responsible for keeping order within the island through a nascent police force<sup>5</sup> and a handful of palace guards.<sup>6</sup> Protection from external threats was the duty of the colonial naval ships, which were now docked at the port. The Levy force was formed to handle threats which could not be easily sorted into this internal-external dichotomy. It was designed as a paramilitary force that could handle threats too big for the police and royal guards, yet too small for the British fleet.<sup>7</sup> As it turned out, a majority of the Levy recruits were Baloch.<sup>8</sup>

In the two years since its formation, there had been two significant incidents of Baloch Levy insubordination. In 1925, a Levy stood trial for the attempted murder of a member of the royal Al-Khalifa family. A Levy had also killed a fellow soldier in that same year. And just a month before the events of this chapter, a Levy had threatened the life of the Chief of Police.<sup>9</sup> Each of these incidents were dealt with as an individual,

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<sup>5</sup> Al-Khalifa's had on their payroll *natur* (night watchmen) and *baladiyah* (municipal) police force.

<sup>6</sup> The palace guards were composed largely through the Sunni Dawasir tribe and diasporic Baloch. For a comprehensive history of pre-colonial Bahrain see: *History of Eastern Arabia, 1750-1800; the Rise and Development of Bahrain and Kuwait*. Beirut, Khayats, 1965.

<sup>7</sup> Prior to the formation of the Bahrain Levy Corps, the British had protected its own interests in Bahrain through a detachment of Sepoys from India. This, however, was seen both economically burdensome and contrary to their desire of establishing the Al-Khalifas as the local sovereign under the British umbrella. Moreover, the British feared that Muslim sepoys could collude with seditious elements in the Persian Gulf. IOR/R/15/2/118.

<sup>8</sup> Ethnic Baloch trace their origins to the irredentist area of Balochistan currently spread across Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan.

<sup>9</sup> 3rd August 1926. Charles Belgrave Diaries (1926-1927). Published by Centre for Arab Gulf Studies, Old Library, University of Exeter, in 1993-1994.

stand-alone crime. Yet with the fourth incident, the British commanding officers had caught on to a pattern--there was a siege and the levies were at the center.

The siege itself began as a personal dispute between two Levy employees, a Baloch Lance Naik named Ismail Shah Murad and a Punjabi Subedar named Niaz Ali.<sup>10</sup> Their latent animosity now boiled over on the morning before the siege. As per routine, the Lance Naik was expected to join in the morning drill exercise with the rest of his unit but asked to be relieved from his duties for the day, as he felt unwell. The Subedar, who oversaw drill trainings, maintained that the Lance Naik was feigning his illness and had refused his request. Now the Lance Naik had to join the drill. As soon as exercises began, however, he fainted. Major Daly, the British supervisor on duty, stepped in to allow the Lance Naik to retire to his quarters for the day, overruling the Subedar.

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<sup>10</sup> Lance Naik and Subedar were titles that mimicked the Indian sepoy military bureaucracy structure. The hierarchy with the Levy was as follows: Subedar, Havaldar, Naik, Lance Naik and Sepoy.



Figure 28: Levies doing routine drills

However, the Lance Naik reemerged as soon as the drills ended and marched towards the Subedar's office with a rifle in his hand. The Subedar and Major Daly were both inside at the time, discussing plans to improve troop discipline. Without a word, the Lance Naik opened fire at the office window. The Subedar got a bullet in his chest and fell to the ground.<sup>11</sup> The Lance Naik proceeded into the room and forcefully struck Major Daly on the head with the butt of his rifle. With the Subedar bleeding to death and Major Daly unconscious, the Lance Naik calmly retreated back into his living quarters.

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<sup>11</sup> The stray bullet also hit a Havaldar named Nurdud who too passed away as a result of the firing.

After Major Daly recovered consciousness, he shouted out to nearby guards (who had mysteriously gone missing at the time of the attack). As the guards rushed towards the scene, Major Daly ordered half of them to take the Subedar to the hospital and the other half to chase after the Lance Naik. Neither group, however, carried out the orders successfully. The Subedar died before they could drive him to the hospital. The other half, responsible for capturing the Lance Naik, refused to go into the narrow lanes of the tightly packed living quarters without any arms. They demanded that Major Daly give them access to the guns securely locked inside the ammunition store.

Fortuitously, the Lance Naik had returned to the scene of the crime and had willingly offered himself for arrest without carrying any arms. Daly was committed to immediately gathering all relevant evidence regarding the outrage. He demanded them to produce the murder weapon. The Lance Naik, however, refused to turn in his weapon and the search team assigned to look through his living quarters returned empty-handed. The gun used to murder the Subedar was missing within an hour of the incident. In response, Major Daly's investigation immediately switched from focusing on the murder to the retrieval of the missing gun. But how did the Lance Naik get his gun and where did it disappear to?





Figure 29: Levy grounds

Regulating Levy access to weapons was a critical component of the British strategy for controlling soldiers. An elaborate bureaucratic machinery was in place for the control of arms. Guns were kept locked in the ammunition store. Two guards were placed outside the store to keep constant vigilance. An additional store in-charge maintained detailed logs of what rifles were issued to whom, for how long, for what purpose, and on whose orders. The store in-charge was to issue arms only on the orders of the Subedar. Immediately following the murder, the guards ran to the store to ask for guns but were refused access. Rifles could not be issued without official orders. The officer in-charge asked that the Lance Naik be arrested without the use of arms. Additionally, ammunition was stored separately from the guns themselves, in a separate

depot outside the city. It created distance between the guns and the bullets. Even if troops managed to sneak out a rifle, they would still not have ammunition. Guards and a store in-charge, similar to those at the arms store, were also posted at ammunition depots. They too had to strictly follow a bureaucratic chain of command before issuing rounds.

Despite these measures, the Lance Naik had somehow managed to obtain a rifle and attack his commanding officers with it. Some believed that the gun was stolen from the lockers. Other believed it was purchased from the market. Yet others claimed that it was a gift from the Lance Naik's brother-in-law. But in order to figure out how the Lance Naik got his gun, it first had to be recovered. One of the guards suggested searching the Lance Naik's brother-in-law's house, but the murder weapon was not found. A friend of the Lance Naik hinted at the possibility of the gun being hidden in the Levy Mosque, located next to his living quarters.

The mosque's Imam and Lance Naik were close acquaintances. In fact, most of those involved in orchestrating the riots and siege that followed Lance Naik's arrest were believed to be followers of the Imam; they prayed behind him and regularly attended his Quran classes. When they raided the Imam's living quarters inside the mosque, they discovered three guns, locked in a safe. One of the three guns was identified as the weapon used for the Subedar's murder. Alongside the safe contained Bolshevik posters, a diary, petty cash, handful of gold watches and a Certificate of Identity. According to informants, the watches belonged to various Levy soldiers.

The posters were assumed to have come from travelers, from Afghanistan and Central Asia, who stopped in Bahrain to stay with the Imam on their way to Mecca. The Certificate of Identity was issued by the Bahraini authorities, recognizing the Imam as Baloch. One word — Najd — was written several times on the first page of the diary with different numbers next to it and a new opening alphabet: Dajd, Zajd, Hajd. The officers suspected that these were alphanumerical codes, meant to keep track of people and places. Another page of the diary had text written in an indecipherable language, believed to be Russian written with an Arabic script.

The diary was sent to India for further investigation. The Certificate of Identity was dispatched for verification by the issuing authorities. Owners of the watches were tracked down and called in for questioning. The posters were taken as evidence of the Imam's Soviet connections. The focus of the investigation, however, were the three guns. Though the murder weapon had been recovered, Major Daly was nowhere close to solving the mystery of how the Lance Naik had obtained it.

The case quickly gained the attention of colonial officers beyond Bahrain, because the Persian Gulf was at the center of the illegal arms trade in the early twentieth century. The region was suspected to be an arms pipeline for rebels and anti-colonial uprisings across the Indian Ocean and territorial Asia. Given the Imam's connections with Russia, it was not a stretch to imagine pro-Bolshevik and anti-colonial soldiers in Afghanistan and Central Asia as the ultimate end point of the Lance Naik's guns. If that

proved to be true, it could point towards a secret plan brewing within the colonial ranks, for besieging the empire in its broad expanse, using its own guns.

This chapter reopens the case of the Lance Naik's missing gun. It dusts off a long-closed investigation on the murder of Subedar Niaz Ali and the "Levy run amok." And so, I ask the same question Major Daly asked: how did Lance Naik get the gun and why did he give it to the Imam?

Using micro-historical methods,<sup>12</sup> the chapter reduces the scale of analysis to focus on a minor, all-but-forgotten incident from Bahrain's past--the case of the missing gun. At the heart of this microhistorical study lies a single case file on the murder of Subedar Niaz Ali and the ensuing Levy riots. The file, safely stacked in the India Office Records at the British Library in London, consists of the following documents: (1) detailed firsthand accounts of the incident, (2) testimonies of Levies, and other acquaintances of the Imam and Lance Naik, regarding their activities in Bahrain and beyond,<sup>13</sup> (3) the court's deliberation and judgment, (4) communications between

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<sup>12</sup> By micro-historical methods I am specifically referring to reduction of scale, inductive reasoning, focus on experience, narrative retelling, following clues, paying attention to patterns that don't fit into perceived historical knowledge, and speculative reasoning. See: Peltonen, Matti. "Clues, margins, and monads: The micro-macro link in historical research." *History and Theory* 40, no. 3 (2001): 347-359, Levi, Giovanni. "On microhistory" in Peter Burke. *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge, 1991): 93-113., and Trivellato, Francesca. "Is there a future for Italian microhistory in the age of global history?." *California Italian Studies* 2, no. 1 (2011).

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly, Major Daly mentions using 'Inquisition methods of the Spanish' to obtain further information on the missing guns. Earliest microhistories, such as Ginzburg's 'The Cheese and the Worms', revolved largely around inquisition reports.

colonial and local state officials in Bahrain, and (5) reports submitted to British officials in Bushier, Bombay and London.

The chapter, however, shifts the focus of the file, away from the murder and siege, to the lives and activities of both Lance Naik and the Imam. I read these colonial archives against the grain, to narrate their story: how did they get to Bahrain; what did they do there; and how did they plan their life beyond their roles as a Levy? From within the histories of their respective lives, I try to solve the mystery of how the Lance Naik got the gun and what the Imam was doing with it.

Moreover, I frame them as characters that are 'exceptional-normal,'<sup>14</sup> recasting the normal- as-normal in a new light, due to their exceptionality. This exceptional story, of the Imam allegedly plotting the Subedar's murder and the Lance Naik carrying out the orders, brings to the fore important questions about the normalized relationship between Levies and arms. The events forced colonial officials to reconsider Levies' relationship to arms on a more contingent basis, rather than believing written reports and official policy documents. In this chapter, by solving the exceptional-normal story of the missing gun, I try to understand the relationship between Levies and guns in Bahrain, and even more broadly between global mercenaries and the arms trade during the interwar period.

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<sup>14</sup> Ginzburg, Carlo, John Tedeschi, and Anne C. Tedeschi. "Microhistory: Two or three things that I know about it." *Critical Inquiry* 20, no. 1 (1993): 10-35,

Antonio Gramsci referred to the interwar period (1918-1939) he lived through as an interregnum in which 'the old is dying and the new cannot be born'.<sup>15</sup> At the end of the First World War, the old world of decentralized, flexible empires was on the way out, yet the bounded, centralized nation-states were not yet ascendant. During this in-between period, one of the central problem faced by states was that private, transnational means of violence— mercenaries and arms— were at once an essential resource and an existential threat to the developing inter-state system. I explore the multiple ways in which states sought to resolve this problem, as they continued to import means of violence through the market, while still claiming monopoly over them.

## ***2.2 Microhistory as global history: state and means of violence in the interwar period***

### **2.2.1 The partially modern levy force structure**

The Levy Force in Bahrain was formed in 1924 as an upgrade to the older force of palace guard. It was supposed to be Bahrain's first modern military force, introduced after Bahrain became a British protectorate in 1892.<sup>16</sup> The Bahraini Levy Force was not, however, a fully modern military force like the Sepoy army in India.<sup>17</sup> The difference between the Levy Force and the Sepoy army can be traced back to different modalities of

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<sup>15</sup> Gramsci, Antonio. Selections from the Prison Notebooks. Edited by Quinton Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, New York: International Publishers, 1971. (p.276)

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed analysis of the protectorate system, see: Onley, James. The Arabian frontier of the British raj: merchants, rulers, and the British in the nineteenth-century gulf. Oxford University Press on Demand, 2007.

<sup>17</sup> Military modernization in the sepoy army have been the subject of several manuscripts. For example, see: Alavi, Seema. The Sepoys and the Company: Tradition and Transition in Northern India, 1770-1830. Oxford University Press, 1995.

rule under the British Empire. Most of India was under British direct rule, in which the British Empire willingly invested large sums of money to structure a full-time professional army under a well-regulated bureaucratic hierarchy. The added costs of military modernization in India were tolerated by the Raj with the explicit understanding they would be offset by regular taxation from the populace. As Fredric Lance has argued, modern military forces cost more, but yield higher profits by forcing the state to implement an unavoidable taxation system.<sup>18</sup>

Under British indirect rule, local taxation in Bahrain was not the main source of state income. With such a small population, the tax net in Bahrain was meager.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, their economic production was limited by a lack of industries and arable land. Any attempt at enforcing greater control over violence, by creating a full-time professional army, would thus produce declining income in the form of taxes. The added costs would not be offset by increased taxes in Bahrain. For the ruling elite in Bahrain, profits from protection came in the form of subsidy payments from the British. For the British, the returns on protection in Bahrain came in the form of added control over Indian Ocean trade. Both the British and the ruling Al Khalifa family were only interested in converting to modern armies if the other was willing to bear its costs.<sup>20</sup> But

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<sup>18</sup> Lane, Frederic C. "Economic consequences of organized violence." *The Journal of Economic History* 18, no. 4 (1958): 401-417.

<sup>19</sup> The phenomena has been studied under the rubric of 'rentier states'. See: Beblawi, Hazem, and Giacomo Luciani, eds. *The rentier state*. Routledge, 2015.

<sup>20</sup> Interestingly, the local sovereigns in Bahrain were more vociferous than the British in their desire for British trained drill soldiers from India. Through soldiers trained and paid for by the

even with these concerns, the British Empire was adamant about the need for a paramilitary force that could replace the ineffective and outdated palace guards.

To find a compromise, colonial authorities in Bahrain searched for examples of a cost-efficient policing force in other areas of indirect rule. They quickly found a very successful model at work in another British colony on the other side of the Arabian Sea: The Tribal Levy Force. In both Pashto and Baluchi speaking parts of the Western Indian frontier, the British had introduced Levy Forces as a locally raised, cost- efficient paramilitary force.<sup>21</sup> Instead of investing in an elaborate bureaucratic system of recruitment, payment and control, the Levy system outsourced all of these tasks to the local tribal chief. The chief received monthly subsidies from the British and in exchange recruited his own tribesmen, distributed their salaries, and controlled them through tribal hierarchies.

The frontier Levy Forces thus provided authorities in Bahrain an enticing example of an efficient force operating at a fraction of the cost of a fully modern army unit.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the coastal area of Makran was where most of the palace guards in

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British Empire, the Al Khalifas could increase their prestige locally with little cost to them. The British, however, were unwilling to redirect its already stretched military to an area that was important mainly as a docking site for its naval fleet. If the *raison d'être* of a local army was only to increase the prestige of rulers sanctioning British naval presence, this could be achieved without bureaucratized, trained full time and lifelong soldiers recruited systematically. The task merely demanded soldiers able to periodically perform parades and public presence of soldiers.

<sup>21</sup> Farrell, Thomas D. "The founding of the North-West Frontier Militias." *Asian Affairs* 3, no. 2 (1972): 165-178.

<sup>22</sup> The Levy model had by the time already been experimented in Persia. The Sistan Levy Corps was formed in 1917 and Khurasan Levy corps formed in 1918. See: Stebbins, L. H. (2017). *British*



Bahrain were already from, with a Levy Force of its own in place.<sup>23</sup> Building a Levy Force would thus require a simple restructuring of palace troops into a tribal structure of recruitment, salary disbursement, and responsibility, which was displaced from Makran to Bahrain.<sup>24</sup>

The British authorities soon discovered that the model could not quite be imported wholesale. The Levy Force on the Indian frontiers was shaped by the assumption that local society was organized on tribal lines. The coastal Baloch who had been serving in the Persian Gulf however, as the first chapter argued, associated more with a cosmopolitan diaspora and not tribal allegiances.<sup>25</sup> Crucially, there were no tribal chiefs who could be deputized. In fact, even the Makran Levy Force was in fact constituted by the imported, tribal Baloch from mountainous areas in the North.

Colonial authorities had to import the tribal Levy Force model into Bahrain, without the underlying tribal structures. In the absence of tribal chiefs, authorities in Bahrain had to think of new ways of recruiting, paying, and controlling Levy soldiers. Eventually, the problem was resolved with diasporic Baloch networks, which replaced the tribal system of recruitment with kinship. For payment, the British instituted a

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Imperialism in Qajar Iran Consuls, Agents and Influence in the Middle East. London, I.B.Tauris. Furthermore, it had also been introduced in Iraq under the title Assyrian Levy Corps in 1923. See: Browne, John Gilbert. *The Iraq Levies, 1915-1932*. Royal United Service Institution, 1932.

<sup>23</sup> OR/L/MIL/7/7133 (British Library, London)

<sup>24</sup> IOR/R/15/2/135 (British Library, London).

<sup>25</sup> For a discussion on the difference in social organization of southern and northern Baloch populations see: Fabietti, Ugo. 2011. *Ethnography at the frontier space, memory and society in southern Balochistan*. Bern: P. Lang.

regular monthly salary payment system under the control of the Subedar. Control and accountability of non-tribal Levy soldiers, however, remained a problem.

In the absence of tribal authority structures, the separation between arms and soldiers become the linchpin of Levy control. With no tribal chief accountable for Levy violence, the Colonial authorities decided to constrict their capability of violence. The Lance Naik and the Imam were amongst the first set of Baloch soldiers in the Persian Gulf who were recruited for military service without their own arms. Moreover, as mentioned in the introduction, their access to state-owned arms was also closely regulated. For the first time in the region's history, mercenaries no longer controlled their means of production.

### **2.1.2 Primitive accumulation and the separation between arms and soldiers**

Ottoman historian Karen Barkey argues that following the gunpowder revolution, large portions of peasant populations across Eurasia and its oceanic geography became gun owners.<sup>26</sup> She demonstrates that the ownership of arms was instrumental for the social and physical mobility of peasants. Echoing Barkey, medieval Indian historian Dirk Kolff argues that unpredictable, seasonal, and limited earnings from the land led to large number of peasants seeking work as mercenaries.<sup>27</sup> Such self-

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<sup>26</sup> Barkey, Karen. 1997. *Bandits and bureaucrats: the Ottoman route to state centralization*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

<sup>27</sup> Kolff, Dirk H. A. 2002. *Naukar, Rajput, and sepoy: the ethnohistory of the military labour market in Hindustan, 1450-1850*. Cambridge [u.a.]: Cambridge University Press.

armed military entrepreneurs, according to both Barkey and Kolff, were not just pawns in the hands of larger empires, but the most dynamic force in the region, determining the nature of social and political shifts.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, I argued that these self-armed peasants need to be thought of as ‘portfolio mercenaries’ who used military service as the platform from which to build a large portfolio of non-military activities and networks. As owners of their own means of production, portfolio mercenaries had considerable leverage and flexibility in choosing their employer and nature of work. They could organize raid parties to collect taxes and agricultural produce. They could unite to resist imperial efforts at tax collections, thus giving an economic advantage over those made to pay. They could join the local feudal lord’s army in collecting taxes. They could travel to other parts of the empire as a roaming imperial band. They could even ally with a rival empire looking to expand. Moreover, the negotiating power that came with the flexibility of work meant portfolio mercenaries could move beyond laboring as soldiers. As highlighted in the first two chapters, portfolio mercenaries could even assert themselves as local governors and fiefs or even monopolize trade routes to become merchants and state diwans.

By relieving soldiers of their own arms, the British Empire began the slow process of turning portfolio mercenaries into military labor, condemned to a career in soldiering alone. Soldiers in many ways are a specific type of laborers. Instead of

wielding the artisan's tools or farmer's till, soldiers work by carrying arms in their arms. The commodity they produce through their labor is protection, the defensive or aggressive actions that make economic accumulation possible. Profits from protection come from the sweat and blood of soldiers channeled through the barrel of the gun. Seen thus, the separation between arms and the arms that carry them can then be placed alongside a broader disenfranchisement of laborers from their means of production; a process Marx called 'primitive accumulation'.<sup>28</sup>

For Marx himself, the separation between laborers and their means of production is the original sin of capitalist accumulation.<sup>29</sup> It sets into motion the process of concentrating capital into the hands of those who own the means of production at the cost of those being dispossessed.<sup>30</sup> Scholars have since moved beyond Marx's historicization while still retaining primitive accumulation as a particular mode of power.<sup>31</sup> Rather than seeing primitive accumulation as the original sin, the prehistory of capitalism proper, primitive accumulation has been reframed as an ongoing process that

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<sup>28</sup> Marx, Karl. 1968. *Capital*. Vol. 2. New York: Dutton. Chapter 26.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> For Marx, Prior to primitive accumulation, the means of production were owned either individually or communally. Work done through these self-owned means of production was in service of owner's needs. Labor that went into the means of production produced goods for their use-value rather than exchange value. In short, the owner and user of the means of production, combined within the same person, determined the usage of means of production, its product and surplus.

<sup>31</sup> David Harvey rebrands primitive accumulation as 'accumulation by dispossession', an ongoing process that uses naked force to separate labor from their means of production. See: Harvey, David. 2013. *The new imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

highlights specific forms of accumulation.<sup>32</sup> Primitive accumulation is a process that is partial, geographically limited, and reversible. It is partial because older modes of production often subsidize capitalist accumulation.<sup>33</sup> It is not a globally uniform process because an uneven global terrain with divergent modes of productions was essential in providing capitalism a diverse set of routes each with their own structures and power relations.<sup>34</sup>

Moreover, primitive accumulation is reversible because it produces an excess of both labor and the means of production, who go on to recombine under older modes of production.<sup>35</sup> Despite attempts at matching the supply of labor with the demand for the means of production, there are excesses in both. Surplus labor, left without the option of laboring within capitalist market, reproduce themselves by turning to 'traditional and/or

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<sup>32</sup> As Kalayan Sanyal writes "Primitive accumulation does not refer to a one time change, it is not a process that works itself out once capital's initial conditions are created. It is not what Balibar has called 'prehistory of capital', an originary moment of capital that dissolves once capital has arisen. It is a continuous and ongoing process that capital is perpetually engaged in; primitive accumulation is an inseparable moment of capital." Sanyal, Kalyan. 2014. Rethinking capitalist development primitive accumulation, governmentality and post-colonial capitalism. London [u.a.]: Routledge. p.61

<sup>33</sup> Meillassoux, for example, highlights how family subsidizes the cost of both reproducing labor and production of commodity. See: Meillassoux, Claude. 1981. Maidens, meal and money: capitalism and the domestic community. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>34</sup> World system theorists, like Jairus Banaji, claim primitive accumulation was never a globally uniform process. It took different forms in different places. The separation between labor and means of production for the purpose of producing wage laborers was not central to colonial projects across the board. Colonialism put in place mechanisms of draining surplus generated through older modes of production, remade under new relations of imperialism. Primitive accumulation for Banaji then is the process of bringing diverse modes of production under the conditions of an imperialism and global market. Banaji, Jairus. "Backward capitalism, primitive accumulation and modes of production." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 3, no. 4 (1973): 393-413.

<sup>35</sup> Sanyal (2014).

non-legal spaces outside the formal market. Similarly, excess means of production too are converted into capital by forcing them into spaces outside markets of capital. Once both excess labor and means of production move beyond the purview of formal legal market space, they find ways of once again coming together. Thus, the more primitive accumulation separates labor from means of production, the more it triggers the reverse movement of recombination.

The Persian Gulf in the last quarter of the 19th century was an example par excellence of a site for absorbing excess labor in the frontier regions of India and means of production in Europe. For a large portion of the population in the frontier regions between India and Persia— such as Balochistan and Afghanistan— military-markets on both sides had been an essential source for social and economic mobility. Chronicles from the medieval period in both Persia and India are replete with references of soldiers and generals in imperial armies who had originated from the frontier regions. With the arrival of the British Empire in India, however, these possibilities were foreclosed as they began to depend exclusively on soldiers recruited from within. In the process, they turned frontier mercenaries into excess labor, left with only Levy Forces— such as the one in Bahrain— as one of the few sources of employment.

As for the excess means of production, following the breakup of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the second half of the 19th century, and the liquidation of its

military there was an excess of arms within Europe.<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, with rapid improvement in arms technology during the interwar period, a large amount of outdated arms supply had been catching rust in European military depots. A large portion of these excess, obsolete weapons found their way to the Persian Gulf, mainly to Muscat but also Bahrain, through legally registered European small arms traders.<sup>37</sup>

Guns entering the Persian Gulf legally through registered firms based in North Atlantic states were sold illegally through networks based out of Afghanistan and Balochistan. European and American private arms traders bought guns on national flag bearing ships to Muscat. Afghan and Baloch traders— composed of elements that had been made excess by the colonial armies— legally purchased arms in Muscat were illegally smuggled into the Makran on dhows traveling at night. The Persian Makran shoreline in particular was notorious for gunrunning. Camel caravans under the protection of Baloch tribal chiefs would then move these arms northwards from the Makran coast. Ultimately, they would reach bazaars in Afghanistan. From there, they circulated within the expansive territorial land trade routes in Eurasia.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Child, Clifton J. "German-American Attempts to Prevent the Exportation of Munitions of War, 1914-1915." *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 25, no. 3 (1938): 351-368.

<sup>37</sup> Historian James Fiscus posits: "In the 1880s, the international arms trade was centered at Zanzibar, and was primarily aimed at Africa. With the controls of the Brussels Act, the trade shifted north to Muscat and fed into Persia, Afghanistan, and Arabia. Much of the trade moved directly from Europe through the recently opened Suez Canal to Djibouti or Muscat for regional distribution. At Djibouti and Muscat the arms were purchased by local captains or transshipped by the European firms based at those ports." Fiscus, James W., "Gun Running in Arabia: The Introduction of Modern Arms to the Peninsula, 1880-1914" (1987). *Dissertations and Theses*. Paper 1624.

<sup>38</sup> Colonial archives are replete with reports on how the illegal arms trade functioned. For

Thus, just as legal opportunities for mercenaries were declining, the opportunities for profiting through illegal arms trade were growing substantially. The partially modern Bahrain Levy force, subsidized by informal recruitment, provided a new lease of life to older Baloch transnational mercenary networks, at a time when mercenaries were being displaced from the markets. While Baloch mercenary networks could not control their means of production with the Levy Force, they could easily locate them in the uneven geography of arms trade markets. By tying in older informal networks with arms, the mosque Imam and Lance Naik at the center of this story could reverse the process of separation and once again build a portfolio of activities that could elevate them out of the position of waged military-labor. As self-armed mobile portfolio mercenaries, not only would they have more economic opportunities, but, importantly, also the ability to barter with the colonial empire on a relatively more equal footing.<sup>39</sup>

## ***2.3 The Imam and the Lance Naik***

### **2.3.1 How were Levis recruited?**

Upon discovering that the Mekran Levy Corps would not be suitable in Bahrain given the fact that they were tied together through tribal allegiances that might not travel beyond Balochistan, authorities in Bahrain began to look for troops elsewhere for

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example see: IOR/L/PS/20/10 (British Library, London)

<sup>39</sup> Engseng Ho argues that diasporic actors capable of instigated networks across the broad contours of European empires presented a far more serious threat to the empire than local movements and uprisings. Ho, Engseng. "Empire through diasporic eyes: A view from the other boat." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, no. 2 (2004): 210-246.



troops. Fortuitously, they found that the Muscat Levies<sup>40</sup> had planned on downsizing an entire unit of Baloch men,<sup>41</sup> and was willing to instead transfer them to Bahrain. Thus, a formal state-to-state transfer from the Muscat Levy Force to Bahrain Levy force was negotiated to simply transfer Baloch men from one colonial barrack to another.<sup>42</sup>

However, soon after landing in Bahrain, several soldiers were deemed medically unfit and were swiftly dismissed. Many were diagnosed with venereal diseases that could spread easily. Even among those with a clear medical history, many turned out to have criminal records. By the end of that year, only few Levies from the original exchange remained on duty. Their place was taken by Baloch men coming directly to Bahrain through family networks and labor markets. Most of the Levy troops were thus technically not imported from another state. They were diasporic actors who had found their way to path to Bahrain.

Both the Imam and Lance Naik were amongst those who landed in Bahrain through circuitous informal channels. The Imam, Sulaiman Shah Bin Ahmad Shah, first came to Bahrain in 1925. He initially lived with the then Imam of the Levy Mosque, who happened to be an Afghan. After a few months Sulaiman Shah left for Iraq where he

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<sup>40</sup> Coincidentally, the Muscat Levy Corps itself was formed through a disbanded unit of the Seistani Levy Corps in 1921. See: Rossiter, Ash. "Britain and the Development of Professional Security Forces in the Gulf Arab States, 1921-71: Local Forces and Informal Empire." (2014)

<sup>41</sup> Baloch had been notable presence even in pre-colonial forces of the Sultan of Muscat. See: Peterson, J. E. "The Baluch Presence in the Persian Gulf." *Sectarian Politics in the Persian Gulf*. London: Hurst (2013).

<sup>42</sup> For detailed records about the transfer of Levy unit from Muscat to Bahrain, see: IOR/R/15/2/135 (British Library, London)

found employment in the Iraqi Levy Force mosque.<sup>43</sup> A year after his departure to Iraq, Sulaiman Shah came back to Bahrain. His host from the first visit, the Afghan Imam, had just left Bahrain for Karachi. Consequently, he was left homeless and had to sleep in the main mosque hall.

Ironically, the late Subedar Niaz Ali came to his help. Given the vacancy for an Imam, Sulaiman Shah seemed the perfect fit, being a Syed, a Baloch and a Hafiz-e-Quran. As a Baloch he could bond together Baloch from different places. As a Syed, i.e. a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad's family, he could command the respect of the mostly Muslim soldiers.<sup>44</sup> As a Hafiz, who had memorized and could recite the entire Quran, he could lead Quran classes and develop Arabic skills among the corps. The Imam, the Subedar believed, could make the job of uniting Levies a little easier. A cooperative Imam leading regular prayers and commanding the respect of troops could further help discipline soldiers from diverse backgrounds.

The accused Lance Naik also had taken a circuitous route to Bahrain. Born in Iranian Makran, Ismail Shah Murad had moved to Karachi before he was eighteen. The early 20th century was a high point in the history of Karachi's development as a major Indian Ocean entrepot. Most of its labor class, populated along the docks and ports, was

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<sup>43</sup> Exchange between Bahrain and Iraq Levy Corps remained a recurrent feature till much later. See: IOR/R/15/2/674 (British Library, London)

<sup>44</sup> In the interconnected muslim landscape of the Indian Ocean, a Syed genealogy was almost a passport to settle anywhere along the muslim coast. See: Ho, Engseng. *The graves of Tarim: genealogy and mobility across the Indian Ocean*. Vol. 3. Univ of California Press, 2006.

Baloch.<sup>45</sup> Ismail worked at the docks as a coolie, manually transporting goods from the ship to the port.

From those ports he found his way to Muscat, working as a security guard for the port custom authorities. Like Karachi, Muscat port work was largely in the hands of Baloch. After the separation of the Omani empire into separate states of Zanzibar and Oman in the 19th century, the Muscat port was on the decline and traders were shifting to more profitable nearby ports.<sup>46</sup> One such Gujarati trader, who was looking to move out of Muscat to the neighboring port of Bahrain which was firmly under British rule, offered Ismail a position as a private security guard. With the Gujarati trader, Ismail moved from Muscat to Bahrain.

Ismail moved to Bahrain around the same time the Muscat Levy unit was being transferred to Bahrain. Upon arrival, Ismail would have thus found great turmoil around the Levy Force, but also opportunities. With many of the original levies coming from Muscat being dismissed, there were jobs to be had. One of the few Muscat Levies not to be dismissed happened to be related to Ismail; through him Ismail was offered a position within the Bahrain Levy Force. Even though Ismail did not have any prior experience in a professional army, he did have some experience in the protection business as a security guard. Given the shortage of trained soldiers, this experience was

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<sup>45</sup> Suhail, Adeem, and Ameen Lutfi. "Our City, Your Crisis: The Baloch of Karachi and the Partition of British India." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 39, no. 4 (2016): 891-907.

<sup>46</sup> Allen, Calvin H. "The Indian merchant community of Masqat." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 44, no. 1 (1981): 39-53.

enough to earn Ismail an immediate promotion. Within months of joining the force Ismail become a Naik in the Levy Force.

The divergent routes of the Sulaiman and Ismail brings into focus a recruitment system that was far from standardized. To get to Bahrain, each man journeyed through contingent paths, laid not by the bureaucracy alone. The paths, however, were not random. Both the Imam and Lance Naik walked along routes carved by continuous movement by various mobile societies<sup>47</sup> across centuries. Karachi and Muscat in particular, two waypoints for Lance Naik had long been integral nodes of an expansive world of mobile Baloch. Even Iraq, while historically peripheral for mobile Baloch, had recently emerged as an important site for Baloch looking for employment.<sup>48</sup>

Prior to the colonial encounter, armies in medieval India depended greatly on military-labor markets for supply of mercenary labor. Along major trade routes had emerged small 'kasba' settlements of mobile populations offering their services as mercenaries to traders, fiefs and even empires.<sup>49</sup> The British Empire no longer recruited from these kasbas. Yet, the networks producing the kasbas, along the frontiers of

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<sup>47</sup> For a detailed treatment of the idea of mobile societies, see: Ho, Engseng. "Inter-Asian Concepts for Mobile Societies." *The Journal of Asian Studies* (2017): 1-22.

<sup>48</sup> Toby Dodge argues that the British model for Iraq was based on the ideas of Robert Sandeman who conceived of the idea of indirect rule through tribes in Balochistan. Hence, to make the model work, the British government in Iraq was periodically importing people from Balochistan. See: Dodge, Toby. *Inventing Iraq: The failure of nation building and a history denied*. Columbia University Press, 2005.

irnaturalin his book on colonial development in Iraq argues that the British modeled their understanding of Iraqi society, and hence the Iraqi state on

<sup>49</sup> Kolff, Dirk H.A. *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market of Hindustan, 1450-1850*. Vol. 43. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

Western India in Balochistan, remained important sources of military-labor supply to places like the Persian Gulf. These networks provided states like Bahrain readily available labor at very little cost. They obviated the need for establishing politically complicated and financially burdensome transnational bureaucratic recruitment centers. In turn, through employment in Bahrain, Baloch mercenary networks that had been eroding in areas of colonial direct rule were thrown a new life.<sup>50</sup> Baloch networks subsidized the Bahraini Levy Force, which in turn rejuvenated older transnational mercenary connections.

### **2.3.2 What exactly were the Imam and the Lance Naik doing in Bahrain?**

Baloch portfolio mercenaries prior to the expansion of the British Empire were more figures of the market than of the barracks. Colonial forces, however, expected their soldiers to be in the barracks full-time. Central to the transition from part-market and part-barrack soldiers to full time soldiers was taking away their guns and handing them shovels. Military historian William McNeill argues that what truly made soldiers modern was the process of drilling them with repetitive routine tasks every day. Armies in Europe were revolutionized by the idea of giving soldiers a shovel and the repetitive, regular, atomized, and coordinated task of digging trenches.<sup>51</sup> The activity inculcated within soldiers the ethos of regularly putting in labor-hours regardless of war or peace.

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<sup>50</sup> See Chapter 4.

<sup>51</sup> McNeill, William H. *The pursuit of power: Technology, armed force, and society since AD 1000*. University of Chicago Press, 2013. p.128-135

The process of making them full time soldiers through regular drills, however, required expenditures that would defeat the *raison d'etre* of a Levy Force, i.e. cost efficiency. Full-time soldiers had to be paid a higher salary, because they could not make up the shortfall through the market. As a partially modern force, the Bahrain Levy Force officially forbade soldiers from concurrent secondary employment. Unofficially, however, they were willing to turn a blind eye to Levies turning to the market to supplement their incomes.

During the investigation into the murder, the multiple market activities of both the Imam and Lane Naik came to the fore. For a while, Major Daly thought that uncovering the relationships and deals which both had in the market was central to the case, because both the Imam and Lance Naik spent much of the day prior to the murder suspiciously loitering in the bazaar.

A barber whose shop was located right in the heart of the Manama souq was called in for questioning. He reported seeing the Imam sitting quietly outside a tea-shop without talking to anyone. It seemed as if the Imam was waiting for someone. At around sunset the Imam got up and just as he was about to leave, some Baloch guard came up to him. The barber could not get the catch the entire conversation but remembered overhearing a snippet about a due payment.

A butcher from the market, a Baloch man who was friends with Ismail, recalled that Ismail came to the market looking for ammunition. Ismail, he informed the investigators, had a running line of credit with an ammunition dealer. He perhaps was

even distantly related to the dealer. On his way back, Ismail stopped at the same tea stall to ask about the Imam, shortly after the latter had left. Not finding him, Ismail too had a brief conversation with the same Baloch guard about some payment.

To the case investigators, these reports of Imam and Ismail from the day before the murder seemed suspicious. They seemed to contradict Ismail's testimony that the murder was not premeditated. Ismail buying ammunition, the Imam quietly waiting, and both conversing about some payment with a third person; all seemed to point at a plan that had been brewing for a while. Upon closer inspection, they discovered that Ismail and Imam both had a long history of involvement with the markets.

A month before his murder, the Subedar had reported to Major Daly that the mosque — reserved for the Levies — was being frequented by traders from the bazaar. The Imam's Quran classes, authorized by the Subedar himself, had transformed into prolonged gatherings with a sizeable attendance. Instead of helping the Subedar build a communal esprit de corps as intended, the classes had become a nexus between Baloch Levies within the barracks and Baloch traders. Initially the Subedar himself had attended these classes, but in the months before the murder he had been forcibly kept out of them. Levies loyal to the Subedar reported that the Imam often spoke against the Shia Subedar and his constant bias for non-Muslims in disputes with Muslims. In retaliation, Subedar had proposed banning non-Levies from entering the mosque, but the idea was shelved out of fears of backlash from the Baloch troops.

According to the Subedar, Ismail drew traders from the markets to the mosque. Ismail, he noted, was sharper than most other Levies. In recognition of his capabilities, Ismail had been promoted to the rank of Naik soon after joining the forces and was posted at the main Levy check post in the market. Soon, Ismail gained a reputation amongst the traders for being able to swiftly deal with petty crimes and disputes. The Subedar, however, was unhappy with Ismail's tendency to vacate his post and go strolling in the markets. Despite being warned several times, Ismail kept up with his routine of walking around the market instead of manning his post.

A few months before the murder, Ismail left the check post without any permission, notice or a substitute. In his absence a robbery took place at a shop very close to the check post. The Subedar called Ismail to explain his absence, to which Ismail responded that he had just vacated his post temporarily. Most of the time he followed his orders of staying at the post, only leaving sometimes. Ismail even made promises of swiftly arresting the culprits. By collecting information from acquaintances, Ismail in fact arrested the robber the following day. The Subedar, however, felt Ismail's negligence was reason enough to demote him from the position of Naik to Lance Naik. Furthermore, Ismail was transferred from his post in the market to an alternate site, which saw much less public interaction. Ismail vociferously protested the decision arguing that it was human nature to get tired standing in place for eight hours; he left his post because he was fatigued. His complaint fell on deaf ears.



This incident was brought up during the murder trial. Several Levies reported hearing an enraged Ismail shouting that God willing, he would have taken his revenge on the Subedar. Ismail himself maintained that his demotion, while a source of anger, was not the root cause of his dispute with the Subedar. The truth, he claimed, was that that the Subedar deducted Rs.5 from every Levy's salary to purchase living supplies for Levies in bulk, even though the supplies actually cost much less. By buying in large quantities, the Subedar could have driven down the cost by quite a lot. Instead he continued buying at that rate through a vendor related to him. Allegedly, the supplier gave the Subedar cutbacks from each purchase. If Levies continued to interact with shopkeepers and traders, they were bound to find out about the profits the Subedar was accumulating.

Whatever may be the true nature of their activities in the market, the daily interactions of our two protagonists reveals that markets remained central to Levy lives. This in itself was not a problem. As mentioned earlier, it was understood that Levies would supplement their income through small side-businesses. The issue was that in the Persian Gulf markets at that time arms were one of the highest traded commodities. By the end of the 19th century, the Persian Gulf had emerged as one of the most significant export regions for European arms producers. Bahrain received a much smaller portion of arms trade traffic than the neighboring port of Muscat. Nevertheless, the possibility remained that the volume could quickly spiral upwards. If Levies continued to deal in arms unabated, they could even switch to being full-time arms traders. They could make

use of their flexible networks, deeply enmeshed in transnational trade, to exploit the uneven nature of arms trade regulation in which some areas could legally import arms, but others could not. Instead of working as military labor for low wages, they could become major traders by transferring legally imported arms to areas where they were illegal.

### **2.3.3 What were their ambitions beyond Bahrain?**

Major Daly was somewhat sympathetic to Lane Naik's complaint that he had been wrongfully demoted. Fatigue, he believed, was a genuine problem that could only be resolved through drill routines. As McNeill argues, one of the technological advancements that came with drill techniques was the rotating frontline. In this maneuver, soldiers on the frontline seamlessly cycled to the back to recuperate before they were fatigued. At no point was a post left in the hands of tired soldiers.<sup>52</sup> Daly believed that had such coordination been standardized, Ismail would have been able to take rest without leaving his post unmanned. If the rotating frontline regime had been in place, even the murder could have been prevented by the guards who had left their post for lunch at just the time Ismail attacked the Subedar.

Practicing highly coordinated maneuvers like the revolving frontline were also instrumental in building esprit de corps. Coordination practices instilled within soldiers

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<sup>52</sup> “..Reinforcement of depleted personnel of any unit became almost as simple as replacing spent musket balls. Soldiers, in short, tended to become replaceable parts of a great military machine just as much as their weaponry” McNeill (2013). P. 141

a sense of mutual dependence. Moreover, full-time work left little time for soldiers to socialize beyond the ranks. When not resting in their quarters soldiers were expected to be working in the barracks. The uniform nature of the force, similar looking people doing similar tasks, instilled within the ranks a strong sense of horizontal solidarity. The lifelong nature of professional military work meant that other men within the ranks became the primary social community. Corps ties were expected to trump tribal, national, ethnic and religious loyalties. Thus, states could have a loyal, committed, and unit band of soldiers even without ideological ties, such as that of nationalism. Had such solidarity existed within the Levy Force, there would have been no need to sanction the Imam's Quran classes and dinners that sowed the seeds of dissent amongst the rank and file by selling them a cause bigger than defending the state of Bahrain.

To ensure that Levies remained loyal to the cause of the state throughout their life, however, would have meant not only paying them full-time work wages but also setting up retirement plans.<sup>53</sup> Veteran pension programs made sure that soldiers do not go and sell skills learnt with the force to an enemy state. It ensured that assets that the state had invested in heavily to get drill-ready would not go after retirement to a

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<sup>53</sup> There was another cost associated with a uniform drill army because of the fact that highly coordinated and synchronized nature of drill required standardization of equipment. No change in either equipment or techniques could be applied piecemeal. Any new technology had to be introduced at the mass scale of the entire military. Even a small change had to take into account the cost of large scale implementation. Modern militaries, one could argue, discouraged change and innovations. Equipment upgrade could not be partial, it had to be applied across the board; and this often proved to be very expensive. McNeill (2013)

competing army. The Bahrain Levy Force, however, guaranteed no such permanent income source. Most Levies were contracted on monthly or yearly contracts. They knew they could be easily dismissed en masse. Consequently, Levies were always building contingency plans in their minds and in practice. These plans not only involved planning other career paths, but also political alliances.

Ismail and the Imam's dealings became a concern only when they were suspected of harboring connections with 'trouble-makers' in other parts of the empire. Much of the investigation by colonial authorities beyond Bahrain revolved around highlighting the pair's connections with networks abroad. Some suspected that the Imam was arming rebellions against the British in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Others believed Ismail had been instigating dissent among the Baloch diaspora across the Persian Gulf. The question thus was whether the Imam and Lance Naik were short-changing the British Empire, using its own markets and goods.

Less than a day into the investigation it was discovered that contrary to the identification certificate found on the Imam, he was not Baloch at all. The barber called in for investigation claimed that the Imam was Bukharan. The barber, a Bukharan himself, recorded that the Imam was born in a town not far from his own hometown. Other Baloch called for investigation corroborated the barber's statement and further added that anyone could tell just by looking at him that the Imam was not a Baloch. The authorities who had issued the Imam his Baloch identity certificate, however, maintained that the certificate was authentic. The certificate was based on an identity

certificate issued by British authorities in Iraq. Unlike officers in Bahrain, those in Iraq were not known to be familiar with the Baloch people. When the Iraqi authorities were called upon for further evidence, they claimed that they issued the Imam's identity certificate on the basis of a Bahrain-issued travel document or *Parvanah-e-rahdari*,<sup>54</sup> which had stated that the Imam was Baloch.

The Bukharan barber, familiar with the Imam, testified that the Imam was born in Bukhara but had lived most of his life in Afghanistan, in pursuit of a religious education. Upon completing his education, the Imam moved to Karachi to work as a petty trader. Eventually, having saved some money, the Imam left Karachi with the intent of performing Hajj. On his way to Mecca, though, the Imam stopped in Bahrain and abruptly decided to forego his plans for pilgrimage. Due to unforeseen circumstances the Imam had to return to Karachi by boarding the weekly steamer going to Karachi via Bushier, Muscat and Gwadar. In preparation for his journey, he obtained in Bahrain a *rahdari* document registering him as a Baloch wanting to go home to Gwadar. Such certificates were commonly used by people who had families divided across specific political boundaries. In a way the *rahdari* documents were passport-lite; they worked only at certain borders for specific ethnic groups. The Baloch, an ethnic

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<sup>54</sup> The system of issuing *parvanah-e-rahdari* or certificate of passage was used in Medieval India for the purpose of collecting toll tax. Having a *rahdari* meant that the holder of the paper had either paid taxes or were exempted from it. After the colonial empire drew rigid border lines, the same certificates came to be used as a type of passport.

group recognized as being divided across British India, Persia, and the different Persian Gulf states, frequently used them to move within the region.

The fact that rahdari documents could be produced quite easily stayed with the Imam. Some years afterwards when he left Iraq for Bahrain, the Imam became known for hosting dhow travelers and arranging documents for their onward journeys. For those wanting to go westward, the Imam prepared Hajj documents. For those wanting to go east, he arranged rahdari certificates, otherwise intended only for Baloch wanting to go back home. With the help of the Imam, travelers informally arriving through dhows could transfer onto steam ships going either East or West. It was well known that travelers could not be not be forced to leave only at the stated port. Those with rahdari for Makran could chose to either disembark earlier at another port in the Gulf or continue travel to Karachi and Bombay. Likewise, Hajj travelers could get off at any westward port.<sup>55</sup>

This neat mechanism brought to the Imam's door a range of travelers moving across the ocean under the colonial radar. Individuals from landlocked parts of Afghanistan and Central Asia, in particular, frequented the Imam. Unlike the Baloch along the coast, they did not have access to networks which could assist in moving

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<sup>55</sup> The misuse of rahdari permit continues to a major problem for policing the Pakistan-Iran-Afghanistan border even today. The main issue remains that the criterias for issuing rahdari certificate remain vaguely defined. To get a certificate one has to prove that he/she lives close to the border and wishes to remain within 60 miles on the other side of the border. However, there are no procedures to strictly enforce this. See: Kundi, Mansoor Akbar. "Borderland Interactions: the case of Pak-Iranian Baloch." IPRI Journal IX 2 (2009): 90-105.

across the Indian Ocean. Through the Imam, however, they could now move with documents registering them as Baloch, regardless of their actual ethnicity. Even rebels, bandits, arms dealers and criminals with warrants against their name could travel by dhows at night, obtain documents under an alias, and hence continue their journey onboard British steamships.<sup>56</sup>

Like the Imam, Ismail too was notorious for harboring relations with suspect characters abroad. Of particular interest was his relationship to a man named Daryai, a known fugitive who carried arms with him at all times. Daryai, also of Baloch decent, had spent large parts of his adult life as a soldier in the Sultan of Muscat's forces. A couple of years prior to the Subedar's murder in Bahrain, Daryai killed a Subedar in the Muscat Levy Force. The charges against Daryai could not be proven. However, few in Muscat had doubts over Daryai's culpability. Almost as an admission of his guilt, Daryai left for Iraq on a dhow, under the cover of night. For around a year Daryai was based in Iraq, mostly in Baghdad. This happened to be the same year in which the Imam too was in Iraq. Like the Imam, Daryai also started his own petty trade business there. The exact nature of his business remained opaque to colonial authorities, but it was believed that arms trading formed his main source of income. In any case, Daryai's business grew rapidly, and soon he was ready to venture beyond Iraq. A few months before the murder of the Subedar, Daryai had returned to Bahrain and was rumored to have made

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<sup>56</sup> Jumma Khan (chapter 4) developed his political career in Sharjah during the cold-war era using a similar scheme of getting permit to go one place but getting off the ship on another.

Ismail as partner in his business as well as his brother-in-law. According to testimonies of people from the market, Daryai was a sea steader who would occasionally march into the markets in Bahrain, always clad in ‘royal’ regalia with a dagger dangling on one side and gun secured on the other.

Daryai cut an anachronistic figure in many ways, harking back to the days before the rise of the colonial empire when Baloch commanders were treated not only as military labor but were self-armed mercenaries able to negotiate a greater share in profits and power.<sup>57</sup> That era was known to Baloch levies through oral narratives passed across generations. Marching fully clad in arms, Daryai commanded both a sense of reverence and awe amongst Baloch. The authorities began to suspect that the entire siege was orchestrated by Daryai in collaboration with the Imam.

Daryai, with his loyal following of Baloch— in Bahrain, other Persian Gulf Levies and Balochistan—and the Imam with his associates— in Central Asia, Afghanistan, and India—banding together presented a threat that could engulf the broadest expanse of the colonial empire. Daryai with his connections in the Persian Gulf legal arms markets and illegal caravans in Balochistan could supplement his routes with the Imam’s possibly ideologically loaded networks. In an extreme possibility, the investigators speculated, it could combine a dispersed Baloch population with an Imam led armed Sunni uprising. The British Empire themselves would have been all too familiar with

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<sup>57</sup> Chapter 1



such a movement, having implicitly encouraged illegal arms networks supplying the Al Saud and the Sunni Wahhabi movement against the Ottomans.<sup>58</sup>

## ***2.4 Deciding between arms and mercenary trade***

### **2.4.1 Arms and mercenary trade at the regional scale**

So how was the Lance Naik getting guns, and what was the Imam doing with them? Investigations into the barracks, markets, and their transnational ties only complicated the case further.

The Lance Naik had several routes to procuring arms. Some believed that the gun with which the Subedar was murdered came from the state's arms cabinets. The Lance Naik must have mobilized his Baloch connections within the loosely disciplined barracks, so as to sneak out a gun. The majority of the Levy ranks were Baloch, and the Lance Naik held considerable sway amongst them. Others believed that the gun with which the Subedar was killed came from Daryai, the Lance Naik's notorious brother-in-law. Yet other investigators claimed the weapon with which the Subedar was murdered had been purchased a few days earlier from the market. Ammunition was still openly

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<sup>58</sup> In 1906 an article published in a Cairo based newspaper Al-Ahram states: "All that he (i.e. Mubarak) requires comes from India. Mail steamers call once a week at Koweit via Muscat, and the Koweit merchants ship every week hundreds of, rifles and ammunition. They write on the cases containing fire-arms 'cases containing sweetmeats,' and those holding cartridges, 'dried limes.' The Customs officials at Muscat do not inquire about the contents of the cases, while the English officers, who last year made such a noise, when they found a Frenchman carrying six revolvers, shut their eyes when these cases are concerned. Thus Ibn-i-Saood obtains his arms from Koweit and the latter from the English and so the English are the agents who supply the Arabs with arms." As cited in Fiscus, James W., "Gun Running in Arabia: The Introduction of Modern Arms to the Peninsula, 1880-1914" (1987). Dissertations and Theses. Paper 1624.

and legally sold in Manama souq. It was common for Levies to purchase ammunition for personal use, to be loaded into state owned guns. Furthermore, though legal guns were hard to come by in Bahrain, illegal guns could be acquired easily. Most of the goods sold in Bahrain, a small island, came from other places. Some of these came on large trade boats flying state flags. The majority however, came from frequent and diverse routes of small dhows shuttling across the Indian Ocean. Most of the Levies had ties of business and family with traders moving between markets in Bahrain and abroad. To ask one of these traders to import arms, or even export them, alongside regular goods, was not an impossible demand.

What was the Imam doing with the gun? The question remained shrouded in mystery. Informants in the barracks believed that he was collecting arms to revolt against Shia influences, like that of the Subedar. As earlier mentioned, the Subedar was no longer being invited to attend dinners at the Mosque. In response the Subedar had stopped praying behind the Imam. In one Friday sermon, the Imam declared those refusing to pray behind him as apostates. In another sermon, the week Ismail was demoted, the Imam declared war on those Muslims who presented challenges to the lives of other Muslims. Sectarian differences in early 20th century Bahrain were not sharply politicized;<sup>59</sup> yet with a demographic imbalance between a small ruling Sunni

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<sup>59</sup> For a history of sectarian and otherwise political divides in Bahrain, see: Fu'ād Ishāq al-Khūrī. *Tribe and state in Bahrain: the transformation of social and political authority in an Arab state*. University of Chicago, 1980.

elite and a Shia majority populace,<sup>60</sup> the Imam's sermons could lead to permanent rifts. Some even believed that Imam's ambitions were much larger than Bahrain and with the help of Daryai he planned to directly challenge the British Empire.

The existence of many routes to arms in Bahrain suggests that the condition of recruiting mercenaries without guns was not enough to separate soldiers and arms from one another. Through family and markets ties soldiers recruited without guns could regain ownership of arms. Furthermore, through networks of trade and kinship arms could be exported abroad either by themselves or with mercenaries. Major Daly realized that policing soldiers access to guns was an impossible task as long as they continued to be informally recruited, paid less than full time wages, untrained in drills techniques, and market connected. As soon as he closed one door to accessing arms, a new one would swing open.

Ultimately, there were only two possible solutions to the problem: they could either prohibit market recruitment of mercenaries, or the sale of arms in the markets. Bahrain had to dismantle the Levy Corps and establish an army of soldiers recruited through bureaucratic military networks that conducted proper background checks, paid soldiers' full-time wages, and trained them in modern drill routines. To emphasize,

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<sup>60</sup> In 2009, the Pew Research Centre did an estimate of the world Muslim population. It has estimated the Shia population in Bahrain between 65 per cent and 75 per cent: Mapping the Global Muslim Population. A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Muslim Population, Oct. 2009, <<http://http://pewresearch.org/pubs/1370/mapping-size-distribution-worlds-muslim-population>.

transnational recruitment in itself was not the problem. If Bahrain did not wish to recruit citizen-soldiers from within its society, then the British Empire would need to facilitate a formal state-to-state transfer of professional sepoy soldiers from India to the Persian Gulf.

Alternatively, the British Empire could achieve the same end of keeping mercenaries away from arms, by banning all legal private arms import into the Persian Gulf. Without ready market access to arms, the existing Levy bureaucracy could effectively maintain an arms registry. If legal import of arms was prohibited, the Bahrain Levy Force could claim monopoly over legitimate means of violence. Thus, the British Empire had to decide between making either soldiers or arms trade a state monopoly, so that the other could be traded in the transnational market.

Interestingly, colonial officers dealing with the problem of illegal arms trade had independently reached a similar conclusion. Short of banning legal arms import into Persian Gulf they had tried everything to limit illegal arms trade, but to no avail.<sup>61</sup> Since most of the illegal arms trade was handled by Afghans, anyone with known ties to Central Asia or Afghanistan was either barred from entry into the Persian Gulf, or kept under careful surveillance.<sup>62</sup> An arms export registry was created and all arms sale had

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<sup>61</sup> See: Burrell, R. M. "Arms and Afghans in Makrān: An Episode in Anglo-Persian Relations 1905-1912." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London* 49, no. 1 (1986): 8-24.

<sup>62</sup> IOR/L/PS/18/C92. British Library, London.

to go through the Muscat authorities.<sup>63</sup> European private arms traders were asked to sell arms under an End User License<sup>64</sup>. The license dictated that any sale of arms was final, and once sold arms could not be resold to another party.

However, no restriction on sale of arms intended for Afghanistan could be enforced. The Afghan ban had little impact. Trade continued through Baloch agents of the Afghan traders.<sup>65</sup> Moreover, Afghans themselves could easily pass as Baloch. As the Imam's activities highlighted, certificate of Identities could be altered. Cultural markers, like dress styles, were easily imitated. With its expansive shoreline, the movement of people in and out of Muscat could not be controlled. Even arms registries and end-user agreements could be circumvented by legally taking arms from Muscat to another Persian Gulf port that was less policed, and from there illegally to Makran.

Outside the Persian Gulf, the British Empire implemented several measures to stop illegal arms networks either in the Indian Ocean or on land in Balochistan.<sup>66</sup> Warships were assigned to patrol the waters in hopes of intercepting the trade at sea.<sup>67</sup> Despite their impressive speed, they always seemed to be too late to catch dhows. Warships were maneuvered on the basis of intelligence coming from land, either Makran or Muscat. By the time the warship rerouted according to new intelligence,

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<sup>63</sup> IOR/L/PS/10/216, and IOR/L/PS/10/235. British Library, London.

<sup>64</sup> IOR/L/PS/12/2188. British Library, London.

<sup>65</sup> Other than Baloch and Afghans, there was also document evidence of the involvement of Yemenis, in particular Hadhramis.

<sup>66</sup> IOR/L/PS/10/101. British Library, London.

<sup>67</sup> IOR/L/PS/10/114. British Library, London.

however, dhows were already emptied of their cargo.<sup>68</sup> Through even smaller boats, cargo would then land under the cover of night.

In Balochistan, meanwhile, stopping the camel caravan required matching the caravans' newly acquired firepower. On a few occasions the Tribal Levies, patrolling these areas, encountered a camel caravan only to flee with just a few shots fired. At present volume, arms imported from the Gulf could not be stopped by Levy forces. Levy forces in Balochistan were designed for guarding particular strategic resources, like the telegraph line. They were not sized, equipped, paid or trained to encounter enemies with entire caravans of camels laden with weapons and ammunition.<sup>69</sup> Moreover, there was a constant fear that Makran Levy soldiers were double crossing the British by taking both protection subsidies to stop arms trade, and taxes from arms dealers for their safe passage.<sup>70</sup>

The illegal arms trade was like a river which, whenever blocked, always found an alternate route.<sup>71</sup> Stopping it required either blocking the flow at source by banning

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<sup>68</sup> To encourage privateers, the British even instituted a prize money for illegal arms captured in the Persian Gulf. See: IOR/L/PS/10/116. British Library, London.

<sup>69</sup> Additionally, levies complained their pursuit was limited by their assigned jurisdiction. Tribal Levies were assigned specific territories. Crossing boundaries was discouraged in hopes of preventing tribal conflicts. Protection payment by arms caravan were not bounded to territorial passage. They were given to influential locals within the broad geography, regardless of territory. With non-standardized troops, coordinating chases across jurisdictions was difficult. Particularly when caravans crossed between multiple political boundaries.

<sup>70</sup> One of the tribal Levy chief most notorious for double crossing the British was Mirza Barkat, the Mir of Jask. We had earlier met Mirza Barkat in the first chapter amongst the list of conquerors who do not rule. See: IOR/L/PS/10/115/4

<sup>71</sup> See: Chew, Emrys. *Arming the periphery: the arms trade in the Indian Ocean during the age of global empire*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2012.

legal arms import, digging through a full time uniform force a reservoir so big that it could control the means of violence within its entire territory. In other words, in order to stop the illegal arms trade the British empire had to decide between either assisting states within the informal empire raise standing national drill armies that were capable and willing to control means of violence within a prescribed territory, or prohibiting the legal import of arms into the Persian Gulf.<sup>72</sup> By making either soldiers or arms a state monopoly, they could allow for the other to be openly traded without the fear of states losing control over means of violence. Making soldiers a state monopoly would have required the British to subsidize, train, and equip armies in the frontiers of Iran, India, and the Persian Gulf. On the other hand, for the state to monopolize the arms trade requires only a single official declaration making it illegal for European traders to import arms into the Persian Gulf.

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<sup>72</sup> The option of building standing-armies all around the region was proposed at the 'Karachi Conference on arms traffic'. See: IOR/R/15/5/47. British Library, London.



Figure 30: The many routes of arms trade <sup>73</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Source: Qatar Digital Library <[https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc\\_100038749892.0x000022](https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/vdc_100038749892.0x000022)>



Having faced a series of failures in policing the illegal arms trade, by the time of the Subedar's murder the British had become more amenable to restricting legal arms imports. They had even offered the Sultan a large subsidy to ban arms imports. However, the problem was that the Sultan of Muscat had been signatory to trade treaties with the United States of America, France and Holland since the 19th century, allowing flag-bearing ships to access the port at Muscat without being stopped for scrutiny. Private traders could pay a small licensing fee or register themselves in any of these states to gain access. If the arms import ban was to be effective, the British had to convince all these other states that the arms trade was detrimental to the larger interests of the emerging inter-state system.

#### **2.4.2 Arms and mercenary trade at the international scale**

At the local and regional scales, the question of arms and mercenary trade appeared as parts of a related problem. Both sets of colonial officers—those trying to control illegal arms trade and those policing mercenary activities—came to the same conclusion independent of each other: that arms and mercenary trade needed to be dealt with in relationship to each other. Both sets of officers suggested that the British Empire could continue to trade only one of the two in the market; the other needed to be a complete state monopoly. Having both in the market led to situations such as the murder of the Subedar or unabated arms smuggling. The British Empire and their allied local sovereigns could impose themselves as a monopoly over legitimate violence using either soldiers or arms imported from private markets, but not both.

After the First World War, the question of arms and mercenary trade also became central to an emerging international scale at which states as a collective body imagined the globe as their sphere of influence. As emerging states began to carve the entire world into neatly defined, contiguous chunks of spaces where they claimed monopoly over legitimate means of violence, they had to collectively decide if there would be any space for private traders of violence—either arms or mercenaries—who were unassociated with any specific state.

Unlike the regional and local scale, however, at the international scale the correlation between arms and mercenary trade was never explicitly made. Forums on arms trade rarely made any mention of mercenary trade, and vice-versa. Both issues were passionately debated along similar lines but in parallel board rooms. That the debates never intersected was particularly surprising given the fact that at both forums, those arguing against the private trade of means of violence had the same argument—private trade in means of violence might benefit individual states but was detrimental to inter-state system as a whole.

Janice Thompson argues that the pressure to ban mercenary trade came from an emerging international order.<sup>74</sup> She argues that from the perspective of individual states, private mercenary trade was often a resource rather than hindrance in states' effort at establishing monopolies over violence. Through transnational mercenaries, states

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<sup>74</sup> Thomson, Janice E. *Mercenaries, pirates, and sovereigns: state-building and extraterritorial violence in early modern Europe*. Princeton University Press, 1996.

further impressed upon a territorially bound society their claim to be the only legitimate purveyor of violence. However, mercenary trade presented critical challenges to effort in producing an international system of trade and diplomacy. The plausible deniability of mercenaries made it difficult to enforce the diplomatic standard of states taking responsibility for violence emanating outwards from its borders. States could officially sign a peace or neutrality treaty, officially foregoing war efforts, but still continue interference through private mercenaries.

The lobby against private arms production in the early twentieth century forwarded a very similar argument. Private arms trade had several benefits for individual states. It allowed them to buy the latest technology without investing development. They could purchase arms when need be, thus obviating the need for piling up stocks. Private traders could also obtain their raw material and technical skills from all over the world, regardless of political divisions. However, private arms trade was ultimately detrimental to producing a collective order of nation-states.<sup>75</sup>

Just like mercenaries, private arms traders could not have held to diplomatic agreements and treaties. Through private arms producers, states could sell weapons to neutral or prohibited areas with plausible deniability. The translucent deals of private arms dealers, selling without any political accountability, made international diplomacy very difficult. State could overtly agree to ceasefires, while covertly sending weapons to

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<sup>75</sup> See: Grant, Jonathan A. *Rulers, guns, and money: the global arms trade in the age of imperialism*. Harvard University Press, 2007.

local allies through private arms dealers. Furthermore, arms producers' singular focus on profit meant that they had vested interest in furthering war and political tensions. Merchants of death,<sup>76</sup> as they were often labelled, maximized their profits in situations of disorder. States, on the other hand, dependent on the stable functioning of their bureaucracy and taxations systems, needed order. In the long run, arms dealers fueling wars would raise the protection costs of states all over the world by forcing them to invest heavily in arms purchases.

The world that emerged after the Second World War and solidified itself over the next half-century, as a natural timeless order, belied the many permutations of international order that had been open as possibilities during the interwar period. Contrary to the normative expectation in the latter half of the twentieth century, of arms being privatized and soldiers stateized, there was greater pressure in the interwar period to limit private arms trade.<sup>77</sup> As the frequent international fora on the issue testify, there was an active interest amongst the international community of states in instituting a political system of arms exchange. Arms in the interwar period, even if briefly, stopped appearing as a purely commercial commodity.

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<sup>76</sup> Engelbrecht, Helmuth C., and Frank Cleary Hanighen. *Merchants of death*. Routledge, 1934.

<sup>77</sup> Stone, David R. "Imperialism and Sovereignty: The League of Nations' Drive to Control the Global Arms Trade." *Journal of contemporary history* 35, no. 2 (2000): 213-230. Also, see: Efrat, Asif. *Governing guns, preventing plunder: International cooperation against illicit trade*. Oxford University Press, 2012. And: Webster, Andrew. "From Versailles to Geneva: The many forms of interwar disarmament." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 29, no. 02 (2006): 225-246.

The possibility of an overarching regulation against private trade slipped away from the agenda of the international community after the Second World War. The lively debates on private arms trade of all types, that marked many of League of Nations meeting agendas, were almost non-existent after the Second World War. For the United Nations, only exchanges in weapons of mass destruction remained an issue of concern; small arms found little mention in UN conducted debates. There was almost no international conference of significance on limiting private arms trade in the post-Second World War short twentieth century.

Private arms trade during this same period, when debates on it disappeared, grew exponentially. While arms have been exchanged across long distances since time immemorial, arms emerged as a distinct, high-value market good only with the rise of European colonial empires in the sixteenth century. The commercial ambitions of private arms traders, however, were reined in by political agendas of the empires until the mid-twentieth century. For example, in the sixteenth century, when the private arms trade industry had just emerged, the Portuguese empire restricted arms sale to non-Christian states. Similarly, European empires in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries forbade traders from selling weapons to belligerent powers that could attack its colonies.<sup>78</sup> Only in the latter half of the twentieth century was the private arms industry allowed to

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<sup>78</sup> Croft, Stuart. *Strategies of arms control: a history and typology*. Manchester University Press, 1996.

expand unabated. Today, of course, arms manufacturing companies are some of the largest corporate entities in the world.

The sudden disappearance of debate on private arms trade, and the subsequent rise of private arms industry, cannot be explained by following arms trade debates alone. As I argue in this chapter, the rise of the private arms industry needs to be understood alongside the decline in military markets. As later chapters will highlight, at the end of the Second World War the nascent American empire, European empires on their way out, and growing anti-colonial movements, all saw a future in which the nation-state alone was to be the default political-form. Moreover, they all saw the rise of a citizen-army invested with a nationalist zeal as a central to the establishment of the nation-state. The sharp decline in the demand for mercenary markets, in turn, allowed private arms dealers to flourish without challenging the international system of nation-states. The state monopoly over soldiers thus allowed for the global market trade of weapons.

## ***2.5 Conclusion***

Detailed reports on the documents found on the Imam came back some time later. By then, though, the murder had all but faded from memory. The Bolshevik posters were commonly available, mass-printed documents and hence could not serve as evidence of ties with the Soviets. The journal entries, believed to be in multiple languages, could not be deciphered. They were finally dismissed as the scribbles of a man who probably did not have full writing fluency in any language. The

alphanumeric code, however, indeed was a mnemonic. It was meant to assist the Imam in remembering the amounts of money different people owed him.

As it turned out, the Imam did have interests that went beyond his role as prayer leader that he had managed to keep hidden from the authorities in the Bahrain Levy Force. The Imam was a small-time moneylender, providing salary advances to the often cash strapped Levies. The watches and guns found on the Imam were collateral. The Lance Naik was one of his largest debtors.

After his demotion, the Lance Naik was left financially struggling. He had to send money back home to his family, as well as support himself in Bahrain. Daryai, his financially more successful relative, offered him the possibility of starting a joint venture. For this, however, the Lance Naik had to secure some start-up capital. Already in debt to the Imam, the Lance Naik could secure another advance only by putting another gun as collateral. With no gun on him personally, the Lance Naik gave as guarantee the rifle issued to him by the Bahraini state. Daryai, he knew, was about to return from his business trip with cash in hand.

However, the business venture failed to produce immediate returns. Daryai came only with news of profits being hard to come by, and asked Lance Naik for more time. Consequently, the Lance Naik was unable to pay back the Imam and re-procure the government issued rifle. When the Subedar increased the pressure to return the gun, the Lance Naik became stuck in a vicious circle of debt.

After the blunders in the initial recruitment, in the second round of recruitment one of the criteria for recruitment was that the individual needed to be free of debt. Besides having an able body, this was the only requirement to be a Levy. Imam's business and the Lance Naik's finances had to remain under cover. The Lance Naik could thus not come out in the open on the whereabouts of the gun. He could not pay back the Imam, nor could he tell the Subedar about the debt. With no recourse left, the Lance Naik took yet another gun and killed the Subedar. Left without his means of production and a salary that was making it increasingly difficult for him to reproduce himself on a day to day basis, perhaps Ismail realized he had nothing to lose but his chains.

In the end, Lance Naik Ismail was hanged on charges of killing the Subedar. Major Daly, however, was unable to tie either Daryai or the Imam to the murder. As he had done before, Daryai escaped Bahrain in the middle of the night and was never heard from there again. The Imam, despite not being charged of any crimes, was deported for being a generally suspicious character. Since the British authorities now knew that the Imam was not actually a Baloch, they could not deport him to Balochistan. However, because they could not openly admit to having embarrassingly registered him as Baloch, he was deported to Karachi—a city that was central to the Baloch world while still being more than just a Baloch city.

Through a detailed reading of an all-but-forgotten incident, this chapter the life of mercenaries during a period when the old system of military-markets had been



eroded in much of the world, but a new modern citizen-army structure had not become ascendant. It argues that the transition from old portfolio mercenaries to modern professional soldiers hinged on the process of separating soldiers from their means of production, i.e. their guns. Producing this separation required large, fundamental changes beyond hiring men without guns and policing their access to weapons within the barracks. It required changes in military recruitment, salary structures, training and work routine. In the absence of these changes, as was the case in Bahrain during the interwar period, soldiers recruited without guns through informal, interpersonal networks could still obtain arms through the market and family networks. By tying together, the networks that got them to Bahrain and the arms trade networks in the market, soldiers being pushed into becoming wage-labor could once again develop a portfolio of ambitions and activities.

During the interwar period, mercenary networks combining with arms trade networks presented a serious threat for both the British Empire and emerging states in the Global South. The mercenary-arms trade nexus challenged their respective capacities to achieve monopolies over legitimate means of violence. Nation-states in the post-Second World War world prevented this possibility by making soldiers a state monopoly, and completely disbanding the idea of recruiting mercenaries from transnational markets. However, in the interwar period, this option had seemed less than obvious. There were substantial debates during that period, about achieving the

same end by prohibiting private arms trade. In an alternate reality, states could claim monopoly over violence even while recruiting mercenaries through private markets, as long as arms trade was restricted to state-to-state transfers.

### 3. Informal Diplomats: Baloch 'Parapolitics'

#### 3.1 Introduction

On the 10th of February 1973, in full view of television cameras, the SSG Commandos of the Pakistan army raided the Iraqi Embassy in Islamabad<sup>1</sup>. Inside, they found a number of neatly stacked wooden crates, sealed by the Iraqi government and hence allowed to enter Pakistan without an investigation by customs. The Iraqi Ambassador, who was present during the raid, claimed that the crates only had books and other innocuous reading material. The Pakistani Commandos, however, were acting on confirmed tips that these crates contained armaments. In the presence of foreign news correspondents and the Iraqi embassy staff, the crates were pried open by the commando units.

Lo and behold, the boxes were full of arms and ammunition, just like the Pakistani authorities had suspected after all. Around three hundred Soviet-made submachine guns, and ten thousand rounds of ammunition from the crates were broadcast live for the world to see. Upon further search in the embassy premises, the commandos found rifles and cartridges inside bags, shoes, and even in a toilet. The raid was expanded to the private residence of the Iraqi military attaché. More weapons and

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<sup>1</sup> For a detailed discussion of the incidence see: Zafar, Hamid. "Arms Cache in Islamabad." In *Pakistan Forum*, vol. 3, no. 5, pp. 5-7. Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP), 1973.

long-range radio transmitters were found hidden inside the attaché's house<sup>2</sup>. Scandal ensued.

While Iraq and Pakistan were on the opposite sides of the cold war divide, there was no direct animosity between the two states. Iraq had no clear direct interest in Pakistan's internal affairs. In the days that followed, journalists, political commentators, intelligence officers, diplomats, and political leaders across the world, all took attempts at explaining the presence of Soviet-made arms in the Iraqi embassy in Islamabad. Who specifically procured and exported the arms? And who were the intended recipients?



Figure 31: Screengrab from the AP video on the raid<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> The spectacular nature of the raid is clearly visible in this picture. Seen here is a Pakistani government employee holding up a Russian made gun for the benefit of the foreign journalists crowding the room. Source: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pEuWaNi\\_oDM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pEuWaNi_oDM)

The Pakistani intelligence agencies suspected that the arms were intended for Baloch separatists. In fact, they were first tipped off about the crates by a prominent Baloch leader, Nawab Akbar Bugti. Bugti claimed that Iraq had been harboring Baloch separatists exiled from Pakistan. Yet in a report to the US Attaché, the Pakistani intelligence agencies expressed their doubts<sup>4</sup>. If they were actually intended for Baloch separatists, then the arms would have been imported through the expansive and lightly monitored Makran coastline. Through the historical trade route of arms described in the previous chapters, Baloch separatists could easily move arms all the way north, from the Persian Gulf into Afghanistan— as the intelligence agencies knew all too well

Foreign correspondents and the international media were convinced that the weapons were intended for use in Iran. The Iraqi government has persistently accused Iran of backing the Kurdish separatists fighting in Iraq<sup>5</sup>. Iran, they believed, had armed, trained, and provided logistical support to Kurdish rebels in Iraq. Iran would facilitate the separatists in carrying out attacks in Iraq and retreating back across the border into Iran. Upon the discovery of arms in Islamabad, it was suspected that Iraq was starting its own proxy-war against Iran. But again, this speculation hit the same stumbling block:

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<sup>4</sup> Sirrs, Owen L. *Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate: Covert Action and Internal Operations*. Routledge, 2016. p.91

<sup>5</sup> See: Abdulghani, Jasim M. *Iraq and Iran*. Vol. 1. Routledge, 2011. Also, O'Leary, Carole A. "The Kurds of Iraq: recent history, future prospects." *Middle East Review of International Affairs* 6, no. 4 (2002): 17-29.

if the arms were meant for Iran, then why were they brought all the way east to Islamabad? Why not directly smuggle them through Iraq's own vast border with Iran?

Moreover, the evidence found made it hard to trace the direct involvement of the Iraqi Government. They immediately denied having any prior information about the arms, of course. Other than the military attaché, there was no proof against other members of the Iraqi state. The Attaché had access to the embassy's seal and handled all mail. Additionally, the fact that he had carefully hidden arms inside his house suggested that others did not know of his smuggling operations. The Pakistani intelligence agencies suspected that the Attaché was in cahoots with an Iraqi student living in Karachi, and both were building private fortunes through illegal arms sales. Yet the two went missing before either could be called in for questioning. Some believed Iraqi authorities had kidnapped them to prevent the divulging of state secrets. Other believed they had gone underground to avoid prosecution by the Iraqi government.

Bhutto, the president of Pakistan, complained to the US Ambassador that the arms were a form of retaliation by the Soviet government, who were unhappy with Pakistan's decision to back the US during the Cold War<sup>6</sup>. In support of Bhutto's position, the Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister informed the American Embassy in Iran that the arms smuggling was part of a bigger plan to challenge American dominance in the

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<sup>6</sup> Owens (2016). p. 94.

region. Soviets, the Iranian postulated, wanted to disintegrate Pakistan into smaller states that could possibly provide them access to warm water port in the Indian Ocean<sup>7</sup>.

As with the case against the Baloch nationalist and Iraqi state, there just was not enough evidence to charge the Soviets. The discovered weapons were manufactured in the Soviet Union, but so were most other arms circulating in Pakistan at the time.

Despite siding with the US, USSR had remained Pakistan's second largest arms import market. Furthermore, the arms route through Islamabad just did not make sense. The Soviets at that time had friendly ties with Zahir Khan, the King of Afghanistan. Through Zahir Khan's assistance, they could smuggle arms into a range of countries bordering Afghanistan<sup>8</sup>.

Despite the spectacularly public revelation of arms hidden inside the Iraqi embassy, the case was beginning to stall. While various suspicions were casted on Baloch nationalists, the Iraqi state, and Soviet imperialists, actual evidence against any of them proved hard to come by. Rumor had it that the whole raid was orchestrated by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto himself. The discovery of this cache of arms had, in the meantime, given him enough of a reason to dismiss Balochistan's provincial government: formed by the left-leaning, pro-Soviet, National Awami Party (NAP). Soon after, Bhutto initiated

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<sup>7</sup> Belmonte, Monica L, and Edward C. Keefer. *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976: Volume Xxvii*. Washington: U.S. Government printing Office, 2012. p.600

<sup>8</sup> Rubinstein, Alvin Z. "The Soviet Union and Afghanistan." *Current History* 82, no. 486 (1983): 318.

a wide-spread military operation in Balochistan to enforce the writ of the federal state onto a province that had been critical of the Pakistani state establishment<sup>9</sup>.

As the violence in Balochistan escalated, Bhutto's government faced pressure to legitimize its excesses by putting a face to the arms smuggling case. To push the investigation forward, the Pakistani intelligence agencies pursued the lead that had first brought arms smuggling to light. Nawab Akbar Bugti, who by then had become the Governor of Balochistan, reported that the arms were specifically being exported by a Baloch nationalist based in Iraq named Jumma Khan.

The Pakistani intelligence agencies were already somewhat familiar with Jumma Khan. In the decade after Pakistan's independence, Jumma Khan had emerged as a student activist in the then federal capital of Karachi. Born into a working-class Baloch family in Karachi's oldest and largest neighborhood of Lyari, Jumma Khan enrolled in a Law College close to his house. During his time in law school, Jumma Khan emerged as a student leader involved in protests for decreasing fees and establishing quotas for Baloch students. As legal training came in the way of his activist duties, Jumma Khan dropped out of college to become a full time political leader. He even published a collection of revolutionary poems and short stories that was summarily banned by the state.

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<sup>9</sup> Majeed, Gulshan, and Rehana Saeed Hashmi. "Baloch Resistance during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's Era: Causes and Consequences." *South Asian Studies* 29, no. 1 (2014): 321.



During the mid-1950s Jumma Khan joined NAP, the Left leaning political party that would be dismissed from Balochistan after the discovery of the weapons. Under the banner of NAP, Jumma Khan initiated a movement for the release of the family of Dad Shah, a notorious Baloch rebel in Iranian controlled Balochistan<sup>10</sup>. For the Baloch, Dad Shah was a righteous rebel fighting against the exigencies of the Iranian government in the occupied lands of Balochistan. In the eyes of the Pakistani, Iranian and American states, though, he was a dacoit who had killed an American aid agency employee and his wife.<sup>11</sup> While being pursued aggressively by Iranian authorities, Dad Shah's family led by his brother Ahmed Shah escaped to Pakistan and sought refuge, only to be arrested by the Pakistani state.

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<sup>10</sup> Dashti, Naseer. "The Baloch Conflict with Iran and Pakistan: Aspects of a National Liberation Struggle." Trafford Publishing, 2017. Also see: Taheri, Ahmad Reza. "The sociopolitical culture of Iranian Baloch elites". Lulul Publication (online), 2014.

<sup>11</sup> The murder of American citizens even made it to the Times Magazine April 1957 issue (Vol. 42, No. 16).



Figure 32: Dad Shah's family being held under arrest at a local jail in Turbat<sup>12</sup>

In response, Jumma Khan established the 'Save Ahmad Shah Committee'. The committee led by Jumma Khan riled up the local Baloch in Lyari by pointing out to the innocent Baloch women and children being held captive in miserable conditions despite their being no charge against them individually. Jumma Khan efforts bore success and he was able to collect enough money to hire a top-notch lawyer and file a case for their release in the court of a favorable judge, all the way east in Dhaka. The case, however, was ultimately abandoned, due to Jumma Khan's hired lawyer leaving midway during the trial because he ran out of money and was unable to draw on support in

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<sup>12</sup> Time Magazine. Ibid.

East Pakistan, disconnected from both Balochistan and Pakistan by the Indian state in the middle.

In 1959 Jumma Khan was suspected of harbouring ties with the enemy state of India, situated in the middle of the two parts of Pakistan. Indian Newspapers had at that time started carrying a letter, written under an alias by someone from Pakistan, criticizing the decision to purchase Gwadar from the Omani Sultanate. Gwadar while physically situated in the Pakistani controlled parts of Balochistan, had since the 18th century been under Omani sovereign control. Through the mediation of the British government, Pakistan had hoped to complete its territorial sovereignty by purchasing Gwadar from Oman. The letters in Indian Newspapers were tracked back to Jumma Khan, and the government issued orders for his arrest. However, before he could be imprisoned Jumma Khan escaped to Sharjah.

Thus, while the Pakistani government had long known Jumma Khan as a mid-tier Baloch activist they could not explain how he could have orchestrated this elaborate scheme of smuggling a large volume of arms and ammunition through the Iraqi embassy in Islamabad. Jumma Khan, they knew, could write critiques, instigate protests and organize political committees, but they did not think he could lead a clandestine war on the behalf of the Iraqi or the Soviet regimes. Jumma Khan was a local activist; not an international political mediator at par with foreign diplomats, ambassadors, military attaché and intelligence officers.

Further investigation into Jumma Khan's time in exile, that had brought him all the way up to the highest echelons of international politics, turned up a very peculiar letter written by the Queen of England to Jumma Khan in 1961. In the letter the Queen thanked Jumma Khan for his offer to fight against Iraq on behalf of the British Empire. The Queen expressed her appreciation for Jumma Khan's offer and the loyalty of the Baloch people. While the British Empire, the Queen wrote, did not at that time require additional military support, she would nevertheless call on Jumma Khan if need be. Furthermore, she wrote that England would not forget Jumma Khan's generous gesture and would look to repay him in the future.

The Pakistani Ambassador in Baghdad submitted this letter to the Iraqi authorities as evidence of Jumma Khan being an agent of the British state. Rather than trying to help the Iraqi government, Jumma Khan, they claimed, had all this time been working to destabilize it. Even though he was not directly fighting the kind of war mentioned in the letter, he was working against Iraq through other means. By implicating Iraq in a diplomatic crisis, Jumma Khan was trying to damage its position within the international structure. Jumma Khan, according to the Pakistani state foreign representatives, was working towards destabilizing Iraq's relationship with friendly states like Pakistan.

The Iraqi government never openly admitted their relationship with Jumma Khan. However, even before the crisis, Khan's relationship with the Iraqi regime were well known. In the year preceding the crisis, Jumma Khan had been authorized by the

Iraqi government to telecast his radio show on the long-ranged AM wavelength able to transgress national boundaries. In the show, broadcasted from Iraq but intended for audience in Iran, Jumma Khan propagated the Baloch separatist cause. He advocated an armed revolt against the Iranian government with the aim of establishing Baloch sovereignty over their own territory.

Selig Harrison claim's Jumma Khan was part of the clandestine collection of ethnic minorities in Iran, brought together in Iraq by the Soviet Republic<sup>13</sup>. Both Al-Bakar, the then president of Iraq, and his deputy Saddam Hussein were known for their pro-soviet tendencies. This relationship was formalized in 1972 with a friendship treaty that aligned both states on issues of international politics<sup>14</sup>. This official treaty, it was suspected, was paralleled in an unofficial secretive pact to work together in destabilizing the US back government in Iran. Saddam Hussein was believed to have orchestrated a meeting between Kurds, Azeri and Baloch leaders from Iran, and promised to offer them in their fight against Iran access to Soviet arms, money, and logistical resources.

While Iraq might not have been fully convinced of the grand conspiracy which the Pakistani Ambassador was ascribing onto Jumma Khan, they found enough evidence in the Queen's letter to implicate him as a soldier of fortune. If he could have gone from offering to fight against Iraq to leading a clandestine war on its behalf in the

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<sup>13</sup> Harrison, Selig S. *In Afghanistan's shadow: Baluch nationalism and Soviet temptations*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981. p.106

<sup>14</sup> Smolansky, Bettie Moretz. *The USSR and Iraq: The soviet quest for influence*. Duke University Press, 1991.

short span of a decade, he could easily go on to be a mercenary for another state in the next decade. Jumma Khan was thus not a loyal national asset, worthy of Iraqi government backing in the face of international pressure.

Reading Jumma Khan as a mercenary made it possible to treat him as disposable means of violence. Unlike citizen soldiers and intelligence officers fighting abroad on behalf of the nation, mercenaries were opportunists without a larger altruistic political project in mind. When clandestine activities of citizens abroad come to light, states often attempt to mobilize all the diplomatic resources at their disposal to secure a safe return of one of their own<sup>15</sup>. With mercenaries, however, states do not feel a similar sense of obligation.

The Iraqi authorities thus decided that while Jumma Khan and his Baloch radio show might have been a useful asset earlier, with his role in the arms smuggling coming to light he had now become a liability that had to be carefully disposed of. Since Jumma Khan was privy to Iraqi states role in the 'proxy-war' against Iran he could not be turned over to Pakistan. They feared that in exchange for a shorter prison sentence, Jumma Khan could divulge state secrets. Luckily, in the letter from the Queen they found enough evidence to charge Jumma Khan with treason against the Iraqi state. Following a very short secretive military trial Jumma Khan was sent to mediaevalsque dungeons from which few came out alive. Before Jumma Khan's full story—of how he came to

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<sup>15</sup> For example, in a recent incidence of an American agent Raymond Davis was arrested for murder in Pakistan but was soon extradited due to the efforts of the American embassy.

receive letter from the Queen and send weapons to the Iraqi embassy -- came to light, he was condemned to the prisons that later went on to gain notoriety during Saddam Hussein's rule as 'death camps'.

After Jumma Khan was sent to prison, not much was written about his politics, practices or history. The frenetic pace of political change at the time meant that states involved in the crisis at the Iraqi embassy in Islamabad soon forgot about the antagonist who was believed to have orchestrated the arms smuggling. The Pakistanis ignored the international connections to the arms import to focus on the civil war in Balochistan that had been instigated by Bhutto's military operation<sup>16</sup>. Iran too was occupied by internal disorder, created by Islamist and Leftist movements demanding the overthrow of the undemocratically established US-backed monarchy<sup>17</sup>. With the US fighting battles on many fronts around the world, they too could not afford delving on Jumma Khan for much longer.

The phenomena Jumma Khan represented, of states expanding influence across borders using non-state networks, however, has far from disappeared. In fact, the numerous contemporary headline-making transnational projects—China's "One Belt One Road" project, Turkey's "neo-Ottomanism," India's diaspora re-connected, and

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<sup>16</sup> Majeed, Gulshan, and Rehana Saeed Hashmi. "Baloch Resistance during Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's Era: Causes and Consequences." *South Asian Studies* 29, no. 1 (2014): 321.

<sup>17</sup> Kurzman, Charles. *The unthinkable revolution in Iran*. Harvard University Press, 2009.

Russian Eurasianism—together foretell an increasing tendency amongst states to expand influence through informal networks rather than official state instruments.

Despite their growing prominence the specific nature of the relationship between expansive states and networks remains opaque. While there have been attempts by journalists and academics to bring to light the covert relationships between states and networks, such as trade links between Turkey and ISIS<sup>18</sup> and Pakistan and Afghan mujahedeen<sup>19</sup>, the focus has remained on uncovering the realist material interests undergirding these relationships<sup>20</sup>. This limited focus, I argue, obscures the myriad historical and sociological ties connecting the two together. The relationships between states and networks, I argue, are often not new. They are instead built on a shared history of movement and exchanges across a regional landscape that is not prescribed by fixed political boundaries. For example, medieval empires in Inter-Asia often outsourced trade, war, and diplomacy abroad to diasporic networks<sup>21</sup>.

In the second half of the twentieth century, state centers prescribed histories within national boundaries, and in the process either deliberately or unconsciously

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<sup>18</sup> Solomon, Erika, Guy Chazan, and Sam Jones. "Isis Inc: how oil fuels the jihadi terrorists." *Financial Times* 14 (2015). Also, Bronstein, Scott, Drew Griffin, Turkey CNN Besaslan, and I. S. I. S. As. "How ISIS Makes Its Millions." *CNN*. October 7 (2014).

<sup>19</sup> Ali, T., 2009. *The duel: Pakistan on the flight path of American power*. Simon and Schuster.

<sup>20</sup> For salient exceptions see: Li, Darryl., 2009. A Universal Enemy: Foreign Fighters and Legal Regimes of Exclusion and Exemption under the Global War on Terror. *Colum. Hum. Rts. L. Rev.*, 41, p.355. And, Dua, Jatin. "A sea of trade and a sea of fish: piracy and protection in the Western Indian Ocean." *Journal of Eastern African Studies* 7, no. 2 (2013): 353-370.

<sup>21</sup> Ho, Engseng. "Empire through diasporic eyes: A view from the other boat." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 46, no. 2 (2004): 210-246.



displaced the role of networks in expanding political order. Networks themselves, however, passed on across generations memories and practices, spilling across state and old imperial boundaries. In continuation of this legacy, networks in the world of nation-states rebuilt their transnational role as diplomats, familiar allies, traders and proxies; albeit in more covert ways. With the twenty-first century reopening in political frontiers, these networks are now impressing in full their presence onto the global political order. Academically speaking, however, these relationships somehow seem to still fall into the gap between the social sciences and humanities.

There exists a large corpus of anthropological literature on the ways in which states mediate their relationship with populations bounded within its borders. States we know govern population within its borders through bureaucracy<sup>22</sup>, legal codes<sup>23</sup>, ideological apparatus<sup>24</sup>, coercive practices<sup>25</sup>, governmentality<sup>26</sup>, routine practices<sup>27</sup>. Many of these forms of control, however, have limited efficacy over transnational networks able to move beyond borders. Similarly, anthropologists have pointed out various ways in which local populations come to demand recognition and rights from states claiming

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<sup>22</sup> Hull, Matthew S. *Government of paper: The materiality of bureaucracy in urban Pakistan*. Univ of California Press, 2012.

<sup>23</sup> Das, Veena, Deborah Poole, V. Das, and Deborah Poole. "Anthropology in the Margins of the State." *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 30, no. 1 (2004): 140-144.

<sup>24</sup> Althusser, L., 2006. Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards an investigation). *The anthropology of the state: A reader*, 9(1), pp.86-98.

<sup>25</sup> Guha, R., 1999. *Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India*. Duke University Press.

<sup>26</sup> Fassin, Didier. "Policing borders, producing boundaries. The governmentality of immigration in dark times." *Annual Review of Anthropology* 40 (2011): 213-226.

<sup>27</sup> Gupta, Akhil. "Blurred boundaries: the discourse of corruption, the culture of politics, and the imagined state." *American ethnologist* 22, no. 2 (1995): 375-402.

sovereignty over the territory in which they live<sup>28</sup>. However, transnational networks—without any recourse to claims of being locals—do not have access to similar modes of claiming rights and recognition.

Part of the problem is the fact anthropologists equipped with tools for uncovering the contingent social relationships that undergird what may seem like structures, have left high-international politics to the structural social-sciences<sup>29</sup>. In focusing on formal state structures, meanwhile, political scientists are often unable to treat informal social relationships between states and networks as part of the normative international political order. As Eric Wilson argues:

It is of great significance that international law is marked by two outstanding 'gaps' or lacunae in its treatment of the state. The first is that international law has no actual conception of the state, relying upon the factual, and essentially circular, finding of a series of empirical signs demonstrating the presence of effective control. The second is that espionage – or, more generally, the covert – is not expressly recognized as a form of state practice, even though it constitutes one of the most basic forms of inter-state relations. When both lacunae are combined, we are left with the rather bewildering reality that international law provides no means to adequately treat entire categories of alternative modes of political behavior directly expressive of both legal personality and extra-legal interaction<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> Povinelli, Elizabeth A. *The cunning of recognition: Indigenous alterities and the making of Australian multiculturalism*. Duke University Press, 2002.

<sup>29</sup> As an exception to this rule, anthropologists of late have been investigating the social relationship underpinning the expansion of the American empire. See: Enloe, Cynthia, and Beaches Bananas. "Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics, Berkeley." (1990), Also, Lutz, Catherine. *Homefront: A military city and the American twentieth century*. Beacon Press, 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Wilson, Eric M. *Government of the Shadows: Parapolitics and Criminal Sovereignty*. London: Pluto Press, 2009. P 44

This chapter mobilizes anthropological tools for studying social relationships to understand these ‘alternative modes of political behavior’ that shape international order. By zooming into the ethnographic scale, it follows the historically contingent ways in which states mobilize transnational networks, and in turn networks demand recognition from states. What are the strategies mobile actors use to claim a space for themselves not just in a foreign society, but also a foreign state? How do states and non-state networks come to trust each other in the absence of legal frameworks? What kinds of political imaginations does this trust open up for states looking to expand beyond borders? In cases when the relationship with particular networks turn sour, what are the tactics available to state for disconnecting?

To answer these questions, I turn to the all-but-forgotten story of Jumma Khan. By retelling his biographical details collected through ethnographic engagements with Jumma Khan himself, I follow the particular ways in which he developed a prolonged career, spanning multiple states variously as diplomat, familiar ally, proxy-trader, and political mediator. I ask: How did Jumma Khan progress from being an exiled Baloch activist to exchanging letters with the Queen? How did he transcend from a local leader to sharing seats at table with Saddam Hussein? How did he go from writing clumsily cloaked letters in newspapers to be a critical figure in the global cold war?

As a disclaimer, I want to point out early that parts of Jumma Khan’s story seem remarkable. Jumma Khan, however, was not completely an exceptional figure. As the chapter will highlight, the international political order in the mid-twentieth century

created the conditions in which mobile characters like Jumma Khan could rise from obscurity to become a lynchpin between competing political orders. Instead of seeing Jumma Khan as a rogue figure easily identified by the state system and swiftly eliminated, I read his story to understand the stable sociological form through which political order is forged across borders.

### ***3.2 Jumma Khan the diplomat***

I met Jumma Khan in 2015 during fieldwork in UAE. He was introduced to me by a mutual connection as a prominent Baloch activist. I did not know at that time that he was the infamous Jumma Khan at the center of the arms crisis in 1973.

There was little in his appearance, mannerism or living conditions that could have allowed me to think of someone I had only read about in books on Pakistan's foreign relations. He lived in a single storied house, with his two sons and their families, in a quiet suburb of Sharjah. To get to the house was not easy. From the more densely populated parts of Sharjah located on the border of Dubai, I had to take two different public buses to get to a shopping plaza. I then had to call Jumma Khan who would graciously come to pick me. All around his house were empty lands. In the desolate surrounding of this part of Sharjah, I was not thinking about Iraq or Islamabad.

By the time I had met Jumma Khan he was already in his nineties. Despite his advanced age, Jumma Khan maintained lived a very active life. As is customary in the Persian Gulf, Jumma Khan maintained a large separate male sitting area in an annex attached to his house. At very few points in the day was his gathering-room empty.

New visitors would come before older ones had left. Many of those who visited were Baloch dissidents, activists, poets, soldiers and businessmen wanting to discuss the intricacies of the political situation in Balochistan. His sons and grandchildren constantly come in with cups full of tea and went out with empty plates of food. Each time they would enter, however, they would remind the aged patriarch to rest.

For his age, Jumma Khan had a strikingly vivid memory. Upon finding out that I too was from Karachi, Jumma Khan recalled in full details the beginnings of his political career in Karachi. He remembered being a firebrand student activist. Once, during a movement for readmission of some Baloch students, he issued a 'shutter-down' strike and threatened to burn down shops that did not heed his call. His zeal, he bemoaned, was seldom matched by other Baloch in Lyari who were too busy just trying to meet ends meet. Once, while fighting a case for a Baloch leader in Dhaka he ran out of money and called people in Lyari for further support but did not receive anything other than false promises. Over time, he thus had to refine his political instruments.

For a while he shifted his political terrain to the print media. He published a collection of Baloch nationalist poetry. Furthermore, he published articles in the newspapers. His most famous article, he recalled, criticized the Pakistani state's decision to buy Gwadar. He argued in the article that instead of enriching the coffers of an opulent foreign sultan, who planned on using the money to build a private cinema and expand his palace, the Pakistani state should have just invested the purchase amount on

the development of Gwadar. Upon seeing the benevolence of the Pakistani state, the residents of Gwadar would have willingly seceded to Pakistan.

One day my conversations with Jumma Khan's life in Karachi extended into the evening. His son walked in during the middle of our conversation and offered to drop me off if I wanted to leave at that very moment. Reading it as a sign to get me out of the house, I agreed. Reaching the more densely populated of Sharjah where I along with many other middle-class South Asians lived, took a long time. During our ride, Jumma Khan's politely asked that I limit my daily interactions with his father to a maximum of two hours. His father, he complained, over exerted himself. Everyday his father would skip on the rest recommended by his doctor to entertain guests.

The next morning, Jumma Khan apologized for his son cutting our conversation short. With a sense of resignation, Jumma Khan acknowledged that his sons were only concerned about his health. They did not like the fact that he continued to tirelessly work all day long despite having retired in the early parts of the millennium. Until that point, Jumma Khan had never mentioned what he did for a living. I had to ask: resigned from doing what?

Jumma Khan quickly responded — over little less than half a century he had worked as in international diplomat for Balochistan. After being exiled from Karachi in 1959, Jumma Khan claims he became a one-man Baloch embassy in Sharjah. Every day he would go to the docks to greet new arrivals. He would assist in their dealings with customs and immigration officials, arrange accommodation for those who did not have

any, and help in their job search. Moreover, he guaranteed the protection of Baloch in the Persian Gulf. Following the Dad Shah incident, Iran had begun closely monitoring the activities of its Baloch population from Iran. Consequently, they restricted their movement into the other side of the Persian Gulf. Those who did manage to find a way out were often arrested by the British government on behalf of Iran. Jumma Khan claimed that he would personally fight for the release of any Baloch being held captive.

For example, one day Jumma Khan received news from Kuwait of an Iran-based Baloch family being held under arrest. The family had been crossing Kuwait on their way back from pilgrimage in Mecca but were imprisoned for not having the proper paperwork needed for transit. The following day, Jumma Khan boarded a small dhow heading towards Kuwait. He stormed into the office of the authorities holding the Baloch family. With utmost bravado, he threatened Kuwait of dire consequences. Kuwait had embassies in many countries with Baloch soldiers—Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Dubai, Sharjah, Pakistan and Iran. Baloch soldiers, he told them, are everywhere and would react violently if they come to know of a *Hajji* Brother of theirs being unfairly held captive.

While Jumma Khan managed to get the Baloch *Hajjis* released, he claims his own diplomatic immunity came into question. The British authorities became suspicious of his political involvements and began questioning him as if he was a spy for a foreign state. Instead of trying to reign in his activities, Jumma Khan sought alternate posting in

the United Arab Republic<sup>31</sup>. In 1964 Jumma Khan moved to Cairo to start a Baloch embassy in the Pan-Arabist state.

Unlike Sharjah, Cairo did not have a frequent flow of Baloch population. His activities as diplomat thus revolved less around protecting Baloch immigrants, and more around building friendly political ties with the expansive Arab state. Jumma Khan claims that he would invited to official dinners with diplomats from other foreign states. Through these gatherings Jumma Khan fostered ties with representatives of various states and pleaded the case for an independent Baloch state. He would often even be sent on foreign diplomatic missions to other states looking to become part of the UAR. During one of his international tour to Syria in 1965, he managed to find sympathetic ears for the Baloch state amongst the pro-UAR state elite invested in expanding the transnational state. These state elites invited Jumma Khan to establish an embassy in Damascus.

While working as a diplomat in Cairo, Jumma Khan personally lived a very comfortable life. He was given a fully furnished apartment in an established neighborhood. He had a car at his disposal. Individually, his standing was no different from the other diplomats of states that actually existed. Politically, however, he felt Cairo was a dead end. The North African country was too far removed from Balochistan. It did not have any stake in helping the politics of Baloch nationalism.

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<sup>31</sup> For a detailed history of UAR and Nasser's Pan-Arabism see: Jankowski, James P. *Nasser's Egypt, Arab Nationalism, and the United Arab Republic*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002.



Furthermore, Egypt was unwilling to directly question the policies of either Iran or Pakistan. Thus, Jumma Khan felt he was little more than a symbolic presence, kept in order to give Cairo the sense of being a global hub for political leaders from all parts of the Muslim world.

In hopes of furthering the cause of the Baloch nation within the international community, therefore, Jumma Khan moved to Syria in 1966. Unfortunately, his departure, Jumma Khan bemoans, was delayed by his brother. The climate of Damascus is much colder than Cairo's. To live there, Jumma Khan insisted, he needed a set of winter clothing. He had asked his brother in Karachi to mail him coats and sweaters immediately after returning from his mission to Syria. Due to their being no direct mailing routes between Karachi and Cairo, his departure was delayed by several months waiting for the winter garments. By the time he eventually reached Damascus, a coup had taken place in Syria<sup>32</sup>. The pro-UAR faction that had invited him were as result of the coup either exiled or imprisoned<sup>33</sup>.

This series of unfortunate incidents forced Jumma Khan to take hiatus from his career as a diplomat by moving to Lebanon. It was during this time Jumma Khan decided to get married to a local Lebanese woman, and start his own family. He

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<sup>32</sup> In 1966 there was a fallout between the Baathist old guards led by Michel Aflaq and the emerging faction of younger neo-Baathist leaders. As a result of the coup, the older guard were overthrown and sent into either exile or prisons. See: Seymour, Martin. "The dynamics of power in Syria since the break with Egypt." *Middle Eastern Studies* 6, no. 1 (1970): 35-47.

<sup>33</sup> For detailed reading of Pan-Arabism in Syria and Iraq see: Mufti, Malik. *Sovereign creations: Pan-Arabism and political order in Syria and Iraq*. Cornell University Press, 1996.

resumed work in 1969, this time in Baghdad. In 1968 a coup in Iraq had brought Baathist leaders with Pan-Arabist ambitions to the front<sup>34</sup>. Following the coup, many of the exiled leaders from Syria who had invited Jumma Khan initially managed to find a place within the state hierarchy. With their assistance, Jumma Khan was thus able to establish a Baloch embassy in Iraq.

Jumma Khan remembers his time in Iraq before his arrest as being the peak of his erstwhile diplomatic career. For the first time he had accommodation in a diplomatic enclave alongside other foreign dignitaries. He had a bullet-proof car with a mounted flag, similar to those given to diplomats the world over. Since there was no actual Baloch state to pay for its ambassador's upkeep, the Iraqi authorities even sanctioned a sizeable salary for Jumma Khan. The money, Jumma Khan clarified, was meant not for his personal consumption but to manage the Baloch embassy.

With the help of the Iraqi government he established a full-fledged office and guest house. For the first time he could host foreign dignitaries with the full pomp they deserved. As word of his embassy reached Balochistan, several notable Baloch leaders started visiting Iraq. Born into a working-class family, Jumma Khan had built his political career from scratch through his unwavering commitment to the Baloch cause. To get to the point where he was during the early seventies, Jumma Khan had had to

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<sup>34</sup>Known as the 17th July Revolution, the coup deposed the older Nasserite Pan-Arab state elite and brought to power the more regionally focused Socialist faction of the Baathist party led by General Ahmed Hassan al-Bakr. Baram, Amatzia. *Culture, history and ideology in the formation of Ba'thist Iraq, 1968-89*. Springer, 1991.

suffer through several moments of hardship. As a result of these experiences, Jumma Khan had become used to a Spartan lifestyle. In contrast, many of the Baloch leaders either visiting or seeking exile in Iraq, demanded a more lavish life. With the stipend he received, Jumma Khan claims, he could arrange for their needs.

Beyond hosting Baloch leaders and exiles, during his time in Iraq Jumma Khan was involved in several high-level policy making meetings. He would write briefs for the Iraqi government explaining political changes in both Pakistan and Iran. He would attend meetings with Iraqi officials to discuss ongoing geo-political developments. By 1972 he was even sharing a seat on a table alongside Saddam Hussein and other prominent Ba'athist leaders.

It was during one such meeting with Saddam Hussein that the idea of forming a coalition of ethnic minorities of Iran was proposed. Present in the meeting, alongside Jumma Khan and Saddam Hussein, were representatives of Kurdistan, the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, and the United Soviet Socialist Republic. The Soviet representative offered the three Iranian minority leaders a steady flow of arms and money. In exchange they were asked to orchestrate uprisings within Iran.

Jumma Khan remembers initially resisting signing the offer until the Soviet representative could guarantee official recognition of an independent state. Jumma Khan realized that the end goal of the project was not to secure sovereign rights for the

minority groups, but the expansion of Soviet influence<sup>35</sup>. Even if the three groups together were able to overthrow the regime in Iran, they would end up not with independent states of their own but as vassals of another empire. Eventually, however, Jumma Khan signed onto the pact. International diplomacy required practical realism and not ideological idealism. Diplomats from different states helped each other out of self-interest and not altruism. Treaty making at the international scale demanded uneasy compromises and temporary political alignments. He could use Soviet support to destabilize the US backed Iranian regime. If the Soviet ultimately succeed in establishing their dominance on parts of Balochistan, he could then later look for other allies to overthrow the Socialist empire.

At least in his self-representation Jumma Khan had all the makings of an international diplomat. His practices, and to a degree, his symbolic status in Baghdad, were not very different from representatives of recognized states. Like other Ambassadors, he looked after the rights of citizens abroad. He assisted them in arranging visas and other needed documents. Like other international dignitaries, Jumma Khan conducted missions abroad. He attended official diplomatic dinners and even drove a bullet-proof car with a flag mounted in front. Like other employees of foreign ministries, he signed international pacts. He drew intricate international treaties that could be of mutual benefit to all the signatories. Like other transnational

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<sup>35</sup> For detailed reading of Soviet plans for expansion in the Middle East see: Kreutz, Andrej. *Russia in the Middle East: friend or foe?*. Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007.

intelligence agents, he exchanged critical information with other agencies. He discussed geopolitical strategies and conceived of elaborate covert schemes. Like other military attachés he imagined defense agreements. He collaborated with foreign militaries on programs for arms exchange and military technology.

The only difference between him other diplomats was that he had no state back home. A historical Baloch state, the Khanate of Kalat spread across much of what today is Pakistani part of Balochistan, had until the colonial period existed as a vassal princely state distinct from the British Raj in the rest of India. With the imminent departure of the British Empire in sight, Kalat had declared independence on 11 August 1947 in order to establish a parliamentary republic. However, against the sentiment and efforts of the Baloch people, the state of Pakistan soon annexed Kalat<sup>36</sup>. While the people of Balochistan have since been involved in a struggle for self-determination, their efforts have been brutally thwarted by the established and internationally recognized states of Pakistan and Iran<sup>37</sup>.

Jumma Khan thus has never been sanctioned by a state as their official representative abroad. Unlike other diplomats, he has never received a salary or budget for maintaining an embassy. He has not had any bureaucratic support or a foreign ministry. His postings and transfers have not been signed by individuals recognized as

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<sup>36</sup> Axmann, Martin. *Back to the future: The Khanate of Kalat and the genesis of Baloch nationalism, 1915-1955*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2008.

<sup>37</sup> Dashti, Naseer. *Baloch Conflict with Iran and Pakistan: Aspects of a National Liberation Struggle*. S.I.: TRAFFORD ON DEMAND PUB, 2017.

the state within the international system. At no point in time did Jumma Khan hold a diplomatic passport similar to the one other diplomats used to move across different political boundaries with complete immunity.

These limitations, however, have not constricted Jumma Khan's ambitions. As a politically savvy individual, he has been able to find ways around his handicap of not having a supporting state back home. He was able to draw funds from foreign states. He used the connections in one state to hop onto another. By drawing in another Baloch leaders, he managed to form a group that resembled a foreign ministry. He even had a plan for overcoming the passport limitation.

During his early years in Sharjah, Jumma Khan became close to Mirza Barkat, the erstwhile conqueror of Deira (now part of Dubai) introduced in the first chapter. Barkat, he argued, had the opportunity to form a small Sheikdom of his own in the Trucial States. According to Jumma Khan, Barkat was of the opinion that a small Baloch state in the Persian Gulf was untenable. Barkat thus rejected the offer and instead procured in exchange for his conquest larger chunks of land spread across the Eastern Batinah coastline. Jumma Khan though argued that had Barkat accepted the offer, Baloch diaspora could have earned official recognition from a state of their own. The small state might not have been able to operate as an independent sovereign unit with a homogenous national population, but in the short run it could have at least printed Baloch passports.

Jumma Khan argued, at that point in time the idea of a state being only a passport issuing authority was not unheard of<sup>38</sup>. Before Gwadar had been bought by Pakistan, the Agha Khan had plans for purchasing it not for the settlement of Ismaili population from all over the world but to issue passports<sup>39</sup>. Even the Sheikh of Sharjah within the system of British indirect rule, Jumma Khan claimed, were little more than passport traders. He remembers meeting members of the royal family at the docks whenever he went to greet Baloch migrants. From behind a desk with basic office supplies and stamps, the royals would try to sell empty passports to traders and travelers looking to exchange their citizenship.

John Torpey argues that the birth of passports was essential feature of states monopolization of legitimate movement<sup>40</sup>. By mutually recognizing passports as a universal identification document in the post second world war order, states collectively regulated the circulation of populations across borders. On the one hand passports allowed issuing states to maintain a relationship of right and responsibility over citizens situated beyond sovereign boundaries. On the other hand, passports gave 'the admitting

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<sup>38</sup> One of the example within Europe of such a state was Liechtenstein, a state granted to elites of the collapsed Austro-Hungarian empire who never even moved to their own state. Veenendaal, Wouter P. "A Big Prince in a Tiny Realm: Smallness, Monarchy, and Political Legitimacy in the Principality of Liechtenstein." *Swiss Political Science Review* 21, no. 2 (2015): 333-349.

<sup>39</sup> More research needs to be done on this fascinating possibility that I only came to know about while searching the British archives files on the sale of Gwadar. 'File 22/16 III Gwadur', British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/1/380. The files suggested that the Agha Khan initially wanted to purchase Gwadar and maintain it as the Ismaili Vatican.

<sup>40</sup> Torpey, John. *The invention of the passport: surveillance, citizenship and the state*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

state a prima facie guarantee that another state is prepared to accept an alien that the "target" state may choose to expel.<sup>41</sup>

Even if Jumma Khan could get away with not having a state that could extend rights and responsibility beyond its borders, how did he gain recognition in admitting states? Unlike other undocumented migrants, Jumma Khan was not trying to hide away upon entering a state without proper paperwork. Jumma Khan in fact was actively pursuing foreign states. Despite not having a state guarantor, Jumma Khan was able to develop a thriving career as a diplomat in a variety of states. How did he do it? More specifically, how did Jumma Khan gain recognition within foreign states as the rightful representatives of a nation that did not have a state?

### **3.3 Jumma Khan as the familiar Baloch**

In his now iconic essay, Charles Tilly draws a provocative comparison between states and protection mafias:

If protection rackets represent organized crime at its smoothest, then war making and state making – quintessential protection rackets with the advantage of legitimacy – qualify as our largest examples of organized crime. Without branding all generals and statesmen as murderers and thieves, I want to urge the value of that analogy. At least for the European experience of the last few centuries, a portrait of war makers and state makers as coercive and self-seeking entrepreneurs bears a far greater resemblance to the facts than do its chief alternatives: the idea of a social contract, the idea of an open market in which operators of armies and states offer services to willing consumers, the idea of a society whose shared aims and expectations call forth a certain kind of government.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Torpey, John. "Coming and going: On the state monopolization of the legitimate "means of movement"." *Sociological theory* 16, no. 3 (1998): 239-259. p.240

<sup>42</sup> Tilly, Charles. "War Making and State Making As Organized Crime." *Bringing the State Back in /*



Tilly's analogy allows us to read states not as an abstract entity that stands above the society it rules, but as representation of a particular sociological group within the society that has the biggest guns. The practice of states collecting taxes from society, according to Tilly, in its materiality is not very different from protection racketeering of mafias. Like states, in exchange for taxes mafias also provide various services to the community. The only difference between the two lies in an intangible qualifier of 'legitimacy'. For states in Europe, legitimacy was a byproduct of a group's effective monopolization of violence within a given territory. The gang that was able to eliminate its rivals came to be recognized as legitimate. With Intra-Europe treaties, such as the treaty of Westphalia, the legitimate Mafioso formed a cabal to regulate future rival mafias claim to legitimacy.

In other parts of the world, as Bayart claims, external legitimacy predated internal monopoly<sup>43</sup>. In his discussion of states in Africa, Bayart argues that in most places around the continent state as a form of social organization was introduced through the colonial conquest. Prior to state-making through colonialism, authority was divided amongst different groups within a shared territory. Instead of working with the system of dispersed sovereignty, European powers would seek out a particular local group and at the cost of others awarded it legitimacy as the state and the means to

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*Edited by Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Theda Skocpol. (1985). p 35.*

<sup>43</sup> Bayart, Jean-François, and Stephen Ellis. "Africa in the world: a history of extraversion." *African affairs* 99, no. 395 (2000): 217-267.

establish internal monopoly. To understand why a certain group gets recognized over another, Bayart argues, one needs to look beyond the structural relationship of colonial dependence. He instead proposes looking towards the historically established matrix of action in which the state elites restricted by lack of means to exploit internal resources mobilize power from external sources through a practice he calls 'extraversion'.

For Bayart 'extraversion' requires inculcating social ties with an external legitimator. As the scores of exiled generals, political elites, religious leaders, and separatists living in the North Atlantic world would testify, to gain recognition as the state one needs to build external social connections before establishing internal support<sup>44</sup>. Moreover 'extraversion' demands mimicking the specific language of a state, peculiar to that specific time. As Bayart highlights, Sub-Saharan local political elite over the twentieth century kept on switching codes depending on global political currents. In the mid-twentieth century high point of nationalism, political elites became nationalist. In the cold-war period of Soviet internationalism and American Liberalism, they became either liberals or internationalists. Now in the neoliberal age of globalization, political elites have made themselves into mediators for local resources and global markets<sup>45</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> As a recent example of this one can see Hamid Karzai's route to the presidency was paved not by alliance with local groups within Afghanistan, but by hosting dinners for the political elites in Washington D.C.

<sup>45</sup> Bayart, Jean-François. "The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly (trans Mary Harper, Christopher Harrison & Elizabeth Harrison)." (1993).

Jumma Khan's movement though was South to South and not South to North. To gain legitimacy for both himself as a diplomat and hopefully the Baloch state, he turned not to global powers in the North Atlantic world but regional powers such as Sharjah, the United Arab Republic, Baathist Syria, and Iraq. He sought familiarity with these regional states not through the more easily universalizable bonds of race, class, gender, or religion— but the particular 'Baloch' ethnic identity. Ethnicity are often assumed to be bounded to place. Subsequently 'ethnicity' is seldom imagined as a mobile identity that can be allow familiarity across large spaces.

However, as the first chapter argues, Baloch people have been circulating within the broad Indian Ocean region since at least the 16th century. While on the one hand this history of mobility provides a broad geography of fellow ethnic Baloch who can assist in gaining legitimacy abroad, on the other it has made Baloch as an ethnic group familiar within multiple political domains. A history of Baloch migrations and settlement thus offers mobile Baloch both the possibility of forming intra-ethnic ties across transnational lines and gaining recognition from other ethnic communities on the basis of a shared past.

I say possibility because familiarity is not a readymade object. While Jumma Khan was able to present himself as a familiar figure on the basis of his 'Balochness', transnational familiarity thus was not a resource available to all Baloch. There are no preset protocols one could follow to gain recognition. Unlike passports which can be

obtained by following a set procedure, informal familiarity requires agents to actively search for linkages in history and contemporary social relationships.

During the time I spent with Jumma Khan, I was constantly impressed by his ability to judge what kinds of claims, histories, and objects he ought to mobilize to express familiarity in different places or situations. After he found out that letters for his arrest in Pakistan had been issued for writing the letter in an Indian newspaper regarding the sale of Gwadar, Jumma Khan knew that he could not use a Pakistani passport to seek exile abroad. The passport would let Pakistani border guards immediately recognize him as the Jumma Khan who should be imprisoned and not allowed to travel.

As an alternative, Jumma Khan was able to produce the travel documents of a dead relative whose picture bore a striking similarity to his own. This document was not an international passport, but an old internal document known as a *rahdari* that once allowed Baloch to travel between parts of Balochistan that are now divided by national boundaries. The *rahdari* of a deceased relative allowed Jumma Khan to board the weekly steamship to travel from Karachi to Gwadar. However, with Gwadar becoming part of Pakistan, he knew that there too he would be recognized and imprisoned. His best option thus was to hide in the hull of the ship during disembarkation in Gwadar. Jumma Khan knew that after docking in Gwadar, the steamship would continue onwards to the Persian Gulf, like a local bus with many stops.

The next stop on the steamship route was Muscat, Oman. Instead of trying to sneak into Oman, Jumma Khan decided to make himself familiar to the Baloch dock guards employed by the Sultan. The guard, perhaps out of a sense of obligation to the Baloch community, warned Jumma Khan that his letter in the Indian newspaper had not taken well by the Sultan. If Jumma Khan entered Muscat, he would sooner or later be arrested and sent back to Pakistan. Upon the guard's recommendation, Jumma Khan reboarded the steamer and continued his journey to the next stop, Sharjah.

Once he had reached Sharjah, Jumma Khan recalled all the people there who might know him from before. He remembered helping a Sharjah-based Baloch secure a cash loan in Karachi a few years back. To cash in on the debt he asked him for temporary accommodation. After a few weeks, when the debt was cleared, Jumma Khan began searching for employment opportunities. This time he turned not to a fellow Baloch, but a Lyari-born Gujarati trader he knew from Karachi. The trader hired Jumma Khan as a bookkeeper for a small general store he owned and allowed him to sleep inside the shop after hours.

The shop, as Jumma Khan soon realized while working the books, was in fact a front for laundering money for gold traders. Nisha Mathew has argued that Dubai and its neighboring Trucial States, like Sharjah, had emerged as the center of gold trade before the discovery of oil. Following the partition of India, wealthy Sindhi Hindu merchants from Karachi migrated to the Trucial coast instead of India. Using the laissez-faire trade policies in the Persian Gulf, Sindhi and Gujarati traders established

thriving gold trade networks that could circumvent India's strict import regulations. On the back of 'cuts' received by the ruling families, places like Dubai and Sharjah were, by the 1950s, transformed from being sleepy backwaters of the Indian Ocean to thriving trade centers<sup>46</sup>.

While Jumma Khan himself did not become a gold trader himself, he mobilized their networks for other ends. Through the shop-owner he worked for, Jumma Khan was kept abreast of who was coming into Sharjah and what was going out. The clandestine networks, Jumma Khan found out, often brought in Baloch from Iran traveling without the required paperwork. By helping these travelers gain safe passage and residence, Jumma Khan started developing a reputation within Iranian-Baloch circuits of mobility as an important mediator. He soon gained recognition as an informal Baloch ambassador in the Persian Gulf.

Years later, when Jumma Khan moved to Cairo he realized that there were not many contemporary social connections he could draw on to make himself familiar. He did not have any cousins, neighbors, debtors or even a fellow Baloch in North Africa. By using his religion as a shareable identity Jumma Khan was able to get a place to sleep inside a mosque, but he struggled to gain recognition within the circuits of power. During his first few months in Egypt, each day he would wake up and head towards

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<sup>46</sup> Mathew, Nisha Mary. "Understanding space, politics and history in the making of Dubai, a global city." PhD diss., 2015.

government offices to try and get a meeting UAR officials. His persistence finally paid off and he met with a bureaucrat from the foreign ministry.

Jumma Khan remembers opening the meeting with the Egyptian bureaucrat by proposing that UAR should expand their understanding of who counts as an Arab. Recognizing UAR aspirations of expanding the Arab state, he argued that the Baloch might no longer speak Arabic but historically they too were Arabs. In making this claim Jumma Khan was drawing on a well-established Baloch historical tradition of claiming Arab ancestry. As mentioned in the first chapter, many of the popular Balochi epics trace Baloch genealogy back to Ameer Hamza. In drawing this connection to Ameer Hamza, the Baloch are not unique. The *dastaan* tradition in many languages— including Arabic—remembers Ameer Hamza for conquering large parts of the world. The Baloch, Jumma Khan claimed, were possibly part of Hamza’s army who decided to settle in Balochistan.

While Baloch might not have many active connections to the Arab world in the contemporary period, Jumma Khan argued, historically they were the same people. Jumma Khan’s claim of the Baloch being Arab found an even more interested audience in Syria. During his diplomatic mission to Syria, Jumma Khan recalls reading parts of a Balochi epic mentioning Aleppo as their historical homeland. Intrigued by this information, Syrian officials told Jumma Khan about local Syrian tribes around Aleppo that no one knew much about. These tribes, they said, looked more like Jumma Khan than other Syrians. They postulated they could very well be Baloch. Though Jumma

Khan knew little about the tribes, he proclaimed that it was within the realm of possibility that they were the original Baloch.

Later in Iraq, however, Jumma Khan modified the story he told about Baloch origins. Within the Baloch historical tradition, parallel to the claim of Arab ancestry runs an alternate genealogy that traces the Baloch as being a breakaway faction of the Kurds. According to this tradition, the Baloch were one of the Kurdish tribes who fled their homeland due to being prosecuted by the Persian Empire. Linguistically, Balochi and Kurdish do still share many common elements<sup>47</sup>. There even exist Baloch tribes that use 'Kurd' as their common name.

Through this historical claim, Jumma Khan was able to foster relationships with Kurdish groups that had just reached a peace agreement with the Iraqi regime<sup>48</sup>. Beyond the historical connections, he argued, Baloch and Kurds had found themselves in a very similar political situation in the mid-twentieth century<sup>49</sup>. Despite having been instrumental in forming empires in the past, both groups were left without a state of their own when nation-states were carved out. The process of drawing national boundaries had left both groups divided across multiple nations. Kurds were split

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<sup>47</sup> Spooner, Brian. "The Baloch in Islamic Civilization, Western Ethnography, and World History." *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 4, no. 2 (2013): 135-151.

<sup>48</sup> Breseeg, Taj Mohammad. "Heterogeneity and the Baloch Identity." *Hanken, Annual Research Journal from the Department of Balochi, Faculty of Languages and Literature, University of Balochistan, Quetta, Volume 1* (2009): 51-65.

<sup>49</sup> Farzanfar, Ramesh. "Ethnic groups and the state: Azaris, Kurds and Baluch of Iran." PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1992.



across Syria, Turkey, Iran, and Iraq and the Baloch were separated into Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Both Kurds and Baloch have since been campaigning across these countries for a separate sovereign state of their own. By drawing connections between the two groups' parallel irredentist struggles, Jumma Khan was able to bring them together on a single table to discuss geopolitical strategies.

During his time as a Baloch diplomat in Iraq, Jumma Khan was further able to make himself familiar to Soviet representatives by speaking in a Marxist language. Having grown up in the politically active working-class neighborhood of Lyari, Jumma Khan had been exposed to Communist literature from an early age. Following the Bolshevik revolution, the Soviet state had managed to disseminate Marxist literature in various parts of the world. In Karachi, the literature had found a stable readership in Lyari, which in the mid-twentieth century was home to various reading circles, Marxist groups and labor unions<sup>50</sup>. Jumma Khan himself had joined one of the largest Pakistani leftist parties, NAP, during the movement for the release for Dad Shah's family.

Jumma Khan knew that as Baloch who spoke in Marxist language, the Soviet officials would see him as a familiar figure. Baloch people, he knew, were present in the Soviet organized Baku Congress of the People of the East in 1920<sup>51</sup>. Baloch were amongst one of the several stateless groups that had sought Soviet support for gaining

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<sup>50</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>51</sup> Baloch, Inayatullah. *The problem of "Greater Baluchistan": a study of Baluch nationalism*. Vol. 116. Coronet Books, 1987. p.149.

sovereignty. More recently, he knew that several Baloch leaders had sought exile in the Soviet Republic<sup>52</sup>. Moreover, many of the Baloch inspired by Marxists literature had been travelling to Moscow for further ideological, political and even military training<sup>53</sup>. By placing himself alongside these other Baloch with ties to USSR, Jumma Khan was thus able to join the anti-Iran coalition in 1972.

Interestingly, while Jumma Khan used his Balochness to gain recognition abroad, the Baloch themselves often refused to recognize him as a Baloch. Born in Karachi, Jumma Khan had until 1971 never visited Balochistan. His first trip home was as a representative of the Iraq-Soviet mission. He was introduced to Balochistan as a mediator for a proposed defense pact with foreign states. Jumma Khan thus was a diplomat not only of a state that did not yet exist, but also of a territorial nation he had never actually seen.

Jumma Khan often scoffed at particular people in Balochistan who did not consider him a Baloch. Many of the tribal chiefs in Balochistan, he claimed, were envious of his success as a diplomat. When they visited him in Iraq they saw firsthand his stature in the foreign state. They became jealous of the fact a man with no land in Balochistan had more recognition than tribal chiefs with acres of lands. These chiefs would then often deliberately hurt the Baloch cause just to deny Jumma Khan his Baloch claims.

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<sup>52</sup> Harrison (1981)

<sup>53</sup> The most well recognized amongst the Baloch nationalist to have gone to moscow was Sher Muhammad Marri. Marri, Sher Mohammad, and Ahmed Shuja. "Interview Sher Mohammad Marri." *Pakistan Forum* 3, no. 8/9 (1973): 38-40

In a recent incident of Baloch in Balochistan casting doubts over Jumma Khan's Balochness, Jumma Khan's daughter had been denied admission into a medical university in Balochistan, for a seat on the Baloch quota. Though he had never lived in Balochistan, Jumma Khan had stated that he wanted to send his children to their native land. When his daughter completed her college education, he wanted to send her to university in Balochistan. When he started his research on universities in Balochistan, he realized that public institutions were the most highly ranked. These public medical universities, however, had limited seats for foreign students. Jumma Khan approached the Baloch student union to push for his daughter to be admitted on the seats reserved for native Baloch. The students refused. They said his daughter was not Baloch, just because she did not speak Balochi fluently (the medium of instruction was English, not Balochi). They did not take into consideration that she was the daughter of a Baloch diplomat who had given his life to furthering the cause of Balochistan abroad. To Jumma Khan's indignation, the criteria for Balochness that he had used strategically at so many junctures in his life fell short in Balochistan itself, as his own children were judged ineligible for a Baloch quota.



Figure 33: Picture of the author with Jumma Khan (left)

Jumma Khan often scoffed at particular people in Balochistan who did not consider him a Baloch. Many of the tribal chiefs in Balochistan, he claimed, were envious of his success as a diplomat. When they visited him in Iraq they saw firsthand his stature in the foreign state. They became jealous of the fact a man with no land in Balochistan had more recognition than tribal chiefs with acres of lands. These chiefs would then often deliberately hurt the Baloch cause just to deny Jumma Khan his Baloch claims.

To counter the sting of his daughter's rejection, Jumma Khan once narrated an incident of a Baloch tribal chief he was hosting in Iraq, who went behind his back to directly contact Iraqi authorities. The Baloch chief told the Iraqis that Jumma Khan was only conning them; he had no support back in Balochistan. He proposed an alternate alliance with leaders in Balochistan who actually had large tribal followings. However,

the Iraqi authorities paid no attention to the proposal. They realized that Jumma Khan alone was the true dedicated representative of the Baloch people.

But why did the Iraqis consider a man who had neither land nor tribal following in Balochistan as its representative? How did Jumma Khan become the diplomat of an imagined territorial nation he had never visited?

### ***3.4 Jumma Khan the proxy***

The birth of democratic nation-state, with at least a nominal social-contract with the nation as its source of legitimacy, was paralleled by the growth of non-democratic covert intelligence agencies. Unlike the internal state bureaucracy, intelligence agencies— a common feature of most states— operate without any public oversight. In fact, one could argue that intelligence agencies secure a certain social group representing the state at the cost of the larger society's interests. Beyond protecting state order within its borders, mobile intelligence agents— involved in a range of covert militant, political, and commercial operations— also expand state interests beyond its borders. The international political order in the modern world of nation-state depends just as much on overt treaties between states, as it does on covert negotiations between intelligence agencies.

To reword Tilly's analogy, intelligence agencies — quintessential self-interested proxies— qualify as our largest example of covert international racketeers. Alternatively, proxies without states—like Jumma Khan—qualify as smaller examples of such international racketeers. In their activities and social makeup there was little that

set 'proxies' apart from intelligence agencies; except for not having state legitimacy. Like intelligence agencies, mobile proxies not bounded to any single recognized state, covertly moved within circles of international state elites and conceived on their way various transnational projects.

Placed next to other intelligence officers, Jumma Khan's lack of social connections in Balochistan appears to be not an anomaly, but a standard feature. Moreover, Jumma Khan's recollections of covert negotiations with high level foreign state officials read not too different from biographies of retired CIA officials. In fact, in many of Jumma Khan's stories, such as the backdoor meeting in Iraq with Soviet agents, foreign intelligence agents formed a recurring presence. As a proxy without state, Jumma Khan moved in the same social circles as intelligence agents with state backing. Thus, because there was no Baloch state, Jumma Khan cannot be considered as an intelligence agent proper. He can however be seen as the nearby social character type of 'proxy'.

Eric Wilson claims that when the biggest mafia gained legitimacy as the state, it neither completely eliminated smaller mafias; nor did it convert them into rebels, outlaws, criminals and revolutionaries. In the process of establishing effective monopoly over legitimate violence, states only changed their relationship with other non-state protection racketeers<sup>54</sup>. Non-state entrepreneurs of violence were not only competition

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<sup>54</sup> Wilson (2009)

for the state, but also their collaborators. They allowed the state to express power in places where it could not or was unwilling to go directly.

As Wilson highlights, states collaborating with state like entities without legitimacy as a common feature of the modern world. States use gangs for both protection and service delivery in urban ghettos and accessible rural areas. In areas on state frontiers with separatist tendencies, states turn to 'quasi-state' mediators for establishing rule. Additionally, as the recent example of turkey buying oil from ISIS networks reveals, states can establish stable trade ties with illegitimate states.

Wilson argues that grey relationships between states and non-state proxies, should neither be dismissed as grand conspiracies, nor should they be seen a sign of a small secret cabal pulling the strings of world order. They should instead be treated analytically for understanding the 'global model of 'shadow governance', practically realized and coordinated through a dispersed, multilayered, transnational network of [proxies]<sup>55</sup>. Wilson proposes parapolitics — the systematically clandestine relationship between states and non-state networks — offers a rich empirical field for testing and reconceptualizing our conceptions of both national and international political order.

While parapolitics has of late emerged as a prominent field of study in various disciplines such as anthropology, political science, and sociology; much of the literature

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 9

traces its operations only within the neoliberal contemporary world. As Mark Duffield writes:

While patterns are uneven and great differences exist, the shrinkage of formal economic ties has given rise to two opposing movements. Coming from the South, there has been an expansion of trans-border and shadow economic activity [i.e., parapolitics] that has forged new local–global linkages with the liberal world system and, in so doing, new patterns of actual development and political authority – that is, alternative and non-liberal forms of protection, legitimacy and social regulation. Emerging from the North, the networks of international public policy have thickened and multiplied their points of engagement and control. Many erstwhile functions of the nation state have been abandoned to these international networks as power and authority have been reconfigured. The encounter of the two systems has formed a new and complex development-security terrain.<sup>56</sup>

Jumma Khan's biography, however, points to thick parapolitical ties between states and non-state networks at the high point of border making in the mid twentieth century. The nation-state system, globalized after the Second World War, divided the world into discrete chunks of territorial political units with a single legitimate sovereign. As Janice Thomson argues, recognition as a sovereign within the international system required not just an exhibition of effective monopoly over violence within the bounded territory of the nation, but also accountability of violence emanating outwards from their borders. To avoid being condemned by the international system as rogue elements, states had to take political responsibility for foreign attacks orchestrated from their soil. Seats at international forums depended less on exhibition of legitimacy of its

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<sup>56</sup> Duffield, Mark. *Global governance and the new wars: the merging of development and security*. Zed Books Ltd., 2014. P. 44



violence within borders and more on control over violence spreading across its borders. Unlike empires in the centuries before, as Janice Thomson argues, nation-states could not outsource the production of violence to private networks of traders and privateers<sup>57</sup>.

Despite this structural limitation of the international order, states in the second half of the twentieth century continued to harbor ambitions of extending their political influence across borders. The contradictory desires of states wanting to expand beyond borders while maintaining the bordered international system, I argue, created the conditions for the rise of 'parapolitical' figures such as Jumma Khan. States within the international system could not officially deploy private networks of protection in the same way colonial empires could charter private trading companies. Yet they could mobilize transnational figures such as Jumma Khan, who could be easily disposed and distanced from the state's formal activities and international relations<sup>58</sup>.

While Jumma Khan might have gained initial recognition as a Baloch, his continued place in the international political elites depended on his ability to move ideas, goods, and people across places state actors were either unable to unwilling to go themselves. At times this meant seamlessly moving between legal and illegal terrain. At other moments it required covertly moving across multiple state boundaries. As a long careered informal diplomat who could at once negotiate with multiple states and

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<sup>57</sup> Thomson (1996).

<sup>58</sup> Darryl Li makes a similar argument about Third Country Nationals working on American military bases in the Gulf as being disposable labor that came with very limited liability. Li, Darryl. "Offshoring the army: Migrant workers and the US military." *UCLA L. Rev.* 62 (2015): 123.

smugglers, Jumma Khan was ideally situated for orchestrating both these kinds of movements; i.e. paralegal and transnational.

Jumma Khan recalls that soon after the meeting with Saddam Hussein, he was flush with substantial amount of money and armaments. His role was to find a way to get these supplies into parts of Balochistan under Iranian control. Since the Baloch parts of Iran lay on the eastern border of Iran and not the parts bordering Iraq, smuggling the money and guns required Jumma Khan finding alternative routes. In hopes of finding such a pathway, Jumma Khan briefly left Iraq for Sharjah to rekindle his relationship with gold smugglers he had worked with during his employment at the general store many years ago. Through their help, he was able to smuggle supplies on board Iraqi ships from Basra to Sharjah. Upon landing the goods were taken by land to the eastern shore of Sharjah and boarded onto small dhows going to Karachi. Once in Karachi trucks would drive the cash and contrabands through Pakistani Makran into Iranian Balochistan.

When the arms route was changed to Islamabad and his operation was uncovered, Iraqi refused to take any responsibility, as states usually do in such situations. To prevent any information of their involvement in illegal arms smuggling getting out, Iraqi authorities immediately issued orders for Jumma Khan's arrest. With whatever goodwill he had left, Jumma Khan gained the Iraqi government's promise of safe passage for his wife and children to Sharjah; and peacefully submitted himself to be taken to the dungeons.

Just when he was about to give up on his political dreams, Jumma Khan found a ray of hope in the shape of a Syrian Baathist leader imprisoned in the adjacent cell. In a fitting nod to the life full of fortunate coincidences Jumma Khan had lived, he realized that his prison neighbor owed him a debt. The Syrian Baathist informed Jumma Khan that he was in prison due to a misunderstanding that was soon be sorted out. He further assured Jumma Khan that he would have him released as soon as he was able. True to his promise, the Syrian political leader appealed to the Iraqi Baathist for Jumma Khan and within weeks secured his release orders.

The story of the debt the Syrian leader owed Jumma Khan takes us back to his life in Lebanon before coming to Iraq. Upon moving from Cairo to Damascus and discovering the political elites who had invited him were overthrown, as earlier mentioned, Jumma Khan had moved to the mountains in Lebanon on the border of Syria. He was hosted there not by state elites, but by a group of nomadic tribes moving across borders.

In an unusually apolitical part of his life, Jumma Khan had decided to make the rural areas on the border of Lebanon and Syria his home. While he had always lived in urban centers, Jumma Khan insisted that having heard Balochi nomadic epics all his life, he had always romanticized a simple nomadic life. In Lebanon he finally got the opportunity to live this life. He quickly learnt the skills of animal husbandry and contributed by herding goats each day. With his much-improved Arabic skills and

willingness to learn and adapt, he was taken in by the nomads as one of their own. It was here that Jumma Khan had decided to marry and started his own family.

While working as an animal herder for whom borders were meaningless, Jumma Khan became intimately familiar with the local terrain. He knew all the ways in and out of Lebanon and could cross the border without catching the attention of the border security forces. As was common with other nomads, Jumma Khan began smuggling basic goods across border as a way to earn supplemental income. Furthermore, with growing tensions amongst political factions in Syria, Jumma Khan began smuggling political fugitives into Lebanon. With the help of other nomads, to whom he was now related through marriage, his operation began to thrive. He would regularly help political dissidents seeking exile cross borders. His neighbor and savior in the Iraqi prison was one amongst the several dissidents he had helped cross the border.

Jumma Khan claims that he realized very early in his career that not having a state could in a way be his competitive advantage. Not having bureaucratic oversight meant he could take actions with complete personal independence. He could convenience of intricate plans individually, without the weight of a structural polity keeping him in place. One of the first time he was able to mobilize this advantage in practice was during the competition for influence over the Persian Gulf between the British Empire and the United Arab Republic, in the mid-sixties when Jumma Khan was still working for a gold smuggler at a general store in Sharjah.

In June 1964 the Arab League announced plans to tour the Persian Gulf states in hopes of opening a development and aid office in the region<sup>59</sup>. Officially, the Arab League was the Arab alternative to the North Atlantic states controlled international organizations like the United Nations. Unofficially, the British Empire believed it was the United Arab Republic's Trojan horse. The disjuncture between the Arab League's official image and conspiratorial ambitions meant that the British rulers in the Gulf could neither openly reject the League's offer for developmental aid, nor could they accept their proposal out of fears that the Arab League would provide Pan-Arabist a door into the oil-rich Persian Gulf. As a compromise solution, the British ordered the local rulers in the Persian Gulf to ignore the Arab League's proposition. These orders were acceptable to the richer Gulf States that were already producing oil and greatly benefited from British presence. The poorer states such as Sharjah, however, continued to eagerly seek the Arab League's aid.

Jumma Khan recalls there being a complete news blackout on the proposed League tour. The British government, which controlled popular media, wanted to make sure that the general public did not find out about the Arab League's offer. Even if support for the Arab League within the ruling class was limited, Pan-Arab imaginations were popular across swathes of wider society. While the general public might not have

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<sup>59</sup>Von Bismarck, Helene. *British policy in the Persian Gulf, 1961-1968: conceptions of informal empire*. Springer, 2013.

known about the tour, as a well-connected individual Jumma Khan found out about it immediately after the announcement; he set his plans in motion soon after.

By this time Khan had transferred from his job at the store to working at the 'Paramount Sharjah'. The Paramount was the first cinema in the Persian Gulf. It was an open air-theater, built in an abandoned British Royal Air Force lot, with ample of seating. As a quick learner, Jumma Khan quickly developed the skills needed to load the film and operate the projector. As a keen political player, he also was aware of the power of cinema. In a state where the state closely controlled print media, he knew that as the cinema operator he had the opportunity to conduct his own propaganda. After he got news of the potential Arab League tour, Jumma Kham, with the acquiesce of the ruler of Sharjah, started playing at the start of each movie show a clipping from Egyptian news channels about the tour. By doing so, he claims he forced the hand of the British authorities who had no option but to allow for the tour.

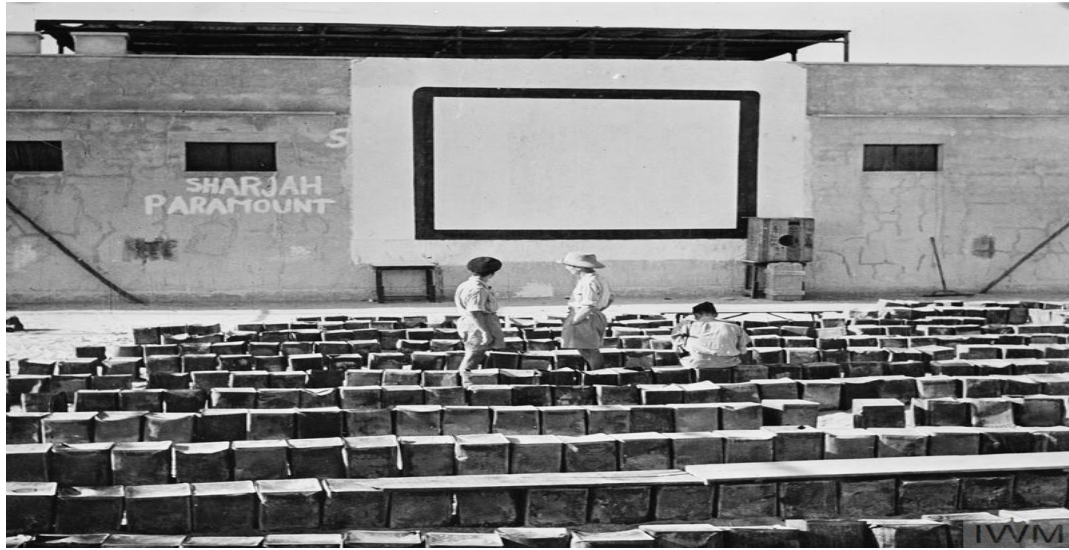


Figure 34: Sharjah Paramount Cinema<sup>60</sup>

By constantly playing clips each day, he built amongst the public in Sharjah great anticipation and excitement about the tour. He argues that it was because of him that everyone in Sharjah knew about the visit. In October 1964 when the General Secretary of the Arab League finally visited the Trucial States, he was welcomed by a very large procession. Even though in other protectorate states the visit took place away from public attention, upon landing in Dubai the Arab League representative was swept up by a large crowd chanting Pan-Arab and anti-imperialist slogans. British intelligence reports claim that most of those who came to welcome the General-Secretary were from Sharjah.

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<sup>60</sup>Source: Imperial War Museum. Royal Air Force official photographer. CM 6015/ Sharjah Paramount' an open-air cinema at an R.A.F. station in the Persian Gulf.<https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/205224709>

Jumma Khan proudly claims that a large portion of them were at the airport because of him. He was the catalyst that made it all possible.

Furthermore, Jumma Khan recalls that he even invested money from his own pocket to decorate the cinema with flags of the Arab League. The flags continued from the cinema to the main city center. He did this in hopes of having the Secretary-General visit the cinema and address the crowd Jumma Khan was confident he could gather together. While the tour to the cinema never happened, the visiting dignitary sent a letter thanking Jumma Khan for his support. According to Khan, the letter was signed by Gamal Abdel Nasser himself. It was this very letter, Jumma Khan claims, which became his eventual passport to Cairo, which in turn opened up Syria and Iraq.

### ***3.5 Jumma Khan as political mediator***

As argued in the second chapter, the shift from a world of empires to territorial states with uniform nations was neither instantaneous, irreversible, nor totalizing. The world in the second half of the twentieth century was thus far from being a neat collection of nation-states sharing seats next to each at international forums. It was instead colored with unequal political bodies aspiring to maintain, expand, and establish their differently imagined sovereign rules. Older empires, for one, persisted until at least the seventies. The British Empire retreated from direct rule on landmasses but continued to exert influence in indirectly controlled island states such as those in the Persian Gulf. Additionally, newer pan-national bodies were established in the fifties. As a reversal of the borders drawn by the Allied forces, the Pan-Arabist movement conceived of a larger



political federation of various Arab states such as the United Arab Republic of Egypt and Syria. Moreover, sub-national communities started their struggle for a state of their own. For example, the hasty process of border-making left subnational states such as the Baloch Khanate of Kalat in a precarious position that led to forced annexation and engendered a struggle for self-determination that continues until today.

The uneven and ever-changing geography of competing political orders provided our mobile Baloch protagonist, Jumma Khan, the ideal platform to develop his political portfolio. As a mobile Baloch, in an Arab majority Persian Gulf that was controlled by the British through Baloch Levy soldiers, Jumma Khan realized he was a lynchpin between the Pan-Arabist and the British Empire. On the one hand, as an influential figure amongst the Baloch, Jumma Khan was an important possible 'jobber' for the British military forces looking to strengthen itself against expanding Arab states. On the other hand, as a political activist in Sharjah, he could become a key local ally for the Pan-Arabist. By leveraging one against the other, Jumma Khan knew he could further his own career as a diplomat. For Jumma Khan, the three main political currents countering the nation-state order — colonialism, pan-nationalism, and separatism — were part of a shared conflict that he could help broker towards a resolution.

In his discussion of the figure of 'broker' or 'middlemen', Eric Wolf writes that these mediatory characters:

[G]uard over the crucial junctures or synapses of relationships which connect the local system to the larger whole... [Brokers] must serve some of the interests of groups operating on both the community and the national level, and they must cope with the conflicts raised by the collision of these interests. They cannot settle them, since by doing so they would abolish their own usefulness to others. They thus often act as buffers between groups, maintaining the tensions which provide the dynamic of their actions.<sup>61</sup>

The idea of brokers as figures perpetuating the tensions within which they come to assume their role, helps explain an encounter Jumma Khan narrated about the time between his receiving the letter from Nasser and his departure from Sharjah. After the British agents in Sharjah came to know about Jumma Khan's role in welcoming the Arab League, they called him in for questioning. Jumma Khan was convinced that they wanted to imprison him. As soon as he entered the British agent's office, he was asked to submit his passport and visa. Given the conditions within which he had sought exile, Jumma Khan could offer neither. He instead took out from his bag, a letter from the Queen of England. This, he remarked, was his passport. He told the officer to take this letter back to London and tell the Queen that Jumma Khan had returned her gift. As soon as the officer started reading the letter, Jumma Khan recalled, his attitude completely changed. Rather trying to arrest Jumma Khan, the officer tried to become friends with him.

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<sup>61</sup> Wolf, Eric R. "Aspects of group relations in a complex society: Mexico." *American Anthropologist* 58, no. 6 (1956): 1065-1078.

The letter itself dated back to a time when Jumma Khan had sided with the British Empire against a Pan-Arabist state. On 25th June 1961, Iraq's nationalist military leader Abd al-Karim Qasim announced his plans to conquer Kuwait<sup>62</sup>. Kuwait at that time, along with the other Persian Gulf city states, was under the protection of the British government. With a British army still recovering from its losses during the world war and planning on transitioning into a nation-state, the situation put the British in an uncomfortable situation. In the ongoing conflict between the English and Iraqi authorities, Jumma Khan saw an opportunity to scale up his protection business. He wrote a letter to the Queen of England stating that since the British Empire was signatory to a mutual protection treaty with Balochistan<sup>63</sup>, the Baloch people were ready and willing to protect the British empire against foreign threats.

Jumma Khan did not have an actual army to back his offer. Having lived his entire life prior to Sharjah in Karachi, his connections to Balochistan were limited. He certainly did not have the military power needed to fight against a sizeable Iraqi army. To his own admittance, he never actually intended to lead an army of Baloch men carrying the Union Jack. The goal instead was only to establish ties with the British

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<sup>62</sup>Schofield, Richard N. *Kuwait and Iraq: historical claims and territorial disputes*. Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1993.

<sup>63</sup>The British had absorbed the Khanet of Kalat into its indirect empire through a mutual protection treaty in 1875. The treaty though had been made defunct with Pakistan's conquest of the Khan's territory. Naseemullah, Adnan, and Paul Staniland. "Indirect rule and varieties of governance." *Governance* 29, no. 1 (2016): 13-30.

government. Fortunately, Queen Elizabeth wrote back thanking Jumma Khan for his support and acknowledging the Baloch loyalty; but kindly refusing military support.

The rejection letter from the Queen became Jumma Khan's ladder into the higher echelons of international politics. All Jumma Khan had to do was frame and hang the letter in his workplace. For all those who came in his store— locals, travelers, smugglers, and even foreign government agents— the letter was sign of Jumma Khan's close ties with Elizabeth II. At times, Jumma Khan would even boast about how his close friend— the Queen— had in exchange for his support agreed to back the cause of Baloch separatists. The letter made Jumma Khan's political actions beyond reproach. It made the Pakistani, Iranian and even Gulf States believe that any attack on him was a direct challenge to the Queen of England.

Moreover, the letter made Jumma Khan a recognized figure amongst the Baloch political elite. It was his fame as the bearer of the letter from the Queen that brought to his embassy in Iraq Nawab Akbar Bugti Khan, the notable Baloch political leader who disclosed the information about arms being stored in the Iraqi embassy. Jumma Khan recalls that after he had already established routes for exporting arms through the Makran coast, Akbar Bugti decided to pay him a covert visit while enroute to England in 1972. Jumma Khan claimed that though he had been suspicious of Bugti's intentions— given his ties with the Pakistani government— he knew tribal connections within Balochistan could prove to be an invaluable resource. Having visited Balochistan only

once, that very year, Jumma Khan believed that he needed the support of local Baloch elites in circulating arms.

Akbar Bugti though had an alternate proposal in mind. He offered Jumma Khan the possibility of sending arms through more formal channels. Bugti informed Jumma Khan that the Pakistani government, while resistant to giving land from its half for the independent state of Balochistan, was willing to partner with Iraq to carve a part out of Iran. The Pakistani state, thus argued Bugti, is willing to let containers sealed by the Iraqi Embassy to enter Pakistan without customs inspection. Once the containers reach the embassy in Islamabad, Baloch networks in Afghanistan could carry them across the Afghan frontier. There they would have the support of the pro-Soviet regime to help further smuggle the arms southwards into Iran. In re-routing arms through Islamabad and Afghanistan, Bugti argued, the Pakistani state too would add a degree of separation from the illegal arms in Iran.

Reluctantly, Jumma Khan agreed to this plan. He loaded a containership with arms and sent them to Karachi with the seal of the Iraqi embassy. From Karachi, he helped truck the arms to Islamabad. As soon as they reached — Akbar Bugti informed the Pakistani authorities of their presence. Such was the nature of informal brokerage. One's political significance could end just as quickly as it had started. In an ironic turn of events, the letter from the Queen that started Jumma Khan's career also spelt its end. The Iraqi state, searching for a reason to arrest Jumma Khan saw in it enough evidence to try him for treason, for siding with the British government against Iraq. While Jumma

Khan was able to come out of the prison alive (due to a fortunate cellmate) his diplomatic career was never the same. The notoriety he gained as a result of the arms dealing coming to public light meant that he could no longer serve as diplomat, proxy or broker. No state, after that incident, was willing to directly associate itself with Jumma Khan.

Jumma Khan continued to live in Iraq after his release. He somehow managed to even get back his time slot on the Iraqi Radio. For about two decades more, Jumma Khan continued to transmit AM news about atrocities in Iranian-occupied Balochistan from his post on the border. He left only in 2002, after receiving news about an impending crisis in Iraq. Jumma Khan claims that one night his spiritual saint Tahir Allauddin Al-Qadri Al-Gillani— a follower of the Qadriya Sufi order who had himself migrated from Iraq to Balochistan around the time Jumma Khan left Karachi—visited him in his dream and asked him to leave Iraq. Soon after Jumma Khan left Iraq on the calling of his pir, Iraq was attacked by US forces. By the time the American forces entered Baghdad, Jumma Khan had already retired in Sharjah— the city where his diplomatic career started. Bringing things to a full circle, much to the annoyance of his children, Jumma Khan continues to help Baloch migrants in the area in any way he can.

### **3.6 Conclusion**

How much of Jumma Khan's stories are exaggerations and imaginations of his own mind— I cannot say for sure. Even if these stories are but Jumma Khan's imaginations, they are good to think with. They allow us to 'deconstruct the shadows'

that shape the international political order. They offer critical conceptual insight into contingent and informal nature of transnational political order. Moreover, they create space for imagining how, within the unstructured space of international politics, non-state mobile characters can carve out space for themselves as diplomats, familiar allies, and proxies. Jumma Khan's stories highlight that even at the core of high-international politics lie contingent social relationships.

To understand these relationships, as the chapter highlights, one needs to look beyond state and international structures, and towards historical imaginations and social networks of specific actors. If I may be allowed to reword Tilly, Jumma Khan's stories may seem unbelievable but do seem more plausible than the alternative— the idea of an underlying mutual international contract, the idea of a transparent order in which states manage foreign relations only through formal treaties, the idea of societies all over the world with shared aims and expectations calling forth a certain international governance model in which states alone get to play.

On my last meeting with Jumma Khan I asked him what passport he actually held now. Knowing Jumma Khan, it was not surprising that the only passport he had was from the now defunct Imamate of Oman.



Figure 35: Immamate of Oman State passport



## **4. Getting the Job Done: Flexible Mercenary Recruitment Networks**

### ***4.1 Introduction***

Military dictators and authoritarian rulers of Middle-Eastern and South Asian states with large societies have a limited shelf life. Strongmen rule for about a couple of decades, before eventually being overthrown by either internal uprisings or external pressures. For example, during the Arab Springs movements in 2011, popular protests dislodged decades old regimes in Egypt, Tunisia, and Libya.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, a decade earlier public demonstrations and a popular lawyer's movement in Pakistan had overthrown the incumbent military dictator.

In the city-states of the Persian Gulf, however, sovereigns and strong ruling families have been in power over their small societies for over a century. Unlike their larger neighbors in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf regimes have not faced cyclical regime changes. Even during the Arab Spring moment, despite sustained protests, Persian Gulf regimes-maintained rule without changing either the faces or structures within the states. The resilient dynasties of the Persian-Gulf have since attracted the attention of political scientists intrigued by the coup-proofing strategies of these small states.

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<sup>1</sup> For detailed analysis on Arab Springs and regime change, see: Brownlee, Jason, Tarek E. Masoud, and Andrew Reynolds. 2015. *The Arab Spring pathways of repression and reform. The Arab Spring*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

One recurring explanation suggests that their tribally organized and oil enriched rentier mechanism ensures the Gulf regimes' stability.<sup>2</sup> The rulers of city-states like Qatar, Kuwait or Abu Dhabi have minimized popular dissent by offering their relatively few citizens a share in the oil riches.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, the state remains an integral source of economic opportunities: be it through quotas in private and public organizations,<sup>4</sup> regulations that force foreign investors to include a local citizen as a majority partner, visa regimes that allow citizens to sell 'iqamas' to migrant-labor interested in jobs in the country<sup>5</sup>, or land-allotments.<sup>6</sup> With some of the highest median incomes anywhere in

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<sup>2</sup> The idea of rentier state mechanism first proposed by Hussein Mahdavy (see: Hussein Mahdavy, "Patterns and Problems of Economic Development in Rentier States: The Case of Iran," in *Studies in Economic History of the Middle East*, ed. M. A. Cook (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 428-467.) and has since been developed further by a range of political scientists (for example see: Hazem Beblawi, "The Rentier State in the Arab World," in *The Rentier State: Nation, State and the Integration of the Arab World*, ed. Hazem Beblawi and Giacomo Luciani (London: Croom Helm, 1987)). The basic claim of rentier state theorists is that states that do not financially depend on tax revenues, by having alternate income through natural resources or foreign funding, do not develop a representative democratic system for including the society in state-making. Within such state "the population in effect is "bought off," with democratic input sacrificed by society in exchange for a share of the rental wealth accruing to the state from abroad. Those who do not accept this "rentier bargain" are subdued by the strong repressive apparatus affordable to the rentier state." (Gray, Matthew. 2011. A theory of "late rentierism" in the Arab states of the Gulf. [Doha, Qatar]: Center for International and Regional Studies, Georgetown University, School of Foreign Service in Qatar. For Rentier State theory at work in Bahrain, see: Abdulla, Khalid M. "The state in oil rentier economies: The case of Bahrain." In *Change and Development in the Gulf*, pp. 51-78. Palgrave Macmillan, London, 1999.

<sup>3</sup> Beblawi calls this system a form of neopatrimonialism, under which a small group of elites manages oil wealth and maintains social order by carefully distributing income within its patronage networks. See: "The Rentier State in the Arab World" *ibid*.

<sup>4</sup> See: Barnett, Andy H., Michael Malcolm, and Hugo Toledo. "Shooting the goose that lays the golden egg: the case of UAE employment policy." *Journal of Economic Studies* 42, no. 2 (2015): 285-302.

<sup>5</sup> See: Gardner, Andrew M. "Engulfed: Indian guest workers, Bahraini citizens and the structural violence of the kafala system." (2010).

<sup>6</sup> See: Herb, Michael. "A nation of bureaucrats: Political participation and economic

the world,<sup>7</sup> this explanation argues that the citizens of these city-states see their own social advancement as being inextricably connected to the longevity of the regime.

However, the oil wells in the relatively poorer Persian Gulf state of Bahrain have been all but depleted.<sup>8</sup> Bahrain's main source of income — refining oil provided at subsidized rates by Saudi Arabia —<sup>9</sup> does not reach much beyond the limited Sunni tribal allegiances of the ruling Al-Khalifa dynasty. The tribally organized rentier mechanism in Bahrain is able to only include a minority population within its fold. The majority citizen population in Bahrain receives very little benefits from the state. With one of the highest unemployment rates and lowest median incomes in the region, Bahrain stands as an exception to the already exceptional Persian Gulf city-states. Yet, just like its neighbors, the Bahraini regime emerged out of the Arab Spring unscathed.

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diversification in Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 41, no. 3 (2009): 375-395.

<sup>7</sup> On the list of countries with highest per capita income for citizens Bahrain is ranked 16th, Qatar is 1st, and Kuwait 6th. See: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/bethgreenfield/2012/02/22/the-worlds-richest-countries/#25c769a54627>

<sup>8</sup> Bahrain was one the earliest site of oil discovery and extraction in the Persian Gulf (discovered in 1929 and extraction began in 1932). Oil extraction reached its peak in 1977 and Bahrain's most important oil field, Abu Safah, was dry by 1987. Limited quantity of oil continued to be extracted until 2005. Since then though there have been few new oil discoveries, the income from it is negligible. For more information see: Peterson, John E. "Life after oil: economic alternatives for the Arab Gulf States." *Mediterranean Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (2009): 1-18.

<sup>9</sup> Under the terms of the Abu Safa Field Co-operation Treaty, signed in 1958, Bahrain receives a 50% share (150,000 bpd) of the oil produced from neighbouring Saudi Arabia's offshore Abu Safa oilfield. Bahrain imports and refines a further 230,000 bpd from Saudi Arabia's state-owned oil company, Saudi Aramco, via its major oil pipeline, AB-1. Petroleum refineries currently constitute 60% Bahrain's income.

As an alternative to the internalist explanation for Persian Gulf regime stability, historians and political scientists have often turned to the regimes' external protectors at the top level— namely the British and later American empires.<sup>10</sup> As James Onley points out, the British (and later the Americans) promised to protect regimes in the Persian Gulf in exchange for their own continued presence in the region. The presence of North Atlantic empires in the Persian Gulf, according to Onley, is contingent on the continued salience of protectorate agreements signed in the latter half of the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> Under these agreements, the British agreed to protect the signatory regimes in the Persian Gulf as long as they protect British presence within their territory.

Thus, regimes in the small city-states of the Persian Gulf, like Bahrain, guaranteed their own stability by providing British and later American forces with a safe, stable base for monitoring and influencing political instability in the broader Middle East and South Asia. In 1935 the British Empire established the Jufair Naval Base in Bahrain. By the 1950's the British were in negotiations with the American empire about the possibility of handing the base to the new emerging global power. As soon as the British naval ships left Bahraini shores in 1971, in its place came the American Fifth Fleet— their largest naval asset in the Indian Ocean.<sup>12</sup> Americans have since used their

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<sup>10</sup> For example see: 'Von Bismarck, Helene. British policy in the Persian Gulf, 1961-1968: conceptions of informal empire. Springer, 2013', 'Sato, Shohei. Britain and the Formation of the Gulf States: Embers of Empire. Oxford University Press, 2017.',

<sup>11</sup> Onley, James. "Britain's Informal Empire in the Gulf." *Journal of Social Affairs* 22, no. 87 (2005).

<sup>12</sup> For a detailed discussion on the transfer from Britain to America, see: Fain, W. American ascendance and British retreat in the Persian Gulf region. Springer, 2008.

base in the Persian Gulf to expand and retract from neighboring states.<sup>13</sup> For example, during the Iran-Iraq wars the Gulf provided bases for 'surgical strikes'. Similarly, the Persian Gulf states provide American soldiers, security experts, intelligence agents, and diplomats a safe base to orchestrate the ongoing 'war-on-terror'.<sup>14</sup> One could even argue that America allows for dictators it once backed, like Saddam Hussein, to periodically fall because it can wait out the temporary instability from within the unchanging states of the Persian Gulf. Governments in other places can collapse, as long as the Gulf regimes do not.

What makes Persian Gulf states like Bahrain an ideal site for twentieth century empires is the fact that here they can maintain their imperial presence without the allegation of being a colonial power. Both the British and American bases in Bahrain were established not through direct force and conquest, but through the willing invitation of the local elites. For example, the Bahraini ruling elite have actually been more eager to maintain foreign military presence than the British and Americans themselves. Historical records indicate that just as the British departure from Bahrain became imminent, the Al-Khalifas began actively pursuing the Americans to take up the

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<sup>13</sup> O'reilly, Marc J. *Unexceptional: America's empire in the Persian Gulf, 1941-2007*. Lexington Books, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> See: Gresh, Geoffrey F. *Gulf Security and the US Military: Regime Survival and the Politics of Basing*. Stanford University Press, 2015.

naval base after the British Empire withdraw.<sup>15</sup> Unlike other post-colonial states, Bahrain does not even celebrate its day of independence.<sup>16</sup>

However, in order for these North Atlantic empires to maintain their image of being willing partners and not an external colonizing forces, overt interference in internal affairs has to be kept to a minimum. The more the empires get their hands dirty in trying to support regimes against internal opposition, the more they appear as a colonial force.<sup>17</sup> This in turn reduces the attractiveness of the region as an imperial homebase in the Indian Ocean. Hence, in order to maintain the continued presence of their top-level protectors, regimes in the Persian Gulf have to find ways of procuring low-level protectors that do not explicitly implicate the foreign empires.

For example, voices within the American empire began to question the value of maintaining their naval base in the politically fractured Bahraini state upon the outbreak of the Bahraini Arab Springs protests in 2011.<sup>18</sup> The tribal Sunni Al-Khalifa Bahraini regime had to quickly find ways of making their external protectors more secure. In

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<sup>15</sup> Smith, Simon C. "Power Transferred? Britain, the United States, and the Gulf, 1956–71." *Contemporary British History* 21, no. 1 (2007): 1-23.

<sup>16</sup> Bahrain shares its independence day with India— 15th August. However, unlike India Bahrain does not celebrate the departure of the British. It instead marks it national day on 16th December to coincide with accession of Isa bin Salman Al Khalifa.

<sup>17</sup> A similar dynamics can be seen in the relationship British empire had with its princely states. Just like in Bahrain, the British empire limited its political liability in the indirectly controlled areas by operating through proxies such as local kings and princes.

<sup>18</sup> Immediately after the outbreak of Arab Springs, a series of articles were published in the American press calling for a withdrawal of its Fifth Fleet. For example, see: Jones, Toby Time to Disband the Bahrain-Based U.S. Fifth Fleet. *The Atlantic*. June 10th 2011. Also, see: Cooley, Alexander and Nexon, Daniel H Bahrain's Base Politics: The Arab Spring and America's Military Bases. *Foreign Affairs*. April 5th 2011.

order to protect foreign expats, multinational corporate employees, oil men, and American military officers deployed on the naval base or transiting from other conflict-ridden states, the Bahraini state sought to increase its internal military capacity.

Bahrain's desire to increase its coercive authority though was limited by a very obvious and immediate resource— manpower. With the majority of its population on the streets, there was a lack of trustworthy and capable soldiers willing to defend Bahrain's external protectors from internal threats. In order to overcome this shortage, the Bahraini military advertised job openings in Pakistani newspapers for trained retired army and police officers. Reports suggest that the Bahraini military recruited around two thousand soldiers from Pakistan in 2011 alone.<sup>19</sup>

Similarly, a decade earlier, when America was again reassessing its relationship with the newly crowned Bahraini King Hamad, they were assured safe presence by way of a new paramilitary force. At that time, however, the tribal Sunni Bahraini regime recruited the required soldiers from other Sunni Arabic-speaking populations in nearby countries like Iraq, Yemen, Sudan, and Egypt. Like the Pakistani soldiers in 2011, the Arab mercenaries a decade earlier helped quell calls for reforms within the Bahraini state structures and put to rest any doubts America might have had about their continued safe presence in the country.

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<sup>19</sup> Mashal, Mujib. Pakistani troops aid Bahrain's crackdown. Al Jazeera Online. July 30th 2011.

In a strange way, states that are themselves prone to periodic collapse provide Bahrain the soldiers it needs to continuously retain control. It seems that foreign mercenaries recruited through state-to-state transfers secure Bahraini regimes from internal turmoil. They have allowed the Al-Khalifa family, the recognized sovereigns of Bahrain since the late 19th century, to constantly maintain control over the state machinery. Coincidentally, they have also allowed North Atlantic empires to retain their presence on the Indian Ocean.

Yet if the soldier exporting states themselves have been periodically changing hands, how have they been able to continuously provide mercenaries? If shifting geopolitics and internal movements have induced changes in exporting states, how have these currents not made their way into Bahrain? How have agreements signed with a particular ruler continued even after a regime collapses? If Bahrain is dependent on these other countries for soldiers, how do they remain independent of the changes within these other states?

In the twentieth century world of nation-states, military agreements and defense policies have been the sole domain of political sciences, international relations experts and historians interested in top-level Politics with a capital P. That is to say, military scholars have only been interested in official agreements between states and the clandestine geo-political power politics played at the highest state levels. The composition and practices of national armies and security forces in such analysis are



solely the product of negotiations and conflicts at the zoomed-out scale of national and international politics. The coercive arm of the state is thus imagined to be immune from everyday social relations and interactions between low-level social actors within or outside national boundaries.

Meanwhile, anthropologists interested in everyday politics, with a small 'p', have closed themselves off from serious analytical inquiry into the cultures and practices of coercive politics. Within the field of the anthropology of the state, a distinction is often drawn between coercive and political apparatuses.<sup>20</sup> The political apparatus— for example the bureaucracy, representative parliaments, and elected councils— operate through soft power of inclusion and negotiation. The coercive apparatus— the military and police— functions through exclusion and brute force.<sup>21</sup> The bifurcation between the two modes of state power leads us to assume that politics stops when coercion comes in.

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<sup>20</sup> Antonio Gramsci, setting himself in opposition to the Marxist discourse that saw state as a coercive instrument controlled by a certain economic class by arguing that the state was instead headed by a 'historical bloc' composed of actors from range of classes and social group that come to cohere through long protracted negotiations. Furthermore, the historical bloc gained legitimacy of rule not just through coercion but through the consent of those being ruled. This consent is gained through battles over the minds of those being ruled, or through establishing hegemony. (Gramsci, Antonio *The Antonio Gramsci Reader*. Edited by Forgacs, D (2000). (2nd, w ed.). Lawrence and Wishart: London. P. 193). Following from this Gramscian understanding, much of the anthropological literature on the state frames the coercive state as one specific aspect of the state, that is set apart from its more persuasive structures and processes. See: 'Clastres, Pierre. 1987. *Society against the state: essays in political anthropology*. New York: Zone Books', 'Sharma, Aradhana, and Akhil Gupta, eds. *The anthropology of the state: a reader*. Blackwell Pub., 2006.', and 'Abrams, Philip. *Notes on the Difficulty of Studying the State* (1977); *Journal of historical sociology* 1.1 (2006): 58-89'.

<sup>21</sup> Building on Gramsci, Althusser argued for seeing 'legitimacy' and 'means of violence' as two separate yet interrelated instruments of the state. He divided the state into the Repressive and

Anthropologists armed with methodologies of bottom-up social processes have provided us various ways of studying the weapons of the weak. Through grounded ethnographies, Anthropology has produced multiple conceptualizations of how social actors resist state power. However, I would argue, anthropologists have not paid enough attention to the processes through which the powerful get their guns. In much of anthropological literature the weak can be seen as drawing on myriad of strategies and relations to accumulate their weapons of resistance, while the powerful are assumed to always have the necessary means of coercion. In focusing solely on bottom-up resistance to the state, the discipline has rendered coercion as a natural and unlimited state resource.

Endless and cyclical debates on the nature of military reforms in Bahrain, however, indicate that political negotiations continued even within states attempts at configuring coercive power. Moreover, these deal-makings have not been limited to the highest echelon of a formal state apparatus. While Bahrain has periodically recruited soldiers through official agreements with states themselves prone to regimes changes, they have maintained internal stability by recruiting an alternate set of soldiers— the

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Ideological State Apparatus. While the Repressive State Apparatus (RSA) was composed of the bureaucratic, military and policing structures of the state that could be controlled by a single group, their control forever remained challenged by their need to also depend on the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA). Althusser, Louis; "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation)" (1970). In *Cultural Theory: An Anthology* (2010)

Baloch—- through informal agreements and bottom-up social relations built over centuries.

Ever since the first Bahraini bureaucratic military force was formed in 1923, Baloch have remained a constant majority in Bahrain's security apparatus.<sup>22</sup> By some estimates, even today Baloch men constitute around 40% of Bahrain's military employees.<sup>23</sup> Even in the long decade between the two recruitment spurts described above— of first Sunni Arab and later Pakistani mercenaries— the Bahraini regime was quietly secured by the Baloch. In fact, throughout the twentieth century it were the Baloch who have been the stable constant within the Bahraini state's security infrastructure.

What makes the constant presence of Baloch analytically interesting is the fact that there are no explicit official agreements for the recruitment of Baloch. In fact, the Baloch were never the ideal soldiers from the perspective of the Bahraini state. Throughout the twentieth century, just like in the 2000's and later 2011, Bahrain eagerly searched for either foreign Arab soldiers, who on account of speaking the same language, could theoretically adjust more easily into local society, or for better trained retired or seconded officers from South Asian armies. In comparison, Baloch recruits

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<sup>22</sup> See Chapter 3

<sup>23</sup> Peterson, J. E. "The Baluch Presence in the Persian Gulf." *Sectarian Politics in the Persian Gulf*. London: Hurst (2013).

could neither seamlessly blend into local society as most Baloch never bothered to learn Arabic, nor did they come with prior military experience or training in military craft.

The constant presence of Baloch, I argue, had less to do with any explicit preference for Baloch, and more to do with the fact that Baloch make themselves readily available. Regime changes in formally mercenary-exporting states and shifts in geopolitical conditions have at different points in time restricted the availability of officially deployed mercenaries. Operating at scales below that high-level national and international politics, Baloch in contrast have provided a stable supply of recruits regardless of the geopolitical climate. Through their diverse social networks, expanded upon in earlier chapters, Baloch had numerous routes available for reaching Bahrain. If one route closed due to external pressures from a changing geopolitical world, Baloch people could reorient themselves and find other alternate capillaries flowing through alternate political geographies. For example, if the Pakistan-Bahrain pipeline is constricted due to conflicts between the two states, Baloch people can still find their way to Bahrain by indirectly rerouting themselves via other Persian Gulf states.

This chapter explores how contingent practices and aspirations of Baloch conquerors who do not rule in their own name have produced regime stability in Bahrain. It places Baloch invested in getting a job in Bahrain at the center of various reform movements in Bahrain. By always finding a way into Bahrain, Baloch provide the ruling elite in Bahrain the necessary stable constant through which they can produce

continuity in rule even amidst reformatory moments. Transnational social relations of the Baloch obscure to security exports operating with the idea of states as preformed aggregates, I argue, provide one important base from which global empires structure their rule over the Indian Ocean.

Instead of reading the stability of Bahraini regime in the twentieth century through its top-level protectors (the British and American empire), this chapter understands it from the perspective of the bottom level soldiers on the ground. In particular it follows the multiple routes and practices used by the Baloch to get jobs in Bahrain in order to explain regime stability in Bahrain, and conversely the continued presence of global powers in the Persian Gulf.

This chapter thus tries to understand how a state constructs its internal sovereign authority through malleable networks of social groupings that are in excess of its own geographical boundaries. It shifts the focus away from International Politics with a capital P and instead studies the small p politics of a social network that is seldom considered a significant geopolitical player. It thus offers a model for understanding national and transnational structures of coercion through the everyday politics of a social network and its historically accumulated practices.

## ***4.2 Cyclical reforms in modern bureaucratic Bahrain***

Protests and rebellions have become expected features of Bahraini polity, as if they were seasonally ongoing processes. Fuad Khuri<sup>24</sup>

Unlike other Persian Gulf city states with small citizen populations integrated into the state's rentier networks, throughout the twentieth century Bahrain has periodically faced substantial internal opposition demanding reforms within the state. The historian Fuad Khuri argues that these seasonal protests are a result of the peculiar historical relationship Bahraini society has had with the modern bureaucratic state. Prior to the development of the modern state in Bahrain, the island was inhabited by a range of different groups governed under their own social structure. He specifically divides Bahraini society into four groups: tribal Sunni, urban Sunni, urban Shi'a, and rural Shi'a. Each of these groups, according to Khuri, maintained social and economic ties with one another. They did not see themselves as part of a single sovereign umbrella. Each of the groups lived in different parts of the island, they organized themselves in varied ways, and depended on different economic resources.

The tribal Sunnis controlled date farms and customs taxes from the ports, the urban Sunni managed bureaucratic trade affairs, the urban Shi'as conducted small trade with other nearby regions and the rural Shi'a population was involved

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<sup>24</sup> Khuri, Fu'ad Ishaq. 1980. *Tribe and state in Bahrain: the transformation of social and political authority in an Arab state*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. (p.194-195)

in self-sustaining cultivation and pearl farming. Moreover, they had different structures of authority: the tribal Sunni population organized through a horizontal genealogical kinship structure and a hierarchical tribal authority. The urban populations, both Shi'a and Sunni, instead were more cosmopolitan in nature and were organized through civic, neighborhood and commercial organizations. The rural Shi'a population was congealed through village communities with sectarian affiliations solidified in religious spaces like the 'Hussaniya houses' governed through Shia jurists.

It was not until the first set of colonial reforms in 1923 that these different groups came to see themselves as part of a single sovereign state that claimed authority over the entirety of the Island. Even though the British had been present in Bahrain since the latter half of the 19th century, their involvement was limited to signing treaties with the tribal Sunnis, who were identified by the British as the legitimate sovereigns. While the 'protection treaties' with the British tilted the intricate power balance amongst the different groups in favor of the tribal Sunnis, their authority remained limited.<sup>25</sup> For example, the rural Shi'a population continued to look towards Shi'a jurists, rather than Sunni tribal elites, as sources of authority.

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<sup>25</sup> For a detailed analysis of the protectorate agreements see: Onley, James. *The Arabian frontier of the British raj: merchants, rulers, and the British in the nineteenth-century gulf*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 2007.

Concerned with the ineffectiveness of the Bahraini state in the hands of the tribal Sunnis, the British instituted a series of state 'reforms' in 1923 in order to arm the local sovereigns with a state machinery. The reforms established a municipal council as Bahrain's first representative body and a judicial system for arbitration of local disputes. Even the levy force discussed in the previous chapter was a result of these original reforms that established a bureaucratic state structure in Bahrain and brought the various social groups under a single sovereign state.

As the recognized local sovereign, the tribal Sunni elite, primarily interested in increasing their own power, participated in reform processes through official state communiques with the colonial authorities. Other groups, left out of the state, participated in the reforms through other avenues. The urban population participated in the municipal council elections, and the rural Shi'a population took to the streets to demand their inclusion in the reforms overseen by the British Empire.

As the original sin upon which the Bahraini state is structured, reforms remain the dominant frame of political engagement in Bahrain for the various social groups present in Bahrain. Rather than exclusion from the tribal Sunni controlled state structure, the left-out groups have constantly used the language of reforms to demand greater inclusion in the state. At times through participation in electoral politics, and at other moments through more confrontational politics of the street,



the groups left out of the state have periodically pushed their agenda for reforms within the state structure.<sup>26</sup>

The ruling tribal Sunni elite have responded to the demand for political reforms by forwarding alternate sets of coercive reforms.<sup>27</sup> Each time the discontented majority has taken to the streets, the ruling elite has countered the movement by increasing their own coercive ability.<sup>28</sup> Unwilling to share in the power and riches of the state, the ruling elite target reformists head on, by either increasing the numerical strength of their existing military forces or by building a new force from scratch.

After the first set of reforms in 1923 Bahrain established the Tribal Levy Force to serve in addition to the naturs and municipal guard force. Following a series of attacks on British agents and subjects, the Levy Force was disbanded and replaced by formal police force in 1932, which was supplemented with a Special Security Force in 1939.<sup>29</sup> By

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<sup>26</sup> There is sizeable literature present on the issue of 'Reform' in Bahrain. In fact, reform remains the primary analytical framework for tracing the history of Bahrain. For example see: Peterson, John E. "Bahrain: Reform—Promise and Reality." *Political Liberalization in the Persian Gulf* (2009): 157-185., Khalaf, Abdulhadi. "A King's Dilemma—Obstacles to Political Reforms In Bahrain." In *Fourth Mediterranean Social and Political Research Meeting*. Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, 2003., Common, Richard. "Administrative change in the Gulf: Modernization in Bahrain and Oman." *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 74, no. 2 (2008): 177-193., and Zahlan, Rosemarie Said. *The Making of the Modern Gulf States: Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and Oman*. Vol. 10. Routledge, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Wright, Steven. "Generational change and elite-driven reforms in the kingdom of Bahrain." (2006)

<sup>28</sup> Marshall, Shana. "Military Prestige, Defense-Industrial Production, and the Rise of Gulf Military Activism." *Armies and Insurgencies in the Arab Spring* (2016): 241.

<sup>29</sup> 'File 28/1 G Bahrain Special Police', British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/657,

1940's, as labor protests within the British controlled oil fields grew in strength,<sup>30</sup> a new BAPCO Guard Force was introduced.<sup>31</sup> Later in the 1950's, the strength of the existing Police Force was substantially increased both in terms of number of soldiers and available weapons. In 1956, for the first time, the Bahraini police force had on hand proper riot gear and tear gas for dispersing crowds. With British departure on the horizon in 1967, a military force trained in the use of heavy weaponry was introduced under the label Bahrain Defense Force.<sup>32</sup> After independence in 1971, the 'Security and Intelligence Service' and a Special Riot Force was introduced to control the demand for democratic reforms. A few decades later in 1997 Bahrain recruited a new paramilitary force called the National Guards. The National Guards were later supplemented in 2005 with a new force under an entirely separate bureaucratic structure called the Special Security Force Command.<sup>33</sup> Thus, each time there are protests in Bahrain, the state introduces a new military force.

#### ***4.3 Will Rafiq's son get a job in the Bahraini police?***

In order to understand what this process of periodic reforms resulting in increased military capacity in Bahrain looked like from the perspective of the bottom tier

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<sup>30</sup> Khalaf, Abdulhadi. "Labor Movements in Bahrain." Middle East Report 132 (1985): 24-9.

<sup>31</sup> 'File 28/1 L I BAPCO refinery guards', British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/664,

<sup>32</sup> Barany, Zoltan D. The Bahrain Defence Force: The Monarchy's Second-to-last Line of Defense. Center for Strategic & International Studies, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> See: Ohl, Dorothy. "Bahrain's "Cohesive" Military and Regime Stability amid Unrest." *Armies and Insurgencies in the Arab Spring* (2016): 145.

soldiers, I conducted ethnographic research amongst Baloch who had observed these changes first hand. My investigation took me to a Qiyamahsari—<sup>34</sup>a small Baloch enclave tucked in the center of Karachi— in which almost every family had ties with either retired or serving Bahraini soldiers. During research I developed a close relationship with one particular individual— Rafiq.

One evening while sitting outside Rafiq's house with him and his son, Rafiq brought up a particularly thorny issue. Rafiq insisted I talk to his son about the value of education. Having failed eighth grade for the second time, his son was on the verge of being expelled from school. Knowing that I was enrolled in a university, he pressured me into lecturing his son on the necessity of formal education for future job prospects.

According to Rafiq, the environment in his neighborhood, Qiyamahsari, was not conducive for formal education. I had seen Rafiq shouting at the neighborhood kids that loitered around, "Stop wasting time that could be used for studying!" He would follow the children, lecturing them on the value of education and retelling some version of "time spent hanging out was time not spent studying in."

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<sup>34</sup> Qiyahmasari literally means 'on the way to Qiyamah (Judgment Day). This ethnic Baloch majority neighborhood, located in the center of Karachi, was one of the earliest Baloch settlements in Karachi. Its name is a result of the area at one point in time being very far away from the much larger Baloch settlement area of Lyari. The neighborhood is now better known as Patel Para. The majority of the population in the neighborhood is dependent on income from the Persian Gulf.

Eventually, the neighborhood kids scattered at the sight of Rafiq before they could be harangued about how they should be studying instead.

When it came to his son, however, Rafiq's constant badgering had no impact. Since Rafiq himself had never completed high school, his words lacked weight (a fact his son was not shy to bring up). Rafiq said, in his defense, that things were different then. Only a handful of his classmates eventually completed high school. The rest dropped out, yet were still able to do well professionally. Back then education was useful, but not necessary. Unsurprisingly, his son remained unconvinced. And so Rafiq pushed me to talk to his son.

I felt awkward uttering a few clichéd lines about the importance of formal education and tried to change the topic. But Rafiq was committed. He complained that I wasn't taking this conversation as seriously as he needed this to be. His son was, he told me, very well at school until a few years back. He used to rank in the top of his class, spending hours studying by himself without pressure from anyone. Had his son had no aptitude for it, he would not be this steadfast on instilling the virtues of doing well at school. Not being familiar with the intricacies of what clearly seemed like a complicated relationship between father and son, I stayed quiet. During the lull in the conversation, Rafiq's son found his cue and quietly exited the room.

Rafiq, however, continued. He pointed out the root of his son's problem—he lost interest in school after spending time with Shafiq, Rafiq's brother-in-law. He

had visited them from Bahrain in the summer of 2013. During this visit, the brother-in-law promised his nephew (Rafiq's son) a job in the Bahraini police. Shafiq had been in the Bahraini police for over two decades and claimed to establish dozens of others residents of Qiyamahsari through jobs in the Bahraini police. The summer he visited, he got his own son in Karachi a job in the Bahraini police and promised to do the same for his sister and Rafiq's son.

This did not sit well with Rafiq, who believed that his brother-in-law did not fully recognize the extent of the shifts that had taken place in the last few years. In the past such promises were considered a guarantee. Rafiq himself had dropped out of high school, because of a similar promise made by this very brother-in-law fifteen years ago. Rafiq left school and went to Bahrain on a visit visa with a guaranteed job in the Bahraini police waiting for him. The brother-in-law picked Rafiq from the airport and took him to his house. He spent the following week exploring Bahrain and reconnected with several of his friends from the old neighborhood, who too had left school to come to Bahrain. At the end of the week, Shafiq took Rafiq to his supervisor, a Punjabi superintendent in the Bahraini police. The supervisor exchange pleasantries with Rafiq and told him that he could start his training the next morning.

Back then, Rafiq claims, it was very easy to get a job in the Bahrain police. There was no need for a resume, proof of education, or even identification requirement. The only test was a medical exam and even that was merely a

formality. Rafiq recalled that on the first day of training a doctor came to check only if his eyes and limbs were functioning. Rafiq pulled out a picture of his from the first day of work—a photograph of a much younger, skinnier Rafiq, with a peach fuzz mustache; pasted onto a Bahraini police employee card. Rafiq joked that he lacked a full set of facial hair because he wasn't even eighteen. The date of birth on the identification card is incorrect. The official minimum age for police employment was eighteen. When medical examiners asked him for his date of birth, he just predated it by a year.

During the late 1980's and early 1990's, Bahrain was desperate for able bodied men, and the Baloch were first in line. Rafiq recalled how he had had a hard time holding a gun, given his age and physical capacity at that time. He remembers being scolded by the drill master for not being fit. Yet, he was fast tracked into the force. The three month long compulsory training that he had to undergo was cut short to a week. Within a month of landing in Bahrain, with nothing but a promise from his brother-in-law, Rafiq was working full-time.

I asked Rafiq if his lack of proper police training became a hindrance. Was he ever left struggling because he was not trained in skills normally associated with police work: like interrogation and investigation techniques, use of arms and armory, riot control tactics, and coordinated maneuvering drills?

With a wry smile Rafiq replied, "The Bahrain police was not like the Rangers." The Rangers are a paramilitary force in Pakistan headed by seconded

officers from the Pakistan Army.<sup>35</sup> At the time of our conversations, the Rangers had been conducting expansive operations against various political parties and gangs across Karachi. A few days before the conversation I recount here, Rafiq had narrated a detailed account of Rangers knocking on his door in the night, quietly climbing on to his roof to jump into the neighbor's house and ambushing some of the kids he been shouting at for loitering in the streets for allegedly selling drugs. Rafiq played a secretly recorded video from his phone, in which the Rangers meticulously lined up all associated with the drug gangs, as they shot one of them through the knee cap.

"I never knew that if an arrested criminal is trying to get away, he should be shot in the knee cap," Rafiq stated in a matter of fact way. He didn't really need to learn such things. During his first ten years in service, Rafiq served as a security guard outside a date farm owned by a member of the ruling Al-Khalifa family. His descriptions reminded me of a suburban neighborhood in the US—dull, alienating, uneventful, but at least calm. Each day a police van picked him from home and dropped him off to his position for an eight hour shift. He managed to get a small tea kettle and radio installed at the position from the overtime he received.

Entire days were spent sipping tea and listening to music, interspersed with long breaks for lunch and dinner. The only threat he remembered was his

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<sup>35</sup> See: Gayer, Laurent. "The Pakistan Rangers: From Border Defense to Internal "Protection"." In *Organized Crime and States*, pp. 15-39. Palgrave Macmillan US, 2010.

supervisor dropping in unannounced and finding him sitting down instead of standing, which realistically was the only job requirement. He didn't need to know how to use a gun, he didn't need to familiarize himself in any of the modern policing techniques. He just had to stand for an eight-hour long shift.

As soon as Rafiq completed his story on recruitment and life in Bahrain, he added the disclaimer: that was then and now things are different. Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa ascended to the throne in Bahrain, which was vacated by his father at the turn of the millennium. To differentiate himself from his father, Hammad branded himself as a more liberal and accommodating ruler.<sup>36</sup> He was willing to bring the largely neglected Shia majority within the fold of the state and promised overarching reforms within the state structures. Shia dissidents exiled by his father were allowed to return. Furthermore, a Supreme National Committee was formed through discussion between oppositional figures with equal Shia and Sunni representation. The committee proposed transitioning Bahrain from an autocratic emirate to a constitutional monarchic kingdom, in which the Sovereign was to act on the advice of a popularly elected parliamentary council.

Beyond allowing greater popular representation, one of the suggested reforms was for greater inclusion of the local population in the state machinery, particularly through the military. Within the relatively struggling Bahraini

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<sup>36</sup> Peterson, John E. "Bahrain's first steps towards reform under Amir Hamad." *Asian Affairs* 33, no. 2 (2002): 216-227.



economy, the public sector was the primary source of class mobility. Defense was the largest government sector. In a country with a total population of around a million and a half<sup>37</sup> there are over fifty thousand people employed within the defense industry. According to the Bahrain Center for Human Rights (BCHR), Shia's constitute less than 4 percent of the Bahraini defense sector. Even the 4 percent were largely in bureaucratic and clerical positions in offices, rather than on the streets and battlefields,<sup>38</sup> even as they are seventy percent of the population.

What was for most of Bahrain one of the most hopeful moments was for Rafiq a harbinger of a bleak future. Rafiq recalls a premonition he had had at the time: Baloch became the sacrificial lambs, slaughtered to build rapprochement between the Shias and Sunnis. Rafiq pointed out the treatment Baloch police received in Kuwait during the post-Iraqi occupation rebuilding — deported overnight without proper compensation in order to bring the national population together.<sup>39</sup> At that time, Rafiq did not wait for the full reforms to be enacted. He believed that there was a possibility he would be forced to leave Bahrain with

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<sup>37</sup> Out of this population only half a million are citizens. The rest of the population is composed of migrant-labor and expats. See: <http://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/bahrain-population/>

<sup>38</sup> See: <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/2784>

<sup>39</sup> Baloch were not the only one left stranded during the Gulf War, without access to their banks and pensions. For a more detailed analysis on the impact of Gulf War on migrant labor, see: Addleton, John. "The impact of the Gulf War on migration and remittances in Asia and the Middle East." *International Migration* 29, no. 4 (1991): 509-526.

nothing in hand. With his dignity intact and a reduced retirement payout, Rafiq retired from the police and returned to Karachi in 2001.

By the end of the year, the fleeting hope within Bahrain's citizens had given way to dread. It was announced that the elected parliament would only have the authority to suggest new laws, which would be approved by a council nominated by the king. Moreover, the king would retain the power to veto any suggested law or reform. The elected council, according to an oppositional leader, ended up as a glorified debate club. The main oppositional forces thus boycotted the elections, and the fleeting hope of reforms faded quickly. Crackdowns on the Shi'a populations resumed. The doors to the public sector were bolted once more.

While reforms meant to give Bahrain's citizens greater representation, they were never realized. The Bahraini state underwent another set of serious reforms aimed at strengthening its coercive apparatus. Just as Bahrain's opposition boycotted what they believed were sham elections, Bahrain expanded its defense sector by introducing a new 'National Security Agency' (NSA) that was to operate under royal decree, on the advice of the king's innermost circle. The NSA established a range of new departments and committees that operated parallel to the existing ministries<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> The departments it ran parallel to included: special operations department, international affairs department, political security department, counter-terrorism department, central department for information and documentation, department of information technology, department of association and coordination and department of legal affairs.

With “preserving national security” as its objective, the NSA became the most prominent public face of the state security apparatus, with a twenty-thousand-strong paramilitary ‘Special Security Force Command’ (SSFC). Established in 2005, SSFC further bloated the already massive defense sector, which consisted of the Bahrain Defense Force, National Guards, Coast Guard and the Police. Since its formation, SSFC has been leading the charge against the Shia population, building notoriety as being the most brutal of the state’s forces, endowed with a massive budget and the latest weaponry. The Bahraini social media, operating under severe censorship, is full of accounts of SSFC soldiers’ violent raids and brutal torture techniques, positioning themselves as being larger than law.

Often, the merciless nature of SSFC is credited to the fact that most of its soldiers are non-Bahraini. SSFC contracted most of the jobs to Sunnis abroad due to the infeasibility of recruiting soldiers from within the population that were meant to be suppressed. While accurate data on the force’s demographics are hard to come by, first-person accounts mention the presence of Jordanian, Saudi, Emirati, Yemeni, Iraq, and Pakistani Sunni soldiers working in the SSFC. A macabre joke circulated about the cosmopolitan SSFC: expect to be stopped by a Jordanian, abducted by a Pakistani, and tortured by a Yemeni.

One of the largest recruiters for the Bahraini state has been the non-profit Pakistani labor recruitment firm Overseas Employment Services (OES).<sup>41</sup> My own interest in this project grew out of an advertisement I saw in a Pakistani newspaper for jobs in the Bahraini Special Forces and the Bahrain National Guard by the OES.<sup>42</sup> By some estimates, since 2005 OES has exported four to six thousand soldiers to Bahrain.<sup>43</sup> During our conversation about the need for formal education, Rafiq asked me to find this particular advertisement on my phone and read all the requirements.

According to the job posting, the maximum qualification age was forty-five and the minimum eighteen, with a minimum height requirement of 5'7. Applicants either had to have an intermediate or bachelor's degree. Preferred candidates required a minimum of three years of experience in either the police, rangers, or army. Interested candidates were asked to apply with their CV, national identity card, passport, medical report and proof of education. Shortlisted candidates were to be called for interview, further medical examinations, and even a clearance

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<sup>41</sup> <http://www.faujioes.org.pk/>

<sup>42</sup> OES officially recruits on behalf of the Bahraini state soldiers for Bahrain National Guard, Bahrain Defence Force, National Security Agency, and Ministry of Interior.

<sup>43</sup> The overall number of Pakistani's in the Bahraini defence industry is estimated to be greater than ten thousand. See: <http://www.ihr.org.uk/publications/briefings/11005-mercenaries-in-bahrain-the-cruel-crackdown-of-the-uprising>

certificate from their local police station as proof that they have no prior criminal record.<sup>44</sup>

Rafiq smiled as I read the advertisement and at the end exclaimed, “This proves it!” The days when any Baloch could just go to Bahrain on a vacation to see their family and end up recruited for the Bahraini security were gone. Now there was a proper bureaucratic mechanism in place that closely checked height and age, in addition to medical, work, education, and criminal history. In contrast, applications now needed to have prior experience as a soldier (who knew that a fleeing suspect needs to shot in the knee). More importantly, applications now needed a formal education.

To further prove his point, Rafiq took his son and me to visit the son of a friend. He had recently failed to get a job in the Bahraini police. Just like Rafiq’s own son, he was promised a job in Bahrain by relatives. Yet despite earnest attempts by relatives serving in Bahrain, he could not get a job because he lacked the proper educational qualifications. I got to know more about Rafiq’s friend on our way to his house. Rafiq told me that his friend had a life similar to his own. He too grew up in Qiyamahsari before leaving for Bahrain to work in the police. He too left at the turn of the millennium and came back to Karachi. However, he chose not to live in Qiyamahsari and instead moved to an ethnically diverse, middle-class

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<sup>44</sup> The advertisement appeared on the backpages of the the largest Urdu language newspaper Jang on 1st of March 2011

neighborhood on the outskirts of the city.<sup>45</sup> To explain his friend's choice, Rafiq pointed towards several schools in his friend's neighborhood. Unlike Qiyamahsari, Rafiq believed, this area had an atmosphere that encouraged investment in education.

Upon arrival, Rafiq wasted no time in asking about their recent experience with the application process. To Rafiq's surprise, the friend's son tried to cover his lack of academic credentials as the reason behind the rejection by claiming that he had completed both his matriculation and intermediate. He was instead denied a position simply because of a mix-up in the paperwork. They made photocopies of his passport, national identity card, and education certificates and had them notarized. They sent all of these to their relative who had promised to help securing a job. However, the relatives informed them that the application was rejected because the notary stamps could not be authenticated.

Why did he not apply again through another channel such as the OES, I asked. If he had proper qualifications, why could he not just apply through the advertisement circulating in the newspapers? The friend's son replied with cynical resignation—the OES does not recruit Baloch. It's meant solely for the Punjabis.

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<sup>45</sup> The friend lived in a recently developed housing society called 'Naval Housing Society' located on the edge of Sindh and Balochistan. Despite being built by the Pakistan Navy, there are almost no Naval Officers residing there.

OES is a subsidiary of the Fauji Foundation, Pakistan's largest business conglomerate. In the last decade, Fauji Foundation has emerged as the industry leader in a variety of sectors in the Pakistani economy, like insurance, banking and finance, private security, and even dairy farming and cereal manufacturing. On paper, however, Fauji Foundation is registered as a non-profit meant to benefit retired army soldiers by providing them employment and business opportunities.<sup>46</sup>

I had met with one of the recruiter from OEA at their office in Islamabad a few weeks prior. Arranging the interview took weeks and exhausted all the connections I had within the Pakistani army. Even then, I had to bring two different identification documents in order to get inside the highly fortified Fauji Foundation headquarters. While greeting me with all the necessary pleasantries, the recruiter did not waste much time in letting me know that there was no possibility of me getting any data on their recruitment history. Fauji Foundation, he argued, was already under public scrutiny for being the largest corporate entity still classified as a non-profit. They worried I might increase scrutiny by manipulating the recruitment data to show an ethnic or sectarian bias. For example, he claimed, OEA could have refused someone for not fulfilling the experience requirement, but in my data it could be appear as being rejected for not being a Sunni.

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<sup>46</sup> See: Siddiq, Ayesha. *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's military economy*. Penguin Random House India, 2017.

This brief conversation with the OES recruiter corroborated the claim made by Rafiq's friend's son, the failed recruit. Even if OES recruits on pure merit, without any ethnic discrimination, there is still an in-built bias that comes with Fauji Foundation's own mission for benefiting retired army officers and how they judge relevant experience and qualifications. Baloch constitute less than 3% of the Pakistani military.<sup>47</sup> The majority of the Pakistani army's recruits, and conversely OEA recruits, are ethnically Punjabi. Thus, in a purely merit based recruitment setup, Punjabis would outcompete Baloch on account of their work experience and training in modern military craft.

Rafiq's friend interjected that it was only very recently that Bahrain began demanding that recruits be trained in military techniques. Historically, as Rafiq himself had pointed out in the retelling of his life in Bahrain, anyone who could follow simple orders and stand guard for eight hours was good enough. The recent demand of prior military experience, according to Rafiq's friend, was the result of top-level changes within the Bahraini security structure itself.

For much of the time Rafiq and his friend served in Bahrain, the security forces were managed largely by two British officers: Ian Henderson and Jim Bell. Major General James Bill, better known as Mr. Bell, had served as the Chief of

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<sup>47</sup> According to Stephen P. Cohen around 70% of the army officers are from Punjab, 14% from former NWFP, 9% from Sindh, 3% from Baluchistan and 1.3% from Azad Kashmir. According to Cohen the ratio of Punjabi in the senior ranks increase to more than 80%.Cohen, Stephen P. 2004. *The idea of Pakistan*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press. (p.98)



Bahraini Police since the departure of the British Empire in 1972 until the end of the millennium. Henderson, better known as the 'Butcher of Bahrain', had served as the head of State Security Investigation Directorate or the chief of the special intelligence branch from 1966-1998 and later served as the advisor to the Interior minister for two more years.<sup>48</sup>

Both Rafiq and his friend agreed that Bell and Henderson were intimately familiar with Bahraini state and society. Having spent decades working in the Bahraini security they knew how to quietly manage the local population. Over the years they had built contacts within different parts of the Bahraini society, trying to discern murmurs of dissent so they could squash them before they grew into a political uprising. Both of them seldom resorted to public displays of military strength. They instead relied on routine management of population through Baloch soldiers, whom they trusted a great deal.

Rafiq's friend had worked directly under Jim Bell for a brief period and on that basis claimed that Bell loved Baloch. It was only after Bell retired that Rafiq's friend started to think about leaving the Bahraini police himself. The older crop of British military officers were replaced by newer, more modern trained officers from the West.<sup>49</sup> Despite having more advanced training, Rafiq claimed that the new

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<sup>48</sup> See: Jones, Marc Owen. "Rotten Apples or Rotten Orchards; Police deviance, brutality and unaccountability in Bahrain." Zed Books Ltd., 2015.

<sup>49</sup> Two of the most prominent new hires were John Timoney, former U.S. Miami Police Chief and John Yates, former assistant commissioner of Britain's Metropolitan Police. For more information

officers were not familiar with local circumstances and relationships in Bahrain. They did not know how to work with a “light touch,” always coming down with full force. The changes at the top further led to a domino effect within the ranks. No longer were soldiers valued for being familiar with Bahraini society. The new heads of the security forces only looked for education certificates and prior military experience. Consequently, they preferred Punjabis over Baloch.

While slightly disagreeing on the root cause—the ascension of King Hamad, the rise of the Pakistani military’s mercenary export business, or the arrival of new, foreign military chiefs—everyone in the room agreed that the Bahraini military recruitment structure had changed drastically. Unlike the past, a relative’s guarantee is no longer be good enough to get a job in the Bahraini police, paramilitary, or army. Much to Rafiq satisfaction, his friend supported his claim that in the future all applicants (like his non-studious son) would need to at least complete high school. Yet he still believed that even then it could all be for nothing. By the time Rafiq’s son completes his schooling and maybe works for a few years in the police in Karachi in order to gain work experience, the reforms promised by King Hamad might actually come to fruition. In a few years, Bahrain might actually start recruiting from the local population.

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the two, see: <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2016/08/john-timoney-miami-model-philadelphia-protests-bahrain-police/> and Raphael, S., and St John, J. 2016. Arming Repression: The New British Imperialism in the Persian Gulf. War on Want. [http://westminsterresearch.wmin.ac.uk/20210/1/WoW\\_ArmingRepression\\_Oct2016.pdf](http://westminsterresearch.wmin.ac.uk/20210/1/WoW_ArmingRepression_Oct2016.pdf).

#### ***4.4 The swinging pendulum of politics of coercion***

The fears expressed by Rafiq and his friend were not unfounded. An increase in Bahrain's military capacity did not necessarily mean more jobs for the Baloch. In fact, Baloch were often the least preferred of the various military-labor sources available to Bahrain. At no point in the twentieth century did officials handling recruitment in Bahrain explicitly express the desire to recruit Baloch.

Whenever a new military force was established the ruling Sunni tribal elite furnished the top military ranks with its own family members trained at military colleges in Britain and America.<sup>50</sup>

In most instances this would mean either an Al-Khalifa or a Dawasir family member<sup>51</sup> would take the top ranked position. The nominated members of the ruling families would then corroborate their technical capabilities by hiring retired and seconded officers from the US and England for other top ranked positions within the

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<sup>50</sup> For example, Bahrain's current King, Hamad bin Essa Al Khalifa, has been trained both at the Sandhurst at Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst (England) and United States Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth (US). Additionally, an article published in the Guardian claimed that between 2005-2010, Sandhurst and other military colleges in the US trained over 100 Bahraini military officers. (Quinn, B., Booth, R., 2011. Britain cancels Bahrain and Libya arms export licences. The Guardian. 18th February 2011) See: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2011/feb/18/military-bahrain>

<sup>51</sup> Prior to colonial rule, the Dawasir were considered the strong arm of the the Sunni tribal society in Bahrain. The Levy Force was formed in 1923 in the background of Dawasir tribesmen leaving Bahrain for Saudi Arabia. Even today there are a considerable number of Dawasir's living in parts of Saudi Arabia bordering Bahrain. While the move temporarily strained the relationship between the Al-Khalifas and the Dawasir, the two once again grew close through military recruitment. During personal conversations, journalists in Bahrain narrated that the Al-Khalifas have been offering generous grants to bring more Dawasirs from Saudi Arabia in to Bahrain.

different forces. Even today the top technical staff who technically control the day to day operations of the military and police forces are either British or American.<sup>52</sup>

The lower ranked positions—- the rank and file of the forces—- were comparatively more difficult to fill. As indicated in the previous section, military reforms have always taken place within the background of popular unrest. Instead of giving in to the demands for political reforms, Bahrain's ruling regime has constantly sought to settle the political instability by increasing its military power. Since the military reforms are undertaken in opposition to the majority demands, the majority is excluded from the opportunities created by the increases in military strength. The majority of Bahrain's citizens are seen as the target of the increased coercive power rather than a resource through which to build it. Even when Shi'as are hired as a symbolic gesture towards rapprochement, they are limited to a very small number of non-combat positions within the security apparatus. A brief period in the 1930's aside, positions within the police and military have remained closed to the Shi'a majority within Bahrain.

Left without recourse to the majority within its already small citizen population, the Bahraini state has, across the 20th century, filled its ranks with foreign mercenaries. While the practice of hiring mercenaries from abroad has frequently been criticized,<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> As earlier mentioned, the two top positions in Bahrain's internal security belong to the retired American police officer John Timoney and the British officer John Yates.

<sup>53</sup> See: Jones, Marc Owen. "Rotten Apples or Rotten Orchards; Police deviance, brutality and unaccountability in Bahrain." Zed Books Ltd., 2015.

seldom has it been analytically analyzed. Much of the critique of mercenary recruitment lumps soldiers recruited from different places, through different means, within the same category. In pushing all soldiers from abroad under the single flat category of foreign mercenary, analysts have missed out on the specific ways the recruitment shapes Bahrain's internal and foreign political relationships.

Not all mercenaries are the same. For the military reformers within Bahrain, whether the top-ranked Sunni tribal elite or the American and British technical experts, this statement would be all too obvious. After all, every time they decided to look for soldiers abroad they debated endlessly on where from, and how to, recruit. Bahraini state's fluctuating choice in site and method of recruitment configured its political conditions.

Ironically, the debate on who to recruit often mirrored the language of the protestors on the street. Through the 20th century, political reformers in Bahrain mainly framed their demands around two tropes: modernizing and/or localizing the Bahraini state. Similarly, debates among the military reformers also revolved around these two aspirations, of either modernizing or localizing the military. Behind this similar language, however, were very different desires. For political reformers, localizing meant greater inclusion and representation of the local population within the state's apparatus; modernizing meant bringing the Bahraini state in line with modern democratic standards. For military reformers, localizing simply meant getting soldiers who spoke

the same language as the local population, and modernizing meant recruiting soldiers already trained in modern military craft.

Every decade or so, the pendulum of reform swung from one side of the modernizing and localizing dichotomy to another. In practical terms this meant switching between localizable foreign Sunni Arab and modernized South Asian mercenaries. As mentioned in the previous section, the Levy force established under the first set of reforms in 1923 were recruited from neighboring Arab speaking Persian Gulf country, Oman. When the Levy Force was dismissed in 1929, as replacement Bahrain recruited seconded officers from the Madras infantry in India.<sup>54</sup> The modernized Indian sepoy were replaced by local Shia Arabs and a handful of Sunnis from Iraq in the 1930's.<sup>55</sup> For the remaining half of the twentieth century, the military reform pendulum continued to periodically swing between these two possibilities, of modern Indian and local Sunni Arab soldier recruitment.

By the end of the decade Bahraini authorities wanted to once again switch to modernized Sepoy soldiers, but with the British Indian Army involved in a looming Second World War they could not find available soldiers. As historians of the British Army have noted, during the Second World War Indians, primarily from the region of

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<sup>54</sup> File 28/1 G Bahrain Special Police', British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/657.

<sup>55</sup> File 28/1 W (Bahrain Defence) N.C.O. – 'Iraq levy officer', British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/674.

Punjab, constituted the largest contingent of the British forces.<sup>56</sup> The Allied victory owes a great deal to the effort of soldiers from Punjab fighting under the Union Jack. The involvement of Indian soldiers in active war efforts at several fronts, however, meant that there were not a lot of them left to be reassigned for internal peacekeeping in Bahrain. Despite frequent letters by the British officers within the Bahraini military to their counterparts in India, only a handful of soldiers could be afforded for the city-state.<sup>57</sup>

After the departure of the British Empire from India, at the end of the Second-World War, the nascent Pakistani state volunteered to take over the business of exporting soldiers to the Middle East. As it happened, the Pakistani state was built largely around the military-bureaucracy inherited from the British.<sup>58</sup> The continued functioning of the military-bureaucracy, and conversely the structure of reproduction of state elites within Pakistan, required Pakistan to trade its soldiers for foreign aid and

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<sup>56</sup> See: Metcalf, Thomas R. *Imperial connections: India in the Indian Ocean arena, 1860-1920*. Vol. 4. Univ of California Press, 2008. (Chapter 3 and 4)

<sup>57</sup> File 28/1 H Proposal for provision of Indian Infantry Company for Bahrain defence', British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/2/658

<sup>58</sup> Unlike territories on the other side of the border which had for centuries been governed through intricate colonial mechanisms, much of the area that became Pakistan was part of a frontier territory without stable and permanent colonial bureaucratic structure. Military-bureaucratic structures established for recruitment of sepoys in Punjab, their management, and finally retirement were perhaps some of the elaborately developed state apparatus. These structures intertwined society within Punjab with the representative state structure and land tenures; that is to say that by joining the military through these structures one could move up within various boards, councils, and even the nascent electoral system, as well as the agriculturist hierarchy by earning more land. See: Yong, Tan Tai. "Punjab and the making of Pakistan: The roots of a civil-military state." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 18, no. s1 (1995): 177-192.

political support.<sup>59</sup> Pakistani military's presence in the Persian Gulf in particular has been very prominent, with records indicating that Pakistan was instrumental in training and establishing national armies within many of the Gulf countries. Much of the early BDF recruits were all seconded and/or retired soldiers from the Pakistani military.

The rise of Pakistan's military export enterprise was fortuitous for Bahrain. By the late 1950's their policy of localizing the military through the recruitment of Arabs from the neighboring countries was being seriously questioned particularly by the British officers in Bahrain. There were suspicions that Sunni Arabs recruited from Egypt, Iraq, and Syria were carrying with them germs of Pan-Arabism.<sup>60</sup> The British navy in Bahrain had already been on guard, fearing an Egypt- and Syria- backed Iraqi attempt at conquering Kuwait. However, more than a direct military confrontation they feared an internal uprising by locals ideologically inspired by Arab nationalism. In order to prevent such an outcome, the British officers in Bahrain were eager to limit the number of individuals recruited from Arab states. Even though Bahrain recruited a military unit from Iraq in 1956, the pendulum swung towards Pakistani soldiers in the 1960's.

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<sup>59</sup> Ali, Tariq. *Can Pakistan Survive*. Verso, distributed in the USA by Schocken Books, 1983.

<sup>60</sup> After the second world war both the declining British and ascending American empire expected a future of the global-south to be divided into discrete nation-states contained within the borders drawn for them. One of the central challenges to such a vision in the Middle East was the growing aspiration of Pan-Arabists hoping to bring together various states under a loose union. By 1958 Egypt and Syria had come together to form the United Arab Republic, and the possibility of Iraq joining the coalition laid on the horizon. After Iraq, moving into small states of the Persian Gulf would have been only a small step forward.



However, recruiters once again moved towards Arab Sunnis after the creation of an independent Emirate of Bahrain in 1971. Concerned now with creating a homogenous national body, the ruling Sunni tribal elites sought to fill military ranks with soldiers who talked in the same language as them. Moreover, after the departure of the British, Bahrain's status as a sovereign state was under threat with Iran looking to renew its claim over the island. No longer under the British umbrella, the ruling Sunni tribal elite sought to protect itself by aligning with other tribal Sunni states like Saudi Arabia. As part of this alignment, the Bahraini military swiftly moved towards Arabization and Sunnization.

Interestingly, the neighboring state Bahrain sought as its big brother—Saudi Arabia— itself did not have tribal Sunni soldiers. During most of the latter half of the twentieth century, Saudi Arabian armies have been managed and operated by seconded soldiers from Pakistan. By offering oil and ideological support, Saudi Arabia has been able to continuously have on hand a stable supply of Pakistani army soldiers.<sup>61</sup> Through deals brokered by Saudi Arabia, Bahrain too recruited trained modern Pakistani soldiers during the 1990's.

However, at the turn of the millennium many of Bahrain's Gulf neighbors introduced nationalizing policies in order to appease local population that feared the increasing influence of foreign population. Policies introduced by these states made it

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<sup>61</sup> Even the current head of the multinational GCC force established by Saudi Arabia, is a former Pakistani Chief of Army staff.

compulsory for all foreign companies to hire local citizens. While Bahrain to passed similar legislation for civil jobs, for military positions it instead looked towards localizable Sunni Arabs from Jordan.<sup>62</sup> Most of the early SSFC recruits in Bahrain were foreign Sunni Arabs.

A decade later, with the outbreak of Arab Spring protests, the Sunni Arab mercenaries were considered insufficient for keeping internal peace. Thus, once again Bahrain turned to Pakistan. However, instead of approaching the Pakistani army directly, Bahraini officials outsourced recruitment to a private non-profit subsidiary of the Pakistani army — the Fauji Foundation. Just as Rafiq had pointed out, most recruitment in the present decade has been handled by the Fauji Foundation and has explicitly benefited trained retired soldiers of the Pakistani army.

There is a historical rhythm at work: every decade or so Bahrain goes through a season of protests. The protestors demand localization and/or modernization of the state. These protest leads to the state to undergo an alternate reform agenda that still uses the language of the protests — of modernizing or localizing the state. After one set of protests the state decides to modernize by importing retired/seconded South-Asian soldiers, at the next protests they localize by switching to recruitment of Sunni Arabs from the neighboring states in the Middle-East. In between these cyclical shifts nothing

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<sup>62</sup> Harry, Wes. "Employment creation and localization: the crucial human resource issues for the GCC." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 18, no. 1 (2007): 132-146.

quite seems to change— the tribal Sunni minority continues to rule and the Shia majority keeps on protesting.

#### ***4.5 The brother-in-law's plan to get Rafiq's son a job***

The historical rhythm described above was all too familiar to Rafiq's brother-in-law, Shafiq. Unlike Rafiq, who had left after the onset of the reforms introduced at the turn of the millennium, Shafiq had patiently waited for them to unfold through the entire decade.

Some months after meeting Rafiq, I met his brother-in-law Shafiq, the erstwhile Qiyamahsari recruiter, in Bahrain and asked him why he was so confident that Rafiq's son could get a job in Bahrain. He swiftly replied, "Because Bahrain will always need Baloch."

While he agreed that for a while Bahrain did shift towards other recruitment sources, he insisted they were already reverting back to Baloch. Even Rafiq, he believed, left Bahrain prematurely. Had he waited out the difficult period, he too could have had a Bahraini passport like Shafiq did, through which one could get other family members to come to Bahrain.

However, to my surprise, Shafiq admitted that for some time after the ascension of King Hamad, he too had felt that the wisest move would be to immediately leave Bahrain and return to Karachi. Luckily, his friends talked him out of it and convinced him to just go to Karachi for an extended vacation. By the time Shafiq returned, the hope of reforms had begun fading away and he once again was secure in his job. However,

because a lot of his relatives and friends had retired and left Bahrain, he felt very lonely and kept contemplating whether or not he had made the right decision by staying in Bahrain.

By 2006 the political winds once again turned in Bahrain. A sizeable faction of the Shia opposition decided to contest the proposed elections under the banner of the Al-Wifaq party. After winning a sizeable number of seats, Al-Wifaq proposed a number of reform proposals only for them to be put down either by the upper parliament or the King himself.<sup>63</sup> This brought to the front the disingenuity of Hammad's promise for reform—it was now apparent to all that the road to state power remained closed for the majority of Bahrainis. Hence, soon after, the majority population began to search for other avenues of political claim-making, including the streets. In Bahrain one of the most common forms of protest involved a small group of protestors closing a roundabout for traffic by burning tires.

The tire-burning protests required police staff to put out of the fire, disperse the protesters, restart the flow of traffic, and establish a temporary security check point. As more Bahrainis started to take to the streets, the state increasingly felt the need to bolster its security with extra staff. Shafiq recalled how, by 2007, the demographics of the military personnel began to drastically shift with this increased demand. The Bahraini state, he recalled, hired people from everywhere. Bahrain's security agencies during

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<sup>63</sup> Kerr, Cortni, and Toby Jones. "A revolution paused in Bahrain." Middle East Report Online 23 (2011).

those year looked like the “United Nations”; a hodgepodge force with soldiers representing various parts of the world such as Egypt, Iraq, Yemen, Jordan, Lebanon, Somalia and Sudan.

Shafiq mentioned how out of place he felt during these cosmopolitan military years, in the job he had been working for decades. He no longer spoke the same language as his other colleagues. There were new higher-ups, whom he had no prior understanding of. These new supervisors were much more stringent about job duties. They were banned from having a radio or tea kettle at their post. Instead, a police mobile began delivering them food and routinely checking if they were standing on their post, so they couldn’t leave for lunch. Under new pressures, he decided once again to leave the force. He left for Karachi in 2010 before his resignation was even approved or retirement benefits were paid out.

After he left, Bahrain was soon embroiled in a series of protests, later seen as part of the broader Arab Spring. In February 2011 an unusually larger group of roundabout protesters took control of the Pearl Roundabout in the heart of the city and refused to be dispersed. They instead occupied the site with tents, banners, and their own bodies. Even in the face of teargas and police aggression, the roundabout remained in control of protesters demanding inclusion in the state. Tensions further increased as a group of counter-protesters, many of them Baloch, occupied a nearby mosque with pro-government banners, flags and posters of the Al-Khalifas.

Shafiq was in Karachi during the Arab Spring protests. He recalls feeling relieved at not being in Bahrain. The only communication he had with the Bahraini state during that time was when he had to use his connections to allow for the transport of the dead body of his neighbor's son who had been burned to death by protesters while on SSFC duty.<sup>64</sup> The Arab Spring, he claims, was the first time Baloch were being asked by the Bahraini state to sacrifice their lives for their job.

In March 2011, the roundabout was finally cleared of protests by Peninsula Shield Force (PSF), a transnational military force under the control of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Established in response to the Iranian revolution, the Saudi-based PSF had served as a backup Sunni Arab army protecting the smaller Gulf city-states against threats from the larger states in the region. With no single sovereign state responsible for financing and controlling the force, PSF had remained largely dormant. Saudi tanks, under the PSF, rolled in from the 25km long King Fahd Causeway, the only international land-bridge to Bahrain. PSF was seen in action only for the third time since its inception.

PSF's involvement, while temporarily suppressing the protests, also exacerbated the discontent amongst the population: who essentially saw themselves as being further

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<sup>64</sup> The murder of immigrant population by shi'a protesters went on to become a major highlights of the commission report authorized by the Bahraini state in the aftermath of the Arab Springs. See: Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, M. Cherif Bassiouni, and Nigel S. Rodley. Report of the Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry. Manama: Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry, 2011.

pushed out of the state's power structure by a foreign, invading army. Hence, the protesters continued to perennially take to the streets and burn tires at roundabouts. In response, the Bahraini state decided to replace the occupying PSF by further increasing the size of SSFC and BDF. With the Bahraini state busy finding new recruits, it so transpired that Shaiq's resignation was lost in the bureaucracy. He thus returned to the island in 2012 to push his retirement paperwork through.

Just as he returned to Bahrain, a group of five hundred recent recruits from Punjab were dismissed and sent back to Pakistan. The deported Punjabi had been recruited after the departure of PSF through Fauji Foundation's Overseas Employment Services. Upon arrival, they found out that they will not be receiving many of the promised benefits, like free lodging, and they could not save enough money to send back home. Hence, they started protesting for an increased salary. The protesting soldiers were swiftly rounded up, disarmed and sent back to Pakistan.

When Shafiq went to the office of the Ministry of Interior Affairs to ask about his resignation application, he was told about the entire story of the five hundred Punjabi soldiers being dismissed (above). He specifically remembers the officer in the ministry stating that Bahrain desperately needed Baloch men like him. If he took back his resignation, he was told, he would be given an immediate promotion and the opportunity to retire a few years later at a higher pay grade.

Shafiq decided to rejoin the police and was posted as a security guard outside a foreign ambassador's residence in a suburb of Bahrain. I met with him a few times in

2016 at his post. During that time, I was living in Budaiya, a predominantly Shia neighborhood not far from his posting, and invited him over to my house; he refused by saying that he was not allowed to go to that area while in uniform. Since his reinstatement, he claims that he has restrained his off-duty activities to Muharraq, where the majority of people were of South Asian descent. Shafiq claimed that every morning he was escorted in an armored car from his house to the post and back. After the attack on South Asian security officers following the Arab Spring protests, like the one that took the life the son of the brother-in-law's Qiyamahsari neighbor, they were under strict orders to not venture into Shi'a neighborhoods in Bahrain.

Despite feeling trapped in a small part of Bahrain, he decided to stay in his job due not only to the promotion, but for the possibility of receiving a Bahraini passport. While there had long been a law in place that allowed immigrants, who had worked in the government for over two decades to apply for citizenship, they were only very selectively awarded the coveted status. In anticipation of the 2006 election the Sunni minority decided to increase its voting base by awarding citizenship to Sunni expats, particularly loyal military and police officers. Shafiq was one amongst these foreign Sunni soldiers to have received a passport in last few years. Though not being born into the bloodline of the national population, he and many other foreign soldiers, became part of the nation by giving and spilling blood in its name.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> According to Bahraini Human Rights Commission report published on 4th September 2006: , "Members of the Representative Council revealed that the authorities might have granted



Now with a Bahraini passport in hand, and many other possibilities in sight, the Shafiq is again currently contemplating leaving Bahrain. The only reason he claims he is still in the force is to help other Baloch, like his nephew (Rafiq's son) get a job in Bahrain. As long as people like him remain in Bahrain, the Baloch will always find a way to Bahrain. While there might be brief periods of reform and experimentation with recruiting people from other places, Bahrain will always need Baloch. This is what Rafiq did not understand, claims the brother-in-law. While undoubtedly, the Baloch situation in Bahrain seemed precarious in first decade of the millennium, like always the uncertainty turned out to be short lived.

#### ***4.6 When the pendulum stops, it rests on the Baloch***

Shafiq's claim that Bahrain will always need Baloch though stands in sharp contrast to Bahrain's official policy seen through documentary evidence of military recruitment. As earlier mentioned, at no point in time has Bahrain actively sought to recruit Baloch. They have instead always preferred either foreign Sunni Arab or Pakistani soldiers. At various points in the twentieth century, Bahraini state officials have forwarded policies for officially recruiting either of these two sets of mercenaries.

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extraordinary citizenships to almost 10 thousand residents, both Asians and Arabs. This number is added to approximately 30 thousand who might have been extraordinarily granted citizenship during the last 10 years[1]. It is also believed that there are political motives behind the extraordinary naturalization campaigns and especially that they are not carried out openly and are based on racial and sectarian basis, and their timing might be related to the elections which will take place in Bahrain in a few months time". See: <http://www.bahrainrights.org/en/node/425>

Even though Bahrain has periodically recruited heavily from both ends of South Asian and Arab pendulum, it has often been unable to retain these soldiers within its ranks. For example, as Shafiq has already narrated, five hundred of the new Fauji Foundation recruits were dismissed only one year after being exported to Bahrain. While potentially an incident of Pakistani soldiers being dismissed by a foreign government could have caused an international conflict between two states, it went by almost unnoticed. Other than short articles in a few regional newspapers in Pakistan, there was almost no reporting of the soldiers' dismissal.<sup>66</sup> The swift and efficient manner in which the soldiers were dealt with— they were supposedly all collected at a single site, disarmed and put on flight straight home— signals that this was not first time Bahrain has had to dismiss soldiers en masse.

Throughout the twentieth century the Bahraini government has had to let go of mercenaries recruited from abroad at various points in time. Moreover, the issues surrounding the dismissal are often similar in nature. The salary offered to a soldier in Bahrain, while slightly higher when compared to labor wages in the country, is not competitive with what seconded officers usually receive when they are deployed to foreign armies. For example, when Pakistani army soldiers are sent to Saudi Arabia not only do they receive their normal wages, but also an additional salary that is more than double what they earn in Pakistan. Even during the colonial

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<sup>66</sup> <https://tribune.com.pk/story/520669/broken-promises-bahrain-deports-450-pakistanis-after-alleged-torture/>

period, Sepoy soldiers when sent abroad received supplementary payment in the form of an out-of-station bonus, through which they could both maintain themselves in the appointed area and their family back home. Soldiers also received an extra hardship allowance in harsh climates and “underdeveloped” areas, like Bahrain in the first half of the twentieth century.

Beyond increased income, there were other benefits to being posted in a foreign state. Seconded soldiers, exported through official bureaucratic channels, received a living allowance and free residence. More importantly, it provided them a shortcut for progressing within the ranks. If there were no higher ranked positions available within the country, soldiers could move to a foreign state where there were openings. Since the transfer was recognized as part of an official contract, the service abroad counted for formal experience needed for career progression. Having served at a higher rank, soldiers would return home on a parallel rank at the end of their Foreign Service assignment: a rank higher than the one they had before moving abroad. Thus, it comes as no surprise that soldiers within the Pakistani army are often very eager to take on foreign assignments, like serving in the UN peacekeeping force. Pakistanis, and other global south states with large militaries, constitute the largest portion of transnational military forces.

Assignment to foreign states is contingent on state-to-state contracts. In the last chapter I argued that, after the Second World War, states alone were considered legitimate traders of mercenaries. The switch to only state-to-state transfers was not

merely a legal shift or the same thing under a different name. Instead it involved replacing the thick social webs of myriad private mercenaries with a single, thin, bureaucratic pipeline. Building a bureaucratic pipeline required agreements between state officials at the highest levels. Such pipelines could not be sustained through solitary backroom and boardroom meetings. In order to continue constant flow over time, the involved states needed to forge a larger political alignment. In addition to offering increased salaries for mercenaries, the importing state had to heavily invest in the exporting state in the form of infrastructural projects and payouts to state elites.

As a result of these complications the phenomenon of state-to-state transfer of soldiers, while permitted within international politics, has been rare. The one prominent exception, of Pakistani soldiers being sent to Saudi Arabia, was contingent on an exceptionally strong bond between the two states. Bahrain's oil rich big brother, Saudi Arabia, has been able to constantly receive Pakistani soldiers by greasing the gears of the Pakistani state and military establishment. Through clandestine and over the board funding given over a long period of time, Saudi Arabia has been able to bring Pakistan into its larger geopolitical vision for the Muslim world. Ideologically aligned and monetarily dependent, the Pakistani state has thus been an eager and active supporter of Saudi Arabia's military projects.

With neither the same amount of cash resources or geopolitical cache, Bahrain has had to import soldiers through contingent and temporary MOUs.

Bahraini officials, mainly their British and American technical experts, have been able to use their thin relations with officials in foreign states to sign agreements that sanction one-off transfers of soldiers. However, they have not been able to turn these agreements into permanent pipelines. The initial agreement with Muscat in 1923 for exporting its Levy unit was one such temporary one-off agreement. When these soldiers were found to be unfit, there were no official channels through which to request another unit from Muscat. Similarly, when they acquired soldiers from the Madras Agency in 1926 it was just for a one-time transfer. When these soldiers requested an early release, there was no possibility of obtaining replacements.

The temporary nature of soldier transfer agreements has been a perennial problem for Bahrain. While they have been able to procure soldiers from abroad at the swing of the pendulum, the imported mercenaries have often not lasted long. Due to the reasons described above— of soldiers not being given enough cash incentive or possibility of career progression— Bahrain has frequently dealt with the issue of soldiers being unwilling to serve in Bahrain for long periods of time. Each time the newly imported soldiers have expressed the desire to leave, Bahrain has been left without official channels to procure replacements.

However, Bahrain has been able to overcome these limitation to the official channels by turning to unofficial recruitment through Baloch social networks. After a majority of the Muscat Levy soldiers were dismissed in 1923, Bahraini

establishment turned to the handful of Baloch left within the ranks to bring replacements through their kin networks. The Lance Naik we encountered in the previous chapter was one such replacement soldier. Throughout the twentieth century Bahrain has turned to Baloch within its ranks numerous times for alternate channels of mercenary import. It was thus not surprising that when Fauji Foundation soldiers were dismissed, Bahrain was once again turning to Baloch like Rafiq's brother-in-law.

The swing towards either side of the modernizing or localizing binary has seldom lasted long. Before swinging back to the other side after a decade or so, the pendulum comes to rest for long periods of time on Baloch soldiers. Momentary and periodic reform moments aside, the Bahraini state has maintained internal stability over the century by resting on Baloch mercenaries. Every time Bahrain has encountered a shortfall of willing, loyal and capable soldiers, it has found a readily available resource among the Baloch.

More importantly, it has found these Baloch sources without the need of high-level official agreements. Baloch recruitment was not the result of formal agreements between two nation-states presenting themselves as equal players within the geopolitical game. There are no state documents that outline the process of recruiting Baloch. Bahraini state has brought the Baloch recruitment pipeline under a bureaucratic machinery. Unlike racialized colonial military recruitment driven by ideas of martial races, Bahrain's recruitment of Baloch is not the product of a state machinery developed

around ethnic and/or racialized recruitment.<sup>67</sup> Baloch recruitment instead functions through the thick expansive social networks of Baloch accumulated through centuries of circulation as conquerors who do not rule, within the Indian Ocean geography.

#### ***4.7 Baloch recruitment without military bureaucracy***

With Rafiq and his brother-in-law, we already have two narratives of Baloch finding their own way to Bahrain. Neither was recruited in Pakistan. Both of them instead used their social networks to reach Bahrain, and only once they inside did they approach the Bahraini military. Rafiq and his brother-in-law both paid for their own tickets, got visas through relatives, received temporary accommodation through kin networks, and received recommendations from acquaintances already employed in the security agencies.

From the perspective of Bahrain, the function of transnational bureaucratic recruitment pipeline was served by Baloch social networks for a fraction of the cost. By coming to military and police headquarter in Bahrain themselves, Baloch heavily subsidized recruitment by obviating the need for wooing a foreign state, hiring recruiters, conducting off-site interviews, arranging for a recruit's travel and accommodation. With recruits coming to Bahrain themselves, the Bahraini state bore no

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<sup>67</sup> Thus, unlike the Punjabis in Pakistan who were able to remake themselves as the state through their control of military-recruitment infrastructure, Baloch never came to be recognized as agents of state in their own name.

risks. They could hire them if they wanted to; or send them away if they did not. Unlike soldiers recruited from abroad, there was no investment already made into the recruits.

More importantly Baloch finding their own way to Bahrain allowed for foreign recruitment without a larger transnational alignment of state interests. The trickling in of Baloch was not contingent on Bahraini state elites signing agreements and pact with high level officials in foreign states. Bahrain did not need to sell its cause to foreign states and societies. It did not have to convince populations abroad of the virtue and value in defending the Bahraini state. All they had to do was interview foreign candidates who carved their own path and decide if they needed them.

One can imagine easily enough how the informal recruitment of Baloch who find their own way to Bahrain can supplement existing forces or serve as a short gap option. Harder to envision, though, is this informal recruitment becoming a stable and enduring system for constantly providing soldiers in large numbers. Military recruitment does not work on a piecemeal system. Soldiers are not hired one at a time. For sake of uniformity in training, soldiers are recruited in large batches which could be trained and pushed along the bureaucratic ladder together. The basic unit of enrolment is seldom an individual soldier, but a larger battalion or military unit. In Bahrain's case, as argued earlier, the recruitment unit was often an entire new military force. How was this practice— of hiring foreign individuals already in Bahrain— scaled up?

During fieldwork both in Karachi and Bahrain I would often be introduced to people on the basis of how many people they recruited. Getting others job in Bahrain



was often the most cherished contribution one could make. People frequently mentioned the number of people they have recruited. Almost everyone who had served in Bahrain for an extended period boasted of getting jobs for other Baloch beyond their own immediate family. For example, Rafiq's brother-in-law took great pride in claiming that he has managed to get job for over a dozen people from Qiyamahsari.

The number of people a single Baloch recruited at times even crossed into triple figures. One friend of Rafiq's, Naseer, claimed that he had single handedly recruited around a hundred people. When I met this friend, he was living on the outskirts of Karachi in a semi-urban neighborhood located on the border of Makran. Even though he had grown up in Qiyamahsari he had decided to retire in the outskirts in order to build for himself a larger house in an area where the land was cheaper. His house, the largest in the neighborhood, could be spotted apart from miles through its distinctly designed raised water-tank carved with the emblem of the Bahraini military. He justified his design choice by arguing that everyone already knew him through his relationships within the Bahraini military, thus the emblem on top of his house was a fitting representation.

Naseer told me about how during his service years he would come to Karachi every couple of with over a dozen recruitment letters in hand. The fact that he could recruit people himself was testimony to the trust that was placed in him by higher ranked officers within the Bahraini security forces. In particular it was because of his close relationship with Ian Henderson, the 'butcher of Bahrain'.

Naseer had joined the Bahraini military in later seventies as a sous chef. After a few years of service in the barracks, he was posted to work inside Henderson's house. Henderson, he argued, grew increasingly fond of him because he would make cocktails that would be the talk of every party Henderson organized. His secret drink mix won over the military elite and as a reward he was recruitment forms that he could take to Pakistan. As the reputation of his drink grew, so did the number of recruitment forms he was given. Upon the outbreak of political disturbances in the early nineties, he remembers coming to Pakistan with around thirty recruitment forms. Rafiq claimed that Nasir's recruitment record was second only to Abdur Rehman.

Rehman currently lives a secluded life in Bahrain and generally avoids public interactions. A few decades ago, however, Rehman was considered one of the most influential Baloch in Bahrain because a significant percentage of those employed owed their job to him. Interestingly, Rehman's life story had striking similarity with the life of Nasir. While Nasir was a close confidant of Henderson, Rehman was the closest friend of Mr. Bel, the Chief of Police. Rehman too began his career in a non-combat position. He was one of the many gardeners responsible for the upkeep of the lawns inside Mr. Bell's house. Rehman caught the attention of Mr. Bell for his ability to quickly climb tall coconut and date palms without harness. Eventually, Mr. Bell retrained Rehman to be his personal chauffeur.

Rehman, a native of coastal Balochistan, came from a humble background, and further was a Baloch of mixed African heritage. Through his association with Mr. Bell,

however, Rehman remade himself into an influential figure. Like Rafiq's friend he would frequently come to his hometown in coastal Makran with dozens of recruitment letters. His ability to get jobs for people in Balochistan made him more popular than many of the ruling elites in his hometown.

His growing popularity, however, made the influentials in Bahrain jealous. Irrked by the fact that a darker-skinned Baloch from working class background was becoming more significant than themselves, the ruling elites decided to ban Rehman from recruiting. Undeterred by the development, Rehman simply decided to look elsewhere for recruits. At one point in time he even started going to Baloch neighborhoods in Gujarat, India for recruitment. All of the Indian nationals in Bahraini military credit Rehman for opening the door. According to rough estimates given by people in Bahrain, Rehman recruited over three hundred people from various parts of South Asia.

Another way the Bahraini state has sought to scale up Baloch recruitment is through the handful of Baloch organizations in Bahrain. For example, after the five hundred recruits from Fauji Foundation were let go, it was rumored that the Bahraini officials approached the Baloch Club to find replacements. Officially, Baloch Club is strictly an apolitical cultural organization that aims to provide Baloch in Bahrain a platform for recreational and social activities. Like the many other social clubs in Bahrain, Baloch Club is forbidden from having state officials on their board. Unofficially, Baloch Club maintains close ties with the Bahraini states. As mentioned in the first

chapter, each year the Baloch Club organizes a parade caravan for the Bahrain national day. Additionally, they are known for facilitating Baloch looking for jobs in Bahrain.

Another organization, the Baloch Welfare Association, has recently emerged as competitor to the Baloch Club. The organization is headed by a 'Sheikh' who has managed to establish himself as part of the ruling tribal Sunni elite by marrying a widow of a member of the Al-Khalifa family. This Baloch 'Sheikh' primarily focuses his attention on recruiting Baloch from other parts of the Persian Gulf. Always dressed in regalia similar to what the Al-Khalifa men wear, the Sheikh is convinced of the political potential in the convincing the ruling Sunni elites in Bahrain that the Baloch are one them. When we met in Bahrain, he handed me a book on the Baloch history written in Arabic that made the claim that Baloch were originally Arab. The Sheikh believes that by getting enough recruits from other Gulf countries, who can talk in Arabic and dress like Arabs, the Baloch can establish themselves as a permanent pillar of the Bahraini state instead of temporary mercenaries.

Beyond organizations and key individuals in Bahrain, Baloch make themselves always available through repeated performance of proven practices of getting to Bahrain. Over time, through repeated enactment these practices appear almost like a system. For example, there is a system that offers Bahrain a steady supply of Persian speaking intelligence agents within intimate knowledge of Iran, despite there being an official ban on recruiting Iranians. This system involves Baloch in Iran using a Rahdari

to cross into Pakistan, forging a Pakistani Domicile Certificate, and crossing into Bahrain on a Pakistani passport.

Another system allows Bahrain a readily available reserve force in the form of unemployed young Baloch men living in their relatives' house waiting for openings in the security forces. As I explore in the following chapter, the young unemployed Baloch I met in Bahrain had enrolled in certificate programs, imagined small business possibilities, and gained part-time work. Yet, most of them saw these activities only as means to occupy time while they wait for a job opportunity in the Bahraini security agencies.

Yet another system offered Bahrain trained police officers without the cost of investing in training. The system depended on certain Baloch military employees in Bahrain establishing personal relations with officers within the Balochistan Police. These police officers would use their thanna (police station) as a temporary training center for Baloch who would join the police with the implicit knowledge that it would lead to a job in Bahrain. I met several police officers in Bahrain who traced their route back to a single police station in Turbat with a Superintendent who was related to Bahraini officer known for recruiting Baloch in large numbers.

Although system-like, these practices are not systematic. They are instead contingent on a particular alignment of unrelated political circumstances. These practices can thus quietly become outdated with the political conditions change. For example, a now-dying practice that operated like a system in the 1970's involved Baloch

supporters of Pakistan People's Party in Karachi getting jobs for party loyalists in Bahrain as a way of building their party's reputation for helping the working class. This was around the time recruitment from Balochistan had slowed down due to the attack on Omani recruiters by Baloch nationalists, who were facing an expansive military operation led by the Pakistan People's Party government.<sup>68</sup> In Karachi, however, the Party remained popular vehicle for the aspirations of the city's Baloch working class. As part of their popular practices, the Party activists in Karachi were instrumental in getting passports made for unemployed youth interested in careers in the then-booming Persian Gulf markets. Baloch activists with ties in Bahrain provided took the practice one step further by not only getting passports made, but also lining up a job in the Bahraini military forces. In doing so, Party activists allowed the Bahraini state to overcome the shortfall in labor supply from Balochistan. While the system of recruitment through the Party died out after the military coup in Pakistan, the connections inculcated by the temporary system lived on through Baloch in Bahrain opening jobs for the next generation in Karachi.

#### ***4.8 Conclusion: Geopolitics with a small 'p'***

One of Rafiq's neighbors, whom we will also meet more closely in the next chapter, often narrated how by working in Bahrain he became acquainted with Baloch

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<sup>68</sup> In 1976 a nationalist Baloch leader— Hameed Baloch— considered the first martyr for the Baloch nation, orchestrated a failed attack on an Omani recruiter in Makran. Hameed Baloch in his writings and speeches vociferously opposed the practice of Baloch people abandoning the movement at home for the cause of an oppressor abroad.

from everywhere. An avid football player, he told stories about the Baloch world cup he would play in every year. The tournament would begin with a qualification round that just included Baloch teams from Karachi. In addition to his Qiyamahsari team, the qualification round included a team from Lyari and Malir.<sup>69</sup> After qualifying the Karachi round teams would proceed to the main league where they would compete with other Baloch teams from around the world. Namely it would include teams from Coastal Makran, northern Balochistan, Pakistan, Iran, Bahrain, and other Arab areas. Each of these teams while representing different parts of the world were all composed of Baloch players.

While Bahrain opened itself for a Baloch world cup, the Baloch opened the world for Bahrain. They made it possible for Bahrain to play a larger geopolitical game without investing in formal international politics. In the 1920's when the Al-Khalifa family wanted to establish themselves on par with the ruling tribes with their own states in the Persian Gulf by literally getting the same soldiers, Baloch agreed to jump from the neighboring Gulf countries. In the 1930's when the Bahraini state wanted to further its standing as a British protectorate by getting soldiers from British India, it was again

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<sup>69</sup> The different teams in the qualification round were set apart not just by the fact players came from different parts of Karachi, but also distinct parts of Balochistan. The team from Lyari— the largest ethnic Baloch urban neighborhood located on the coast— was mainly composed of 'darker skinned' Baloch of mixed African descent with long established ties within the Indian Ocean geography. The team from Malir— an expansive semi-rural area on the outskirts of Karachi— had 'fairer skinned' Baloch who had migrated through land routes connecting Sindh to Balochistan. The team from Qiyahmasari— located in the center of Karachi— had a mixture of both groups.

Baloch who came forward from Southern Punjab— the heartland of British military. In the 1950's when Bahrain wanted to make itself immune from Pan Arab influence, it was Baloch from Makran who allowed Bahraini recruiters to look eastwards, away from the Middle East and towards South Asia. Later when the ruling tribal elite wanted to make itself an urban global city with modern urbanized soldiers, it simply had to hire Baloch from other urban centers like Karachi. After the revolution in Iran, as Bahrain looked to strengthen its hand in the sectarian struggle for the control over the Persian Gulf, it hired Persian-speaking, Iranian Baloch for its intelligence agencies.

Diverse Baloch thus networks allowed Bahrain to quietly and continuously realign its local state structures with the changing geopolitical context. By switching between Baloch from various parts of the world, Bahrain could reorient its internal political relations in accordance with shifts in transnational political conditions. Because of the Baloch, Bahrain did not have to declare these reconfigurations through formal transnational contracts and agreements. To change its positions within the larger geopolitical world, Bahrain did not even have to either officially send its representative abroad or even invite foreign dignitaries. Instead, they only had to turn themselves from one Baloch team within its border to another. Rest of the work— locating recruitment sites, advertising recruitment, interviewing candidates and transferring mercenaries— was done by Baloch social networks.

Internal stability produced through malleable Baloch social networks allows not just tribal Sunni elite rule in Bahrain, but also the persistence presence of twentieth



century North Atlantic empires in the Indian Ocean. Just like the Bahraini state itself, the British and American empires on its shores have faced serious challenges every decade or two. In the 1920's British agents and subjects were physically targeted by discontent population. In the 1940's and 1960's labor strikes disrupted the flow of oil through British Petroleum companies. In the 1950's Pan-Arab nationalist directly contested colonial dominance.<sup>70</sup> In the 1970's elected parliamentarians passed a resolution to restrict the transfer of Jufair Naval Base to America. During the Arab Spring protests western expats were forced to either leave or lock themselves indoors out of fear of violence on the streets.

Each time the interests of the North Atlantic empires came under threat, they responded by urging Bahrain to increase its military capacity without implicating the empire. The plan to let the Bahraini state handle internal instability by increasing its military capacity was contingent on the availability of manpower resources. After swinging from one set of possible recruits to another, the Bahraini state settled on the always available Baloch military-laborers. Yet the availability of Baloch mercenaries was not the result of transnational recruitment structures, official international agreement, or even a realist political alignment between two nation-states. It was instead the product

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<sup>70</sup> Also, In 1968 the marxist-leninist 'National Liberation Front' planted a bomb in the car of Bob Langdale one Bahrain's British officers working in the Special Branch under Ian Henderson. (Franklin, Derek Peter. *A Pied Cloak: Memoirs of a Colonial Police Officer (special Branch)*, Kenya, 1953-66, Bahrain, 1967-71, Lesotho, 1971-75, Botswana, 1976-81. Janus Publishing Company Lim, 1996. p. 146)

of small organizations, informally contracted recruiters, and individual soldiers interested in getting jobs for those within its diasporic networks.

The work done by transnational networks, such as those of the Baloch, seldom gain recognition in geopolitical discussion. Scholars of international relations have considered the implicit agreement that trade of soldiers should be limited to state-to-state transfers, as a given rather than an often unfulfilled ideal. Coincidentally, almost all of the writing on transnational military relationships focus exclusively on nation-states, seen as preformed aggregates rather than a complex articulation of various social groups. Furthermore, these nation-states act like systematic actors, who are always playing the same geopolitical game as other states. The players, rules, and goals within this geopolitical game are all imagined to be predetermined by a real-politick structural relationship.

This chapter, however, has highlighted an alternate approach to studying transnational military relationships. In the model that I have presented, military-labor supply is not determined by overarching political alliances between nation-states, formal contracts between high-officials, or even provision of foreign aid (covert or overt). Instead, it functions through ties within families, precarious relations between Baloch in different places, informal expansion in the scope of an organization's work, and individuals looking to build a name for themselves by getting jobs for others.

The zoomed-out lens of geopolitical analysts cannot see the everyday practices and interpersonal relationships between Baloch rank and file. However, these Baloch

networks and practices are not tangential to global politics. Baloch recruitment is not a peripheral phenomenon that has preserved itself by escaping to a desolate place far from the watching eye of national and global politics. It in fact sits at the heart of the modern American empire. As I have highlighted, the self-recruiting mechanism of the Baloch allows the American empire to continuously maintain safe presence in Bahrain without appearing like an empire. From their stable base in the Persian Gulf, the American empire can then expand and retract in other parts of the Indian Ocean, as dictated by the changing political winds. The recruitment continuities forged by Baloch networks, not only allow continuity in the tribal Sunni elite rule in Bahrain, but also periodic changes— handled by the American empire— in other parts of the Indian Ocean.

Shafiq once told me a suggestive anecdote to understand the relationship Baloch had with Bahrain: when dish antennas first came to Bahrain, many of the South Asian expatriates saw in great opportunity in the business of selling dish antennae. One of his Baloch friend, however, decided to instead invest in only an installation and dish servicing business. While his business did not prove as profitable in the short-run, in the long run he alone remained in business. Each house purchased the dish antenna only once; if the residents moved they would simply sell their dish to the next occupant, obviating the need for an agency that sold the device. According to Shafiq however, the residents arriving every two years came from a different part of the world and watched different TV channels. Thus, even if they bought a used antenna they still needed his friend to come and point in the dish antenna in the new orientation. In a similar vein

even if they periodically chose to change policy directions under pressure to reform, they would always need a Baloch to point them in the right direction.

## 5. Waderas of Karachi and Portfolio-Mercenaries of Bahrain

### 5.1 Introduction

The current center of Karachi is marked by the mausoleum of Pakistan's proclaimed founder Mohammad Ali Jinnah. Adjacent to the *Mazar-e-Quaid* (tomb of the Leader) is a small Baloch 'village' about a thousand households strong. Officially known as Goth Dad Muhammad,<sup>1</sup> this village at the heart of the one of the most populated city in the world does not fall under the authority of Karachi's municipal government. The Baloch enclave inside the cosmopolitan center of Karachi instead falls under the jurisdiction of the defunct *Gothabad* or rural management body.

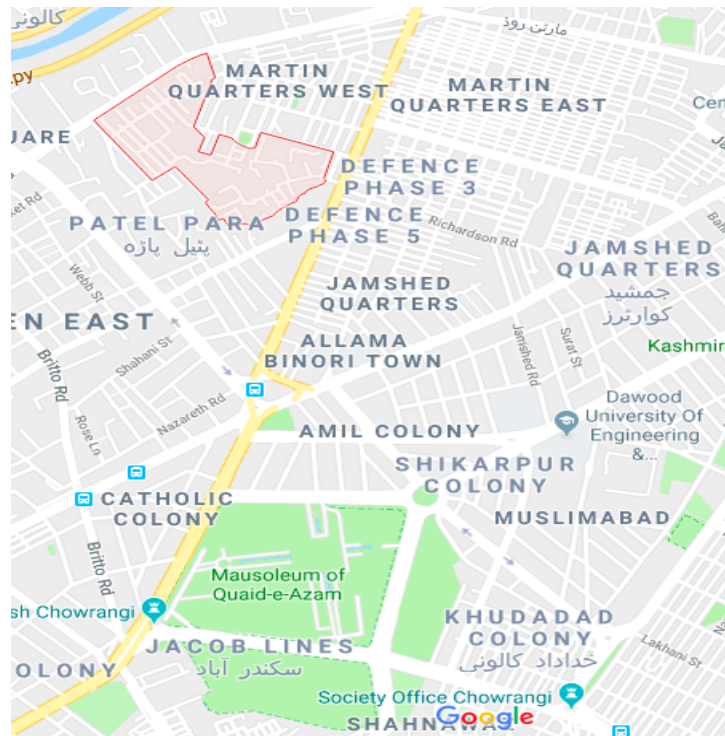


Figure 36: The area in pink demarcates the boundaries of Goth Dad Muhammad

<sup>1</sup> The term *Goth* is used for ethnic minority (mostly Sindhi or Baloch) enclaves in Karachi.

The neighborhood is popularly known as the Jameshed Road Baloch *Para*, or urban slum, with tightly packed houses and limited infrastructural resources. Marginalized by the state, the neighborhood has no paved roads running through it. Its narrow mud lanes are puddled with leaks in sewage water. Residents complain that due to not being recognized by Karachi's municipal authorities, they struggle to get repairs and connections to be even the basic utilities like gas, electricity, and water. Having fallen through the cracks of jurisdictional designation, the neighborhood is often left out of governmental development, urban renewal schemes and upgrades in basic infrastructure.

In the absence of state support, management and upkeep of the *mohallah*<sup>2</sup> is largely seen as the duty of the 'natives'. One family in particular claims to have the baton of managing the population within the village and their relationship with the city beyond its boundaries. The family call themselves the '*Waderas*'. The title they claim come to them in inheritance from their great grandfather Dad Muhammad. Dad Muhammad, as the proclaimed founder of the village populated these desolate lands in the 19th century before Karachi became an urban megapolis, they claim.

Having grown up in Karachi myself, I found their use of the *Wadera* title odd. The title of *Wadero*, I knew, was popularly used in Sindh for feudal chiefs with large agricultural lands. *Waderas* were rural elites of Sindh.<sup>3</sup> In the densely populated city of Karachi, however, the title was only used sarcastically to poke fun at someone with a

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<sup>2</sup> *Muhalla* : a small tightly knit neighborhood community

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed analysis of land holding power structures in Sindh see: Cheesman, David. "Power in rural Sind in the late nineteenth century." *Asian Affairs* 12, no. 1 (1981): 57-67.

pretense of influence without any actual material authority. There were no actual *Waderas* in Karachi with large landholdings. *Waderas* in Karachi were paper tigers out of sync with their own reality.

I met the eldest *Wadera* of the family, Naseem, during fieldwork in Karachi in 2013. Each evening, without fail, Naseem would sit on a small paved porch outside his house that he called his *baithak*. For the rural elites of Sindh, the real *Waderas*, the *baithak* was the equivalent of a feudal public court. It was the designated space for a public forum, where subjects of the *Waderas* could forward complains and suggestions. It was the space where a *Wadera's* authority came on full display. A thriving *baithak*, or an influential *wadera*, would attract people from all over the village.

Naseem's *baithak* was usually empty. His gathering never had a willing audience. Murmurs in the neighborhood had it that people were changing their walking paths to avoid crossing from outside Naseem's *baithak*; lest they get pulled over to join and thereby losing a minimum of four hours of their day. After I started frequenting his *baithak*, some of the more vocal residents would in jest shout 'thank you God – *Wadera* has found his prey, we have been saved!' Naseem would never respond to the jeers directly. He would only turn to me and recollect the glory days when the *Waderas* held actual respected. His family, he claimed, once used to own all the land stretching from here to the *Mazar-e-Quaid*. His great grandfather, Dad Muhammad, was even buried on the lands occupied by Jinnah's tomb.

Interestingly, Naseem's claim to these lands was not based on autochthonous argument of being born to the soil. His family, he argued, had migrated to Lyari, Karachi's oldest urban settlement, in the early 19th century from Balochistan. Soon after

arrival, however, Dad Muhammad was exiled onto the lands where Jinnah is now buried. Here he became the *Wadera* by helping settle Baloch migrants. His position as the *Wadera* came to be officially sanctioned by the colonial regime that resettled the village onto the lands they live on today. The generations of *Waderas* that followed Dad Muhammad continued to manage migrations and settlements in the neighborhood.

Naseem claims that as late as the seventies, the *Wadera* demanded great reverence. When violent ethnic riots broke between the majority Muhajir and recently settled Sindhi migrants in 1972, their house was designated as the neutral 'no-war' zone.<sup>4</sup> Refugees from various parts of the city turned to the *Waderas* for asylum. Everyone knew that no harm could befall them as long as they were under the protection of the *Waderas*. Even as the rest of the area around Jinnah's mausoleum was set ablaze in ethnic tensions, the *Wadera* territory was at peace.

The fate of the *Waderas*, though, changed for the worse as result of the riots. One particularly violent day a Sindhi protester chased after by Muhajirs took refuge in his house. Naseem's younger brother Shamim was asked to mediate the conflict between

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<sup>4</sup> The Sindhi-Muhajir riots in 1972 were one of the first instances of a city wide ethnic conflict since the partition of Pakistan. The riots were triggered by Bhutto's government absorbing Karachi in Sindh's provincial government, orchestrating the settlement of rural Sindhi population in Karachi, and declaration of Sindhi language as a necessary part of the high school curriculum. For a detailed reading of the 1972 riots see: Hasan, Sibte "1972 riots: Was it a language issue?" *Herald Magazine*. Dawn Newspaper- Karachi (August 1972), Verkaaik, Oskar. "Violence and ethnic identity politics in Karachi and Hyderabad." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 39, no. 4 (2016): 841-854. Also, Pattanaik, Smruti S. "Ethnic aspirations and political power: Defining Mohajirs' grievances in Sindh." *Strategic Analysis* 23, no. 3 (1999): 459-482; Khan, Adeel. "Pakistan's Sindhi ethnic nationalism: migration, marginalization, and the threat of Indianization." *Asian Survey* 42, no. 2 (2002): 213-229; Siddiqi, Farhan Hanif. "Intra-ethnic fissures in ethnic movements: the rise of Mohajir identity politics in post-1971 Pakistan." *Asian Ethnicity* 11, no. 1 (2010): 25-41.



the Sindhi refugee and Muhajir rioters. Shamim told the Muhajir rioters that had besieged their house that as part of a Baloch custom, protecting a guest was their responsibility. The Muhajirs though were in no mood to negotiate. They forewarned the *Waderas* of dire consequences for protecting Sindhis. On receiving a direct threat to his family, Shamim lost his calm. In a fit of rage Shamim stabbed one of the rioter. Soon after, fearing his imminent arrest, Shamim was forced to flee the city in the dark of night.

The fallout from the incident, according to Naseem, created visible cracks in their *Wadera* authority. They lost on that day one of their more enterprising brothers, Shamim, who then had remained in exile for around three decades. Moreover, in the months that immediately followed, police would randomly arrest family members and pressurize them to disclose Shamim's hideout. Eventually the family had to take recourse in law and fought a long-drawn-out court battle to prove their innocence. The ignominy of a public trial, helplessness in encountering police authority, and inability to protect their own brothers, according to Naseem, collectively diminished their standing as a *Wadera*. After the incident, it was impossible for the family to maintain their image of being the foremost authority in the village.

I met the exiled brother Shamim, during fieldwork in Bahrain in 2015. During our initial meetings, I tried broaching the issue of the *Waderas* decline and the significance of his exile. Shamim though changed the topic of conversation. He instead started talking about his many entrepreneurial ventures in Bahrain. Like many of the other Baloch I met in Bahrain, Shamim was constantly conjuring business plans. Almost every Baloch I met in Bahrain had an entrepreneur inside waiting to come out. The

younger ones were constantly thinking of new side 'gigs' to supplement their incomes, while those on their way to retirement were consulting on investment opportunities.

Compared to other even mildly successful businessmen, Shamim maintained a very inconspicuous lifestyle. He drove an old sedan and lived in a small shared apartment. As I later found out, Shamim did not need such material luxuries to confirm his status as a successful investor. Stories of Shamim's investment success were known to many in Bahrain. During his time in Bahrain, Shamim had explored almost all possible commercial opportunities – he sold and rented cars, ran a transport company, and imported and exported various goods. Shamim was also always willing and ready to share his experience with others. Every time I met Shamim, his phone was buzzing with people asking for sound business advice. In sharp contrast to his brother Naseem, Shamim was never short of a willing audience.

One day several months into my fieldwork in Bahrain, Shamim finally brought up the issue of his exile and its impact on their family's *Wadera* 'ship. Shamim read the same moment differently from his brother. By the time he was exiled, Shamim argues, the position of *Wadera* had already been on the decline for over two decades. As a *Wadera*, his father who took up the mantle around the time of partition of India, was a pale shadow of the *Waderas* who came before. The blame for the decline, for Shamim, fell not on his father but larger changes within Karachi. Karachi was designated by Jinnah as the first capital of the nascent nation-state of Pakistan. Additionally, the city was chosen as the site of settlement for the Muslim migrants or Muhajirs from the other side of the newly drawn border. Rapid population growth due to migrations, and the increasing

strength of the Pakistani state in the city, had by the time of the incident greatly curtailed the territory and efficacy of a *Wadera's* authority.

His exile, Shamim claims, was in fact fortuitous. It marked not the decline of the *Waderas* but their return to glory. Just like exile from Lyari had allowed Dad Muhammad to become the *Wadera*, exile from Karachi has made Shamim into a *Wadera* of Muharraq in Bahrain. To reclaim the position of the *Wadera*, Shamim claims that he followed his great-grandfather's model. He helped Baloch migrants settle in the land of his exile. He helped residents from *Goth Dad Muhammad* find business opportunities, jobs, and accommodation. However, unlike Dad Muhammad, Shamim has helped the settlement not of entire families and households, but Baloch men. Through his effort, there are now over three hundred men from the Baloch *para* living in the Bahraini town of Muharraq. A large portion of the money these Baloch men earn, Shamim claims, is sent back to Karachi. Through the remittances being sent from Bahrain, living conditions in his mohallah in Karachi are already improving. Moreover, Shamim argues that in Bahrain he has been working on a decades-long plan of accumulating social and economic capital in Bahrain to help his brothers restore the *Waderas* to their original glory.

Peculiarly, most of the money being used for the renewal of the Baloch *para* comes from the government of Bahrain's defense budget. A vast majority of the migrants from the mohallah, including Shamim, are mercenaries in Bahrain. While there are no official statistics, residents from the area claim that the protection industry in Bahrain employs somewhere between 300 and 500 of its men. Almost every household in the locality has either a retired, serving, or aspiring Bahraini soldier. The Baloch *para*

adjacent to the symbolic center of Pakistani sovereignty is, in essence, a Bahraini military colony.

Military colonies, in the regions that are now Pakistan, were a recognized feature of the colonial geography in the 19th and 20th century. In their efforts to streamline the process of recruiting and retiring soldiers, the British Empire established several military colonies in Punjab, by grafting military-bureaucracy onto informal structures of rural authority. The British recruited members of elite rural families for their army and offered them *zamindari* of large tracts of agricultural lands in exchange.<sup>5</sup> As *zamindars*, or elite landowners, the elite families took the responsibility of procuring agricultural labor and possible military recruits from within their social and kinship networks. Elite Punjabi rural families thus came to take on the dual responsibility of managing agricultural lands and military recruitment.<sup>6</sup>

Over the years, this colonial experiment proved hugely successful. The average yield of *zamindar*-recruiters' land proved higher than any other nearby area in North-Western India. Also, by the start of the First World War, 'Punjabis accounted for sixty-six per cent of all cavalrymen in the Indian Army, eighty-seven per cent in the artillery and forty-five per cent in the infantry'.<sup>7</sup> Punjabi *zamindar*-soldiers also took on many of

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<sup>5</sup> The lands offered were largely concentrated in parts of central punjab that had been made arable through the development of an elaborate system of canals. For a detailed study of settlements in the canal colonies see: Gilmartin, David. "Migration and modernity: the state, the Punjabi village, and the settling of the canal colonies." in *People On The Move: Punjabi Colonial, and Post-Colonial Migration*, (eds) I. Talbot & Sr Thandi, Oxford University Press, Karachi (2004). Also: Imran, Ali. 1988. *The Punjab under imperialism: 1885-1947*. Princeton: NJ.

<sup>6</sup> Yong, Tan Tai. *The Garrison State: Military, Government and Society in Colonial Punjab, 1849-1947*. Vol. 8. Sage Publications India, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p.18

the state's other functions, such as local policing and revenue collection.<sup>8</sup> As the influence of these military intermediaries grew, they even came to dominate provincial and local legislative councils. The electoral success of the Muslim League, advocating a separate Muslim state, depended greatly on the support of such rural elites in the Punjab.<sup>9</sup>

After the partition of India, the military-*zamindars* came to form the core of the nascent Pakistani state.<sup>10</sup> While their position was initially threatened by an emerging industrial bourgeoisie class in Karachi, the Punjabi rural elite consolidated their hold on the state apparatus by moving the capital of Pakistan in 1960 to a newly constructed city in close proximity to their landholdings.<sup>11</sup> Even today, Punjabi rural elites— with a long familial history of military service tracing back to the colonial period— continue to dominate the bureaucratic, military and legislative apparatus of the state.

One of important factors in their dominance is the division of labor within elite families.<sup>12</sup> It is not uncommon to have within a single elite Punjabi family a Brigadier, a bureaucrat, politician, and *zamindar*. By dividing these roles, often between male members of the family, Punjabi elites maintain diverse networks of accessing the state.

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<sup>8</sup> Washbrook, David A. "India, 1818-1860: the two faces of colonialism." *Oxford History of the British Empire* 3 (1999): 395-421.

<sup>9</sup> Yong. 2005. p.13

<sup>10</sup> Yong, Tan Tai. "Punjab and the making of Pakistan: The roots of a civil-military state." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 18, no. s1 (1995): 177-192.

<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed reading on the politics behind the shift of capital see: Harper, Annie. *The Idea of Islamabad: Unity, Purity and Civility in Pakistan's Capital City*. New Haven, Conn: Yale University, 2010. Also: Daechsel, Markus. "Misplaced Ekistics: Islamabad and the politics of urban development in Pakistan." *South Asian History and Culture* 4, no. 1 (2013): 87-106.

<sup>12</sup> See: Alavi, Hamza A. "Kinship in west Punjab villages." *Contributions to Indian Sociology* 6, no. 1 (1972): 1-27.

They have ensured that regardless of which direction the state moves in, there would always be room for them.

Though Shamim himself did not make the connection with Punjabi military-*zamindari* families, his plan for reclaiming the position of *Wadera* was uncannily similar. It required him becoming a soldier and using his position to help his brothers expand their political portfolios within their neighborhood. Through Shamim's assistance one of his brother became the nominal civil authority jurisdiction on local disputes, another managed land tenures, while yet another brother mediated relationships with political parties. However, unlike the Punjabi rural elites' families, Shamim's village was not the sovereign territory of the security force he joined. Shamim was part of the Bahraini security apparatus and the territory under their *Wadera* 'ship' was located at the center of Pakistan's largest city.

Saskia Sassen argues that the 'unbundling of the national as a spatial unit'<sup>13</sup> under conditions of neoliberalization and globalization created the possibility of smaller geographical units, namely cities, to form direct transnational linkages that surpassed states. Cities located in different countries could directly exchange good, people, ideas and commodities through transnational logistical, financial, commercial and diasporic networks. Through these networks, Sassen argues, cities could entangle their fate with a foreign partner city without directly implicating nation-states.<sup>14</sup> Shamim's plan for

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<sup>13</sup> Sassen, Saskia. "The global city: Introducing a concept." *The brown journal of world affairs* 11, no. 2 (2005): 27-43. (p.28)

<sup>14</sup> See: Sassen, Saskia, ed. *Global networks, linked cities*. Psychology Press, 2002. Also: Taylor, Peter, Ben Derudder, Pieter Saey, and Frank Witlox, eds. *Cities in Globalization: Practices, policies and theories*. Routledge, 2006.

maneuvering within the 'unbundled' geography required transnational connections between sub-city spaces. Shamim's plan was not dependent on continued connections between the Pakistani and Bahraini states, or even Karachi and Manama — it only needed the circulation of people, ideas, and commodities between Goth Dad Muhammad and Muharraq.

By the seventies, Shamim found his mohallah had become crowded from all sides into an urban slum by a series of migrations into Karachi. As part of a marginalized ethnic group both within the city and the nation at large, Shamim felt there was no political space left for Baloch *Waderas* in Pakistan. To rebuild their lost authority, Shamim saw possibility in circumventing both the city and the nation to join a foreign army. Through a portfolio-mercenary career, he hoped to accumulate social and economic capital within Bahrain that could fund his brothers' portfolio *Wadera* careers in his mohallah.

The previous chapter explained why the Bahraini state continues to recruit Baloch men. It highlighted ways in which the Bahraini regime stabilized itself over a century of periodic reforms and riots, by mobilizing informal transnational networks of Baloch portfolio-mercenaries. This chapter looks to answer why Baloch men continue to seek employment in the armies of Persian Gulf states. It reads contemporary migration to Bahrain as part of a longer history of Baloch using migration as a resource for escaping conditions of social, political and economic decline at home. The conditions and desires that have led Baloch men from Karachi to join the Bahraini military in the last four decades, I argue, share several similarities with the situation that led to Baloch migrations to Karachi in the 19th century.

In particular, the chapter tells the long history of the *Wadera* family's use of migration as a resource for building social, political and economic capital. Baloch desire to migrate from a city on the decline and labor demands of another city on the rise, I argue, created the conditions for the emergence of mediatory characters. In the 19th century, Dad Muhammad took on the job of mediating labor settlement in Karachi allowed him to become the *Wadera*. With rapid increase in migrant populations in Karachi after the partition of India, the importance of Baloch mediators greatly diminished. Under these conditions, Dad Muhammad's descendant, Shamim, migrated to the emerging global city-state of Bahrain. Here he too assumed the position of mediator, helping Baloch settlement and recruitment in the Bahraini security forces. Moreover, just like his mediatory role allowed Dad Muhammad to establish a broad portfolio of social and political activities, it has enabled Shamim to develop a diversified economic and social portfolio. Through his mercenary-portfolio, Shamim, hopes to influence political change in a small neighborhood located in another country across the Arabian Sea.

## **5.2 Labor-Migrations to the Persian-Gulf**

Labor migrations from South Asia to the Persian Gulf have been on the academic radar since the start of large scale migrations in the late seventies.<sup>15</sup> Much of the early research, based on migration statistics and government records, argued that migrations were driven by the mutual economic and political interests of both the labor-exporting

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<sup>15</sup> For a historical review of the early literature see: Seccombe, Ian J. "International labor migration in the Middle East: A review of literature and research, 1974-84." *The International migration review* 19, no. 2 (1985): 335-352.



and importing nation-states. South Asian states, with large populations but struggling economies, exported their unemployable population to sparsely-populated Persian Gulf city-states with a thriving oil economy.<sup>16</sup> The symbiotic relationship gave Persian-Gulf the labor force they lacked, and provided South Asian states with a steady source of foreign exchange in the form of remittances.<sup>17</sup>

The literature further highlighted that money being sent back by laborers from the Gulf to families invigorated the local economy in parts of South Asia. Shahid Javed Burki, a Pakistani economist and part of the first wave of Gulf migration studies, analyzed patwari (village clerk) records from a small Pakistani village in which most men work in the Gulf, and noted that agricultural land prices had doubled in the village by 1980. He further observed that nine out of ten cases of home remodeling in the village were being carried out by families with workers in the Persian Gulf. The labor migration system thus not only benefited states but also village/urban economies and individual families. In other words, oil money in the Persian Gulf was trickling all the way down in South Asia.<sup>18</sup>

Recent studies, however, take a much less approving tone. By switching from quantitative to qualitative methods, literature published in the last two decades presents

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<sup>16</sup> Chandavarkar, Anand G. "Use of migrants' remittances in labor-exporting countries." *Finance and development* 17, no. 2 (1980): 36. Also, Serageldin, Ismail, and World Bank. *Manpower and international labor migration in the Middle East and North Africa*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983.

<sup>17</sup> Keely, Charles B., and Bao Nga Tran. "Remittances from labor migration: evaluations, performance and implications." *International Migration Review* (1989): 500-525. Also, Russell, Sharon Stanton. "Remittances from international migration: a review in perspective." *World development* 14, no. 6 (1986): 677-696.

<sup>18</sup> Burki, Shahid Javed. "What migration to the Middle East may mean for Pakistan." *Journal of South Asian and Middle Eastern Studies* 3, no. 3 (1980): 47.

labor migrants as being trapped in an exploitative relationship rather than the symbiotic system Burki outlined. As Andrew Gardner in his review of recently scholarship on labor migrations writes:

Systematic research clearly suggests that these transnational migrants face a common set of interrelated problems, challenges, and hurdles throughout the Gulf. Laborers frequently report that employers withhold wages. Migrants are often forced to work longer hours than those indicated in the contract they signed in the sending country, and many report not receiving additional wages for these additional (overtime) hours. Throughout the Gulf, it remains commonplace for employers to retain possession of the passports of the unskilled and semi-skilled workers they employ, despite the fact that this is expressly forbidden by law in most of the Gulf States. Many migrants report that they arrive in the Gulf to discover they will be required to work a job different from the one they were contractually promised in the sending country: men who were promised jobs as supervisors, for example, find themselves working as supervised “tea boys”, or men who were promised jobs as drivers are sent to work on a construction site. Fees and other costs that contractually belong to the employer are often deducted from the migrant’s wages — examples include visa renewal fees, the costs of return tickets, room and board, or the costs of a driving course. Research throughout the region also clearly demonstrates that foreign migrants have difficulty asserting their legal rights in the courts and other venues charged with adjudicating labor and contractual issues.<sup>19</sup>

South Asian migrant labor, tumbling around on the back of buses without seatbelts, have of late even attracted the attention of global news media, human rights agencies and NGOs. Cases of violence against migrant-labor in the Gulf often make it to the front page of global news websites.<sup>20</sup> International labor and human rights groups frequently publish reports severely criticizing the work and living conditions laborers in the Gulf are subjected to.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, as Gardner notes, ‘all six of the GCC states have

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<sup>19</sup> Gardner, Andrew M. "Gulf migration and the family." *Journal of Arabian Studies* 1, no. 1 (2011): 3-25. P.10.

<sup>20</sup> For example cases of worker abuse in the construction of the football stadium for the FIFA world cup were for a while featured in a variety of international newspapers.

<sup>21</sup> Human Rights Watch published a scathing critique of the conditions under which migrant laborers were building the stadium in Qatar. See: “Qatar: Take Urgent Action to Protect

occupied the lower tiers of the US Department of State's Human Trafficking Report for much of the last decade.'<sup>22</sup>

While recent academic and popular literature has brought to our attention the specific ways in which migrant-labor, arriving on false promises, get trapped through exploitative legal, social and economic structures in the Persian Gulf, it struggles to explain repeated migrations over decades. Given that the labor relationship is so exploitative, why do South Asians – with at least four decades long histories of working in the Gulf – continue to look for opportunities in the region? Why do laborer in South Asia not take lessons from those returning from the Gulf with only harrowing tales?

One possible answer to this question is provided by studies on the symbolic production of Dubai, or more accurately the fetish of Persian-Gulf city-states. Michele Acuto observes that by hitting all the symbolic check-points of a 'global city' – an efficient airport, skyscrapers, expansive highways, and trade-centers – Dubai developed a soft image of being a global-city at par with New York, London, Seoul, or Tokyo.<sup>23</sup> For those in South Asia, unlike the other global cities, cities in the Persian Gulf were much more accessible. Mike Davis argues that cities like Dubai were sold to South Asians as a 'Mecca of conspicuous consumption' close to home.<sup>24</sup> Focusing not on the standard

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Construction Workers". September 27 2017. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/09/27/qatar-take-urgent-action-protect-construction-workers>. HRW also has similar reports on labor abuses in other Gulf city-states such as Dubai. See: <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2017/country-chapters/united-arab-emirates>

<sup>22</sup> Gardner. 2011.p.11

<sup>23</sup> Acuto, Michele. "High-rise Dubai urban entrepreneurialism and the technology of symbolic power." *Cities* 27, no. 4 (2010): 272-284.

<sup>24</sup> Davis, Mike. "Sand, fear and money in Dubai." *Evil paradises: Dreamworlds of neoliberalism* (2007): 48-68.

global-city like features of Dubai but on the 'spectacular' projects – such as the World and Palm islands, the world's tallest building, Global Village at the Dubai Shopping Festival, and the world's largest mall – Heiko Schmid reads the city as a hyper-reality, a 'simulacra' removed from reality, operating on an 'economy of fascination'.<sup>25</sup> The Persian Gulf's flash with no substance provided populations living in dire situations in South Asia an empty symbol for projecting their dreams. Schmid compares Dubai to Las Vegas, as a place where most come with the hope of enrichment but only few leave richer.

In the nineties popular media in countries like India and Pakistan often highlighted Gulf success stories of migrants starting from scratch to build large commercial empires. An antagonist living a hedonistic lifestyle or an anti-hero rising from the slums through illicit networks in the Gulf was a recurrent trope in Bollywood movies. The positive or at least bewildered representation of the Gulf has in the last decade given way to a grittier reality – of worker abuse, debt bondage, and precarious life in the Persian Gulf. Of late in Pakistani news media, the most common news story about the Gulf has been of workers being laid off without full payment of salaries and expulsion without prior notice. How then is the 'economy of fascination' still alive?

Ethnographic literature on the 'push-factors' in labor exporting countries offers an alternate explanation of the phenomena of continued migration. Laborers, it argues, do not enthusiastically migrate in the pursuit of a farfetched fantasy. They instead are forced to flee their home due to scarcity of job opportunities, family pressures,

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<sup>25</sup> Schmid, Heiko. *Economy of fascination: Dubai and Las Vegas as themed urban landscapes*. Gebrüder Borntraeger Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2009.

conditions of debt, and urban violence. As Nida Kirmani argues in her research on Lyari, young men looking to migrate to Dubai are fully aware of the miserable work conditions.<sup>26</sup> Yet, they hope life in the Gulf might just be a slightly less miserable one than in Karachi. Labor migrants know they will be not be able to live the kind of 'dream' Persian Gulf city-states sell but might be able to 'get by' through a range of coping strategies. As Khalaf and Alkobaisi argue, in the face of exploitation structures, laborers manage themselves by the 'utilization of kin and friendship ties', 'having a second job', 'downgrading in the type of work' and 'tolerating crowded housing accommodation'.<sup>27</sup>

Neha Vora's work on middle-class Indian migrants in Dubai further highlights a different set of techniques used by 'unofficial citizens' to claim space both in the economy and political life of the city-states. Indian elites in Dubai, she claims, are 'are complicit with the state in producing social and economic hierarchies that benefit both citizens and elite expatriates while maintaining a structure of labor migration that significantly disadvantages the majority of foreign residents'.<sup>28</sup> Indian elites, often with monopolies over trade of certain commodities, secure the continued supply of labor by importing patriarchal, clan and ethnic hierarchies to the Gulf. Labor thus migrates not to escape conditions at home, but as a bounded subaltern element within a mobile hierarchical structure born in India.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Kirmani, Nida 'Mobility and Urban Conflict: A Study of Lyari, Karachi'. Crossroads Asia Working Paper Series, No. 28. (2015)

<sup>27</sup> Khalaf, Sulayman, and Saad Alkobaisi. "Migrants' strategies of coping and patterns of accommodation in the oil-rich Gulf societies: evidence from the UAE." *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 26, no. 2 (1999): 271-298.

<sup>28</sup> Vora, Neha. "Unofficial citizens: Indian entrepreneurs and the state-effect in Dubai, United Arab Emirates." *International Labor and Working-Class History* 79, no. 1 (2011): 122-139. p 122.

<sup>29</sup> Vora, Neha. *Impossible citizens: Dubai's Indian diaspora*. Duke University Press, 2013.

In continuation of Vohra's argument of the Persian-Gulf being an 'Indianized' space in the first instance, Nisha Mathew's dissertation understands post-oil migrations to the Gulf as part of a longer history of circulation of gifts, commodities, money and families in the Indian Ocean.<sup>30</sup> Mathew argues that brand 'Dubai' was built not just through the urban and social designs of the Gulf states, but by relatives coming back with suitcases of gifts and commodities that stood as symbols of class advancement. Dubai's symbolic status was dependent not on a thin veneer of 'spectacular projects' but a thick history of 'social imaginaries and meanings attached to Dubai emerging out of migration, smuggling and other flows.'<sup>31</sup>

Building on these studies explaining the process of continued migration, this chapter presents one specific social imagination enabling continued migration of Baloch men from Karachi to Bahrain. This imagination I argue is born out of a long history of circulation that is not limited to the corridor between Karachi and Bahrain. It instead is part of a pattern of Baloch using migration as a resource to circumvent limitations at home. As the *Waderas* highlight, they halted their families decline by migrating to Gwadar in the 18th century, Karachi in the 19th century, and now Bahrain in the late 20th century. To cease their political and economic decline, the *Waderas* did not just have to move themselves, but also had to mediate continued commodity and population flow between their new and old homes. The chapter thus argues for reading recent migration to the Gulf as part of longer historical patterns of migrations in the Arabian Sea.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Mathew, Nisha Mary. "Understanding space, politics and history in the making of Dubai, a global city." PhD diss., 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 122.

<sup>32</sup> Shahid Javed Burki in passing mentions a similar long historical pattern of labor migration

### ***5.3 Changing geographies of exile: from Gwadar to Karachi***

Normally one thinks of being exiled as a sign of declining political influence. In the Indian Ocean, however, exile was an instrumental strategy for rulers to reclaim power. In fact, stories of the rise of many Indian Ocean cities begins with ruling elite accumulating political cache in exile and claiming sovereignty upon return.

The rise of the Omani Thalassocracy that dominated the Western Indian Ocean corridor between Gujarat and East Africa offers one such story of empire growing out of exile.<sup>33</sup> In 1784 Said bin Ahmed, unable to further his political control in Oman, sought exile in Balochistan. Upon reaching Balochistan's coastline, Said bin Ahmed approached the Khan of Kalat, the then nominal sovereign of Balochistan, for protection. Not only did the Khan guarantee the Busaidi Chief safe presence, but also graciously awarded the use of the port of Gwadar in 1789.<sup>34</sup>

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from the North-Western Pashtun region of Pakistan. Burki notes that labor demands of post-partition developments in Karachi were met by labor camps of young, uneducated, and unmarried male migrants from the frontier region. These areas, he argues, had a long history migrations to urban centers in Mughal and Colonial India as laborers and soldiers. When focus of development shifted to Islamabad in the sixties, labor demand was again satisfied by migrants with a similar profile. With slow down of developmental projects in Islamabad, a similar group of men shuffled into labor camps in the Gulf. Burki(1980).

<sup>33</sup> Prior to the rise of the coastal Sultanate, Oman was largely under the control of the Imamate located inland. The Busaidi clan, having accumulated considerable wealth through trade in the Indian Ocean sought to convert capital into political power by directly challenging the authority of the Imamate. To mount this challenge though required the Al-Busaidis's seeking exile in Gwadar.

<sup>34</sup> The Khan of Kalat's lease of Gwadar long remained an issue of contention between the later Sultans of Oman and Khans of Kalat. While the Omanis maintained that Gwadar had been permanently awarded to the Sultans, the Khans claimed that the Omanis were only given access to the city during their period exile. Moreover, the local chieftains of Makran who shared power with the state of Kalat, claimed that the Khan only had the authority to offer his share of Gwadar revenue to the Sultan. More research is required to intricately trace the deal between Kalat and Oman. As a start one can turn to the India Office Records at the British Library (London). In particular see: Coll 20/25 Kalat-Gwadar relations. IOR/L/PS/12/2985.

At the time of Said bin Ahmed's arrival, Gwadar was only a small transit port and fishing village, often out of the direct supervision of the Khan of Kalat, the nominal ruler of Balochistan.<sup>35</sup> However, with the help of local Baloch elites, the Al Busaidi's helped Gwadar become an important military recruitment center attracting Baloch laborers from far flung areas.<sup>36</sup> Mercenaries recruited from Gwadar conquered Muscat on behalf of the exiled Sultan. Soon after, the Busaidis began exporting Baloch military and political figures to other parts of the Indian Ocean, particularly to East Africa, and established the translocal Omani Empire.<sup>37</sup> By the eighteenth century most forts along

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<sup>35</sup> The Khan thus probably awarded the Omani control of the port, in order bring the commercial networks of Indian Ocean to Balochistan. For an early history of Gwadar see: Hetu, Ram R. B. *The Bilochi-Nama*. Calcutta, 1885.

<sup>36</sup> Histories of the Omani empire often assume that because Gwadar was part of the Sultanate, the Baloch working as soldiers, laborers, and traders alongside the Gulf rulers were natives of Gwadar. During fieldwork in Muscat and East Africa, however, I observed that almost none of the families trace their roots to Gwadar itself. While most of them claim that their ancestors migrated through Gwadar, they originated from hinterlands further north. This claims stands up to the fact that until Gwadar became part of the Omani empire, the city had a very small population of petty traders and fisherfolk living on the immediate shores. Gwadar thus just did not have the population needed to sustain the demands of Omani expansion in the Persian Gulf and East Africa. Moreover, even after Gwadar established itself as an important entrepot, the population exported from here came mostly from areas lacking similar economic possibilities. Residents of Gwadar itself could find at that time enough opportunities close to home that would have made soldiering abroad a less preferred option. In dying agricultural areas, such as the native village of the *Waderas*, migrating to other parts of the Indian Ocean via Gwadar remained an attractive possibility.

<sup>37</sup> Studies of the Omani empire often treat Gwadar as a marginal holding of the Al Busaidi empire. It is seen as an Omani holding the Al Busaidi's almost forgot about after establishing control over financially more lucrative ports in East Africa and Persian Gulf. Volume and value of trade transiting through Gwadar was a fraction of the numbers being recorded by custom houses in Zanzibar, Mombasa and Muscat. In focusing purely on economics of trade, however, such histories ignore the politics of trade. While marginal purely economically, Gwadar was instrumental in the constitution of the political structures that allowed for trade. See: Nicolini, Beatrice. "The Baluch role in the Persian gulf during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 27, no. 2 (2007): 384-396.



the East African and Omani coast were under the control of Baloch men.<sup>38</sup> The relationship Al Busaidi's forged during exile formed the backbone of their empire. Moreover, Gwadar continued to be the site where Sultans were made. Until the mid-19th century members of the Busaidi clan with aspirations of becoming Sultans would seek exile in Gwadar in order to garner military and political support needed for them to claim the throne.<sup>39</sup>

Naseem claims that his family moved from their hometown, a small agricultural village on the outskirts of the Gwadar, to the Omani enclave in the late 18th century. Naseem suggests that their family used to own agricultural land outside Gwadar that were watered by the regions *Karaez* (wells) networks. With the rise of Gwadar and influx of migrant networks to the city, the water usage in the area increased dramatically and coincidentally the groundwater level in the *Karaez* declined. With this shortfall in water supply, their family moved to the emerging port-city of Gwadar. In Naseem's recollection, Gwadar in the 18th century was a thriving trade entrepot mediating the

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<sup>38</sup> One can see mention of these Baloch figures in the 19th century Swahili epic on seizure of Fort Jesus. "Hinawy, Mbarak Ali. "Al-Akida and Fort Jesus, Mombasa." (1970). Mention of prominent Baloch can also be found in the recent scholarship on Zanzibar as an Indian Ocean city. See: Bishara, Fahad Ahmad. *A Sea of Debt: Law and Economic Life in the Western Indian Ocean, 1780–1950*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.

<sup>39</sup> Rene Barendse writes: "As the imperial authority began to fragment in the early eighteenth century many older city-states and some "royal ports" began to revert to what I believe is the fifteenth century pattern. What the merchants and urban notables then did was to buy protection: hire mercenaries to guard the town (and often grab land in the neighboring districts by force from the peasantry), enlist pirates to defend the port and highway robbers to protect the roads." Perhaps the rise of Baloch mercenary networks from Gwadar was connected to this larger shift from empire organized protection to small mercenary networks. With larger empires— like the Mughals and Safavids— fragmenting in the early 18th century, Baloch networks found room to expand as empire makers themselves. Barendse, René J. "Trade and state in the Arabian seas: A survey from the fifteenth to the eighteenth century." *Journal of World History* 11, no. 2 (2000): 173-225.

flow of people and goods between South Asia and the Persian Gulf. With their ancestral lands no longer able to sustain their large family, Naseem suggests that his family moved to Gwadar to try their hand in trade. In particular, they started trading animal livestock across the Arabian Sea. In the early years most of their trade was with the small Gulf sheikhdoms right across the sea. The ruling Gulf sheikhs, according to Naseem, preferred animals raised in the more hospitable environment of Balochistan to those reared in their native desert lands. Their trade business in Gwadar though was short lived.

By the latter half of the 19th century, Gwadar had lost its significance as the site where Omani Sultans were made. With the spread of the British Empire in the Indian Ocean, the Omani Sultans were forced to change their protection partners. Instead of depending on soldiers from Gwadar, the Omani's outsourced their empires external defense to the British Empire.<sup>40</sup> As the new protectors, the British Empire took on the responsibility of securing the incumbent Sultans against contenders. While Baloch men continued to fill the ranks within the Gulf security forces, as argued in the previous chapter, they were no longer king-makers in the same way. No longer could members of the ruling dynasty, aspiring to become Sultans, commit themselves to exile in Gwadar with hopes of building an army that could conquer in their name.

The British Empire was able to fully to demonstrate their role in 1872 when one of the brothers of the then incumbent Sultan fled intra-tribal conflict to seek refuge in

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<sup>40</sup> Bhacker, M. Reda. *Trade and empire in Muscat and Zanzibar: the roots of British domination*. Routledge, 2002.

Gwadar. Like<sup>41</sup> the Omani exiles before him, he soon started to form alliances with local elites in Makran. Out of concerns to his own power, the incumbent Sultan wrote letters to the British Empire demanding actions against his own brother. The exiled brother was swiftly arrested and sent to a prison in Karachi. While the incident brought to an end Gwadar's days as a king-maker, it also introduced the Gulf rulers to a new South Asian site for accumulating political power – Karachi.

It was around this time that Naseem's family too started noting a change in the trade pattern. By the 19th century, the livestock demand from areas to the East drastically outmatched the Gulf requirements. Most of the animals they were shipping from Gwadar were heading towards the new British garrison town of Karachi. The commodities being exported from Gwadar to Karachi, were soon joined by Baloch families. In search of better fortunes much, by the time Dad Muhammad came of age, the family too migrated to Karachi. The late 19th century decline of Gwadar was not coincidentally paralleled by the rise of Karachi as the largest port on the Makran coastline. By the early twentieth century, Gwadar was reduced to an almost forgotten Omani town and Karachi had emerged as the second largest British Indian port in the region.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> I found in the Sindh National Archives collection on Gwadar a series of letters exchanged between British officers in Karachi, Gwadar and Muscat on the issue of arresting and maintenance allowance for the Omani royal being held in a prison in Karachi. MSS/File 7447 Commissioner Records, 'Gwadar 1872 v.1' Sind National Archives. Karachi, Pakistan.

<sup>42</sup> For a detailed historical study of the transformation in Gwadar during the colonial period see: Jamali, Hafeez Ahmed. "A harbor in the tempest: megaprojects, identity, and the politics of place in Gwadar, Pakistan." PhD diss., 2014..

Given their close ties with the British Empire, the ruling families of the Persian Gulf were quick to take note of this shift from Gwadar to Karachi. As early as the twentieth century, Gulf rulers started frequenting Karachi in hopes of furthering their ties with the Colonial regime.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, many of the Levy soldiers that were recruited in the early century, were exported via Karachi. Later in the century, as representative of states within an emerging international political order, they attended various conferences and meetings in Karachi.<sup>44</sup> After the partition of Pakistan, many Gulf rulers even built second homes in Karachi.

Perhaps the best-known case of a Gulf king being born to Karachi is the previous ruler of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan. Before ascending to the throne in 1966, Zayed bin Sultan was relentlessly wooed by an emerging banking tycoon of Pakistan. In 1967, in the days before Abu Dhabi become the global oil and trade center, Zayed bin Sultan accepted the banker's invitation to visit in Karachi. Soon extended trips to Karachi became an important part of Zayed bin Sultan's calendar. Through his relationship with the banker in Karachi, Zayed bin Sultan was able to push back against Western banks looking to immediately funnel out the oil money. He was able to lay the foundation of a banking infrastructure that become central to his legacy as the father of global and cosmopolitan UAE.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> For example the letters being exchanged between British officer in Bushire and Karachi there are several mentions of Gulf rulers wanting to tour Karachi. See: Letter from Herbert Isaak Walton, Kurrachee [Karachi], to Lewis Pelly, Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Bushire, British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, Mss Eur F126/45, ff 61-62,

<sup>44</sup> See: File 13/6 Karachi Conference on arms traffic; arms smuggling incidents', British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers, IOR/R/15/5/47

<sup>45</sup> Beaty, Jonathan, and Samuel C. Gwynne. *The outlaw bank: A wild ride into the secret heart of BCCI*. Beard Books, 2004. p.133-137

In the last few decades, however, the movement of exiles and aspiring kings has worked the other way around. Instead of being sent from the Persian Gulf to South Asia, those wanting to either escape an uncomfortable situation or explore new avenues of powers, are leaving South Asia for the Arab city-states. Karachi, for example, is currently replete with stories of individuals fleeing the city and finding themselves in the midst of limitless possibilities in the Gulf. The Persian Gulf has for the last few decades been crucial to Karachi's population's imagination of modes of social and economic mobility.

Even the aspiring and declining political elite of Pakistan have been convinced of the fruitfulness of building oneself in the Persian Gulf. Most political elite in Pakistan have houses and businesses in the Gulf. Like Gwadar and Karachi in the past, Persian Gulf cities are now the preferred site for exiles to become kings. For example, Nawaz Sharif, the current head of Pakistan's ruling political party, chose exile in the Persian Gulf after being dismissed through the military coup in 1999.<sup>46</sup> By building ties with royal families in the region – like the Al Saud's – Sharif was able to gain back his lost political clout and even the seat of Prime Minister in 2013. Having recently been dismissed once again, news reports suggests he is again contemplating exile in the Gulf.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Harding, Luke. "Pakistan frees Sharif to exile in Saudi Arabia". The Guardian. December 10th 2000. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/dec/11/pakistan.saudi-arabia>

<sup>47</sup> Khan, Wajahat. "Pakistan could let ex-PM Nawaz Sharif go into exile". The Times (UK Edition). December 30th 2017. <https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/pakistan-could-let-ex-pm-nawaz-sharif-go-into-exile-zb5nk9fdj>

The key to becoming a king in exile was finding the early waves of a city on a rise. The exiled Omani Sultans were able to develop their sovereign authority over Gwadar because at the time of their city had not yet emerged as a regionally significant entrepot. Similarly, Dad Muhammad managed to become the *Wadera* over an expansive village, because the area then was offered little more than barren land. Moreover, Shamim believed that he too was lucky in arriving to the Persian Gulf before it had emerged as the global center of trader.

In his discussion of world cities, Braudel posits that cities take turns in leading the global-economy:

Dominant cities did not dominate forever; they replaced each other. This was as true at the summit as it was at every level of the urban hierarchy. Such shifts, wherever they occurred (at the top or half-way down) , whatever their causes (economic or otherwise) are always significant; they interrupt the calm flow of history and open up perspectives that are the more precious for being so rare. When Amsterdam replaced Antwerp, when London took over from Amsterdam, or when in about 1929, New York overtook London, it always meant a massive historical shift of forces, revealing the precariousness of the previous equilibrium and the strengths of the one which was replacing it. The whole circle of the world-economy was affected by such changes and the repercussions were never exclusively economic.<sup>48</sup>

World cities on the coast, according to Braudel, have a dynamism distinct from that of areas in the hinterland. Trade entrepots by the ocean, born out of changes in larger regional economies, and not internal political consolidation, rise and decline very quickly. Places with sea ports can grow from being a sleepy village with petty trade to centers of the regional economy within a span of a few decades. The rise of a new city in the nearby region, often signals the decline of an older city. Cities can tumble down just

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<sup>48</sup> Braudel, Fernand. *Civilization and capitalism, 15th-18th century, vol. III: The perspective of the world.* Vol. 3. Univ of California Press, 1982. p.32.

as quickly as they climb the regional economic ladder. Beyond the Mediterranean, Barendse notes similar pattern of cities taking turns in leading in the Arabian Sea over the 17th century.<sup>49</sup>

The key to this dynamism, Barendse argues, were neither long duree structures of physical patterns of the changing oceanic currents, but adaptive social networks.<sup>50</sup> The economic and political lifeline for coastal cities was its connections to other regions and cities. These connections though did not have to be established from scratch. Cities could piggyback of networks developed in other places. Through favorable trade policies and promise of protection, cities could attract networks with pre-developed connections that can be quickly supplanted into a new nodal point. As even Braudel notes, the rise of Amsterdam at the cost of Venice was a result of merchants and financiers migrating from the latter to the former. When Venetian merchants moved to Amsterdam they took with them much of its mobile capital, labor force, and more importantly connections to other nodes.

Networks socialized within this oceanic dynamism develop the skills needed to quickly pack up in one place and set up in another. Merchant networks, for example, spread their nodal connections across the oceanic geography. Through their many nodes they keep adrift of changes in political and economic profitability of various ports. Upon learning of a favorable conditions emerging in one city, merchant networks quickly transfer their hub from another. As adaptive and flexible networks move, they take with

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<sup>49</sup> Barendse, Rene J. *The Arabian Seas: The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century: The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century*. Routledge, 2016.

<sup>50</sup> Barendse (2000). p.222

them many of the material and social resources needed for keeping a city afloat within the regional economy.

The meteoric rise of city-states in the Persian Gulf *thus* needs to be seen as part of this oceanic dynamism of networks migrating with connections fostered in other places. As an alternative to the oil-centric histories of the region that see the sudden rise from dust in the early seventies as a result of petroleum discoveries, the rise of Persian Gulf has to be studied through the movement of trade networks from South Asia in the 19th and 20th century. After all, even before oil money had started pouring into the Gulf, merchant networks had started integrating cities like Bahrain, Muscat, Kuwait, Dubai, and Sharjah into larger circuits of population and monetary flows. The rise of city-states in the Gulf needs to be seen not as drastic historical rupture, but a continued pattern of city's rising and falling.

#### ***5.4 The rise and fall of Baloch in Karachi***

Naseem argues that when their family first began trading animals from Gwadar, Karachi was just a small fishing village that marked the eastern edge of the Makran coastline. Despite geographically being located in present-day Sindh, Karachi was historically part of the Baloch geography. In fact, until 1795, the Baloch rulers of Sindh — the Talpurs — had leased out the port town to the allied Khanate of Kalat.<sup>51</sup> Even after Karachi was absorbed into the Talpur state, it remained more closely associated with coastal Baloch mobility than riverine and territorial movement of Sindhis. Until the conquest of Sindh by the East India Company in 1839, Karachi was one amongst the

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<sup>51</sup> Edward H. Aitken and J.W. Smyth, *Gazetteer of the Province of Sind* (Karachi: Mercantile Steam Press, 1907), p. xxxviii.



several small nomadic coastal Baloch settlements dotting the entirety of the Makran coast line. As a marker of this Baloch prehistory, many prominent neighborhoods in Karachi still have Balochi epithets as names. In fact, the name 'Karachi' itself is said to have a Baloch origin.

Naseem argues that his family's presence in Karachi predates their permanent settlement there. While the family frequently exported livestock to these parts through their Baloch partners, they only considered settlement in Karachi after it had become a British garrison. Upon conquest, Karachi was declared the new capital of Sindh, with a standing sepoy army.<sup>52</sup> While the native and diasporic Baloch population was not recruited for the army itself, they were awarded subcontracts for constructing the military city. The labor demand created by the military and later the expanded port, during the mid to late 19th century, brought to Karachi a large Baloch population, who now aspired to permanent jobs and settlement in the city, rather than only trading. The *Waderas* were one amongst these many 19th century Baloch settlers.

Like most other Baloch migrating to Karachi at that time, Dad Muhammad initially settled in Lyari, Karachi's oldest urban center, built around the port.<sup>53</sup> By the time Dad Muhammad landed in Karachi, Lyari was already a dense cosmopolitan town with a Baloch majority living in close proximity to other ethnic groups like the Maheshwaris and Kachhis.<sup>54</sup> In colonial records, Lyari was the black city to the colonial

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<sup>52</sup> Cook, Matthew A. *Annexation and the Unhappy Valley: The Historical Anthropology of Sindh's Colonization*. Brill, 2015.

<sup>53</sup> For local histories of Lyari see: Ramzan Baloch, *Lyari's Unfinished Story* (Karachi: ARM Child & Youth Welfare, 2015). Also, Hamid Nazir, *Wadi-e Lyari* (Karachi: Akasi, 1992). And, Latif Baloch, *My Reminiscences* (Karachi: Self-published, 2014)

<sup>54</sup> Simpson, Edward. *Muslim society and the western Indian Ocean: The seafarers of Kachchh*.

white city.<sup>55</sup> As the 'black city', Lyari was while on the one hand the target of all apprehensions and anxieties of urban sprawl, it was also the source of labor that made the white city possible.<sup>56</sup> Most of city's labor demands — in factories, construction, transport, and port — was satisfied by Lyari.<sup>57</sup> Thus, while the black city had to keep at a distance from the white city, it could not be kept completely apart.<sup>58</sup>

The job of mediating the relationship between the white and black part of the city brought to the front the figure of the 'jobber'. Most prominent jobbers until the twentieth century were Baloch. In essence, jobbers were the historical equivalent of modern day labor subcontractors. They recruited and outsourced labor. In practice, the jobber's responsibilities extended further. Through kin networks in Balochistan, they sought out willing and available laborers. In Karachi, they arranged for migrant-labor accommodation. They negotiated salaries with contracts from the white city, and in return managed the labor from the black city.

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Routledge, 2007.

<sup>55</sup> Part of the reason why Lyari was labelled as the 'black city' was its runaway African slave settlements. While the British had outlawed slavery in parts under their own direct control, they had until the late 19th century allowed slave trade in parts under their indirect control. This uneven regulation created the conditions whereby African slaves in parts indirectly ruled parts of the Omani empire found ways into Omani controlled Baloch territory of Gwadar, and from there to British controlled Karachi. Most of the emancipated slaves found residence in the already cosmopolitan neighborhood of Lyari, where they integrated themselves with the Baloch population and became Afro-Baloch.

<sup>56</sup> Gayer, Laurent. "Guns, slums, and "yellow devils": a genealogy of urban conflicts in Karachi, Pakistan." *Modern Asian Studies* 41, no. 3 (2007): 515-544.

<sup>57</sup> Suhail, Adeem, and Ameem Lutfi. "Our city, your crisis: the Baloch of Karachi and the partition of British India." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 39, no. 4 (2016): 891-907.

<sup>58</sup> Suhail, Adeem "The Clothes Have No Emperor! Reflections on the crisis of violence in Lyari Town, Pakistan." *Centre for Muslim and Non-Muslim Understanding Working Paper, University of South Australia, Adelaide* (2015).

Though none of the *Waderas* use the term ‘Jobber’ to describe what Dad Muhammad did, they claim that he started a business of managing coolies at the port. Given their trading business fostered in Gwadar, the family had connections within the port authorities even before their settlement in Lyari. Using these connections, according to Naseem, Dad Muhammad was well on his way to become a key partner of the British Empire in Karachi. He could have become a major figure within Lyari, something akin to the Gabols who rose to prominence as colonial ‘jobbers’ and still continue to hold important political positions with the area.

Dad Muhammad’s career in Lyari was cut short by deliberate misinformation spread against him. His success had been the envy of Lyari. Those jealous of Dad Muhammad spread rumors of him smuggling contrabands arms from the Karachi port. Despite there being no actual evidence, Dad Muhammad and his family was banished from the port town into desolate parts of the interior. Most of Karachi’s early growth was crowded around the coast. Beyond the coast there was nothing but thorny bushes and wild animals. Getting to parts in the interior using camels and horses, was more difficult than reaching other parts of the Makran coast using a *dhow*. The parts where Dad Muhammad was exiled to – the area where Jinnah’s mausoleum is currently located – were believed to be so far that it would take until Judgment Day to get there. The Baloch population of Karachi still recognize this area as Qiyamahsari, literally meaning a place that is enroute to *Qiyamah* (Judgment day).

According to Naseem, the family’s fate turned for the better with the expansion of the British Empire in Karachi. The lands of Qiyamahsari were zoned as sepoy campgrounds. To negotiate this allotment, British officer came to Dad Muhammad and

requested him to resettle in a nearby area. As compensation the British honored Dad Muhammad with the official title of *Wadera*, or the headman of the proposed settlement area. Once an agreement had been reached, the British roughly marked the expansive boundaries of what is today Goth Dad Muhammad and asked the assistance of Dad Muhammad in populating these desolate lands.

Dad Muhammad and his sons soon started inviting to their new territory *relatives* from back home in Balochistan. Even at the time they were growing up, Naseem claims, their house was always full of distant relatives coming from Makran. There were at all times multiple families living in his house. New people would come before the older ones could leave. His grandfather (Dad Muhammad's son) used to take care of all of their boarding, lodging and logistic needs during the stay. He would even assist them in finding jobs, through his connections in the 'white' part of the city. Those who were unable to find work, or a job that could provide for separate housing, were even given permanent residence in Qiyamahsari. According to Naseem, many of the current residents of the town owe his forefathers for the houses they live in today.

This unique exile story aside, Qiyamahsari was one of the several Baloch 'villages' settled by the colonial authorities in the latter half of the 19th century. In the second half of the 19th century Karachi saw the development of numerous labor-intensive industries, such as cement factories, rock quarries, and salt panning. Since many of these industries were located far from the main labor hub of Lyari, the British government helped establish labor colonies in parts beyond the coast. For example, there was a sizeable Baloch village adjacent to Dalmiya Cements, the then largest cement

factory in the region. According to some estimates there were close to three hundred such Baloch urban villages in early 20th century Karachi.

I myself grew up in a neighborhood of Karachi popularly known as 'Baloch Colony'. Despite its name, the neighborhood had very few Baloch. The only significant Baloch settlement I knew about was a small Baloch *kutchi abadi* (informal settlement) of some three hundred houses. Within the non-Baloch population of the Baloch colony, it was assumed that the Baloch *para* was a recent illegal settlement on government land, similar to other such working-class neighborhood built around railway tracks and rain drainage areas. Only during my fieldwork did I discover that like Qiyamahsari, the eponymous Baloch Colony of my childhood preexisted much of the nearby development. The Baloch *para* used to part of a much larger labor colony for nearby rock quarry in the early 20th century. Its Baloch residents were forced to relocate to their current residence with the Pakistani military appropriating the land as an air force base after partition. During the sixties and seventies, more of the Baloch land was taken away by the Pakistani government for the settlement of its retired civil servants.

Shamim's retelling of the past of Qiyamahsari follows a similar narrative arch, albeit with a different timeline. Like the residents of Baloch Colony, they were forced to relocate due to expansion in colonial military property in the mid-19th century. In the early twentieth century, more Baloch land was chipped away by the large bungalows of wealthy Sindhi Hindu and Gujarati merchants who did not want to live in the 'black city' but could not get houses in the 'white city'. Radical shifts in the geography of Goth Dad Muhammad though only began with the partition of British India.

The departing British empire in 1947 drew a boundary line demarcating two separate states – a Muslim majority Pakistan and a Hindu majority India. While Karachi was located on the Muslims side of the divide, the majority of its denizens were Hindu. The uncertainty and religious violence at the time of partition forced Karachi's Hindu majority to migrate across to India.<sup>59</sup> In their place came waves of Muslim migrants from parts of North India.

Shamim recollects from his inherited memory, at the time of partition some of the wealthy Hindu merchants living in bungalows close to Qiyamahsari left the keys to their houses with his grandfather who was still the *Wadera*. Instead trying to claim them for himself, his grandfather opened these houses to the migrants coming from India. Given their large numbers each house was settled with at least ten families.

The Hindu merchants and Muslim *Muhajirs*, Shamim claims, were not like for like replacements. In contrast to the rich merchants leaving Karachi, the incoming Muslim migrants were generally working-class. Most of the Muslims lived not in large bungalows, but in temporary 'migrant camps' that were later converted into permanent government quarters. These quarters, Shamim claims, greatly reduced the size of their landholdings. It crowded their village from all corners and made horizontal expansion impossible. This meant that the *Waderas* could no longer afford to offer space for any and all Baloch arriving from outside. Shamim mentions that his father started to offer space in their own individual house to those in dire needs. He remembers the football

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<sup>59</sup> For a detailed history of the migration of Sindhi Hindu from Karachi see: Ansari, Sarah FD. *Life after Partition: Migration, community and strife in Sindh, 1947-1962*. Oxford University Press, USA, 2005.

ground outside his house was converted into small apartment buildings in the sixties. These waves of migrations turned his village from being an expansive reservoir for Baloch migrants, into a small bounded ghetto filled to capacity and trapped from all side by non-Baloch settlements.

Moreover, unlike the rich Hindu and Parsi merchants who interested in employing the Baloch, the Muhajirs were competing with the Baloch for the same jobs. By 1951, Muhajirs from North India constituted about 57 percent of the city's population.<sup>60</sup> Developments in the early years after partition, when Karachi was still the federal capital, further attracted a large number of Pashtun laborers.<sup>61</sup> By the seventies the city also became home to Sindhi laborers migrating from rural areas in the province to its urban center of Karachi.<sup>62</sup> With growing competition for jobs, *Waderas* could not guarantee family members jobs any longer. Baloch have, since Partition, lost their place as the bona fide working class of the city. Consequently, the *Waderas* have lost their significance as mediators.

Shahid Javed Burki argues that migrations at the time of Partition of India set in motion changes in social and political relations between different ethnic groups, which eventually led to another wave of migrations to the Persian Gulf in the late seventies.<sup>63</sup> In the first decade after partition, the number of positions held by Muhajir refugees in the state was far greater than their proportion of the population. The Punjabi rural elites,

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<sup>60</sup> Burki, Shahid Javed. "Pakistan: a demographic report." *Population Bulletin* 29, no. 4 (1973): 1-36. p.16

<sup>61</sup> Burki (1980) p.48

<sup>62</sup> Khan, Adeel. "Pakistan's Sindhi ethnic nationalism: migration, marginalization, and the threat of" Indianization"." *Asian Survey* 42, no. 2 (2002): 213-229.

<sup>63</sup> Burki (1980)

perturbed by the growing influence of the Muhajir population (particularly the new industrial bourgeoisie), set in motion plans for marginalizing Karachi. They forced a shift in capital by building a new federal city closer to their agricultural support base in Punjab. Since the 1960's, Burki argues, urban development and conversely available jobs in Karachi have declined sharply. The decline, however, did not stem the flow of internal-migration of Pashtun and Sindhi laborers. In the face of Karachi growing population and decreasing economic productivity, its residents who were already socialized in the process of migrations, decided en masse to search for employment opportunities in the Persian Gulf.

Shamim's decision to move to the Persian Gulf can be placed within this broader change described by Burki. The settlement of Naseem and Shamim's family in Karachi was part of larger historical process of Baloch population migrating from parts of the Makran coast to Karachi in the 19th century. Until the early 20th century, the Baloch villages and urban centers provided much of the city's labor. The management of these labor pools brought to the front political mediators such as the *Waderas* and the Union leaders. After partition of India, the nascent Pakistani state started to move away from such Baloch mediators to manage populations through its new Muhajir majority. After the capital shifted away from Karachi, the state machinery was consolidated in the hands of the national majority ethnic groups, the Punjabis. The shift also curtailed the political significance of Karachi within Pakistan. The Baloch of Karachi were thus reduced to being marginal players within an already marginalized city. In the face of this migration, Baloch men like Shamim decided to join the migrant-labor outflow to the Persian Gulf.



However, at the time when Shamim was exiled from Karachi in 1972, the Persian Gulf had not yet emerged as popular site for migration.<sup>64</sup> The major labor outflow from Karachi started only in the latter half of the seventies.<sup>65</sup> The number of Asian workers was estimated to be 247,700 in the entire Arab region in 1970.

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<sup>64</sup> While labor from South Asia had started trickling into the Gulf region started in 1969, migrations in large numbers did not start until 1973 when OPEC increased the price of its oil exports triggering the accumulation of capital within oil-rich Gulf states. Even then most of the early migrant-laborers in the region were brought in from other Arabic-speaking countries and not South Asia.

<sup>65</sup> Migration from Pakistan were until the mid seventies limited by the restrictions on obtaining a passport. While Pakistani passport holders could obtain a visa on arrival in the Persian Gulf, the passport itself was reserved only for a certain class of citizens until the seventies. To obtain a passport required incredible amount of maneuvering within the bureaucratic channels. It required submitting property educational qualification documents. It was only in 1973 that the populist president Zulfikar Ali Bhutto declared the passport as a right of every citizen, eliminated the property and educational requirements, streamlined the process, and reduced the passport fees.

**Table 1**  
**Labor Force Emigration**  
**from Pakistan**

Year	No. of Workers
1971	3,734
1972	4,530
1973	12,300
1974	16,328
1975	23,077
1976	41,690
1977	140,445
1978 (Provisional)	128,041

Source: Government of Pakistan, *Pakistan Economic Survey 1978-79* (Islamabad: Ministry of Finance, 1979), p. 6.

Figure 37: Statistics on Labor Force Emigration from Pakistan<sup>66</sup>

Thus, when Shamim was forced to seek exile, he was not thinking about the Persian Gulf. While he had known some people from Lyari who had earlier gone across the Arabian Sea, he did not have any direction connection to the region through his acquaintances in Qiyamahsari. To avoid being arrested for stabbing a Muhajir rioter in the scuffle described at the outset of this chapter, Shamim left for a small coastal Baloch

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<sup>66</sup> Burki argues that because a large portion of the migrants circulated through informal channels, the official data is not a good indicator of the number of Emigrants. By dividing the amount of remittance sent to Pakistan by the average salary, Burki instead suggests that the number of Pakistani emigrants in 1978 was closer to 750,000. Source: Burki (1980)

village called Ibrahim Hyderi. From there he boarded a small dinghy boat to get to the Makran coast, where he knew he would be protected from the Pakistani government.

Shamim claims he had always wanted to return to his native lands. He had long dreamt about giving up his grueling urban life for a rustic idyll. During his time in Balochistan, Shamim claims, he would spend most of his time in isolation. Each day he would go far from the settlement and spend time with his own thoughts sitting on barren hills. When he got bored, he would travel to the nearby towns and sit at tea stalls to quietly overhear conversations in the surroundings.

On one of these trips to a tea stall in the town of Turbat, Shamim saw a large crowd gathered in the city center. In the middle of the circle of people was a man who looked Baloch but was dressed in a military uniform. The military man was a recruiter from the Omani army. He had come to Turbat, his hometown, to select a group of young men to take with him to Muscat. These men would be trained and equipped in Muscat for joining the army of the Sultan embroiled in internal conflicts. The Sultan, having recently established his dominance in the interior by abolishing the historical Imamate in 1958, was drawn into another civil war with the outbreak of separatist sentiments in the Dhofar region.<sup>67</sup> The Baloch recruiter, Shamim found out, was looking for able-bodied men to fight the Sultan's wars in the South of Oman.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Gardiner, Ian. "In the service of the Sultan: A first hand account of the Dhofar insurgency." *RUSI Journal* 152, no. 1 (2007): 82.

<sup>68</sup> A few years later on Dec 9th 1979 a young Baloch nationalist activists attempted an attack on an Omani recruiter in Turbat. See: Aziz, Sheikh 'The Baloch question: Hameed Baloch executed' DAWN Newspaper, Karachi. June 7 2015. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1186385>

For a brief moment Shamim thought about approaching the recruiter and throwing his name in the hat. However, having just come out of a civil-war like situation in Karachi, Shamim was not eager to return to a life of violence. The encounter with the recruiter in Turbat, though, planted the idea of moving to the Persian Gulf in Shamim's head for the first time.

When he returned to his hometown and talked to others about his plans for moving to the Persian Gulf, he found out that many of his relatives from Balochistan were already settled in countries like Sharjah, Oman and Bahrain. Even though the Baloch from his village in Karachi had yet to turn towards the Gulf, the Baloch in Balochistan had long been circulating in the Persian Gulf region. By piggybacking of these historical connections Shamim had just discovered, he decided to seek in the Persian Gulf ways to restore the lost position of *Wadera*.

### **5.5 Portfolio-mercenaries in Bahrain**

Just like in Karachi, the *Wadera's* presence in Bahrain predated their settlement. If Karachi was the eastern end of Makran, then Bahrain was its western frontier. Nomadic fisher folk who moved in the Arabian Sea on the east, also travelled west through the same sea.<sup>69</sup> The Batinah coast, a short boat ride away from the Makran coast, has long been dotted by Baloch settlements. Additionally, Baloch traders, laborers, and soldiers had made urban centers like Muscat part of their diasporic landscape.<sup>70</sup> Baloch have been the largest minority in Muscat since at least the eighteenth century. Furthermore,

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<sup>69</sup> Peterson, J. E. (2013). The Baluch Presence in the Persian Gulf. *Sectarian Politics in the Persian Gulf*, 229-44.

<sup>70</sup> Peterson, John E. "Oman's diverse society: Northern Oman." *The Middle East Journal* 58, no. 1 (2004): 32-51.

Baloch have since the late 19th century been a prominent presence in the city-state of Bahrain.



Figure 38: Map of the Arabian Sea<sup>71</sup>

While Shamim was not thinking about his pre-existing connection in the Gulf in Karachi during the early seventies, during his time in coastal Balochistan he quickly became familiar with the thick history of Baloch settlement in the Arab lands located right across the Arabian Sea. After coming to terms with the history of Baloch circulation in the Persian Gulf, no longer did the area seem alien to him. Moreover, because of the

<sup>71</sup> The map marks also marks Shamim's route. Blue: Karachi, Yellow: Turbat, Green: Gwadar, and Red: Bahrain.

continued presence of Baloch, Shamim knew that he would not be seen as an unknown foreigner in the Gulf.

While researching Baloch presence in the Gulf, Shamim came to know of a cousin from the branch of the family that had stayed in Gwadar, who had recently married a Baloch police officer in Bahrain. Moreover, the cousin's husband too was a distant relative from another branch of the family, which had moved to Muscat around the same time Shamim's family migrated to Karachi. This distant cousin had moved to Bahrain from Muscat in the early sixties. While his cousin's husband had only moved to Bahrain in the previous decade, Shamim assumed that having been born and brought up in the Gulf, the cousin's husband would have several connections with the locals in Bahrain. Shamim decided to make use of these connections by going to Bahrain on a visit visa to stay at his cousin's house and looking for job in the private sector using her husband's connections.

Shamim finally reached Bahrain in 1976 and was welcomed in his cousin's home. After a week had passed with Shamim settling in to the new surroundings, the cousin's husband began constantly bringing up the issue of Shamim's job search. He recommended that Shamim, like most other Baloch in Bahrain, should apply for a job in the security sector. Shamim himself remained reluctant to be a soldier. He instead wanted to join a private company where he could learn the basics of running a business, which could later allow him to start his own entrepreneurial career. In the months that followed, Shamim applied to a number of positions. His search however came to no avail.

During the months he was unemployed, Shamim got the opportunity to interact with a number of Baloch employed in the security industry. Through their experiences Shamim came to know that working in the Bahraini military required very little soldiering. Unlike Oman, Bahrain was not involved in any active war. The only story of active policing he came across was a Baloch police officer catching a petty thief attempting to break into a car. Recruits did not even have to undergo rigorous training. In most cases, soldiers could get permission to live outside the barracks. Moreover, the weekly work schedule of one day on and one off, offered a lot of free time for soldiers to think of other career possibilities.

With other job opportunities not coming his way, Shamim reluctantly decided to apply for a position within the Bahraini police. Just as he walked into the central police headquarters, a familiar voice called out "*Wadera* – what are you doing over here!" It was a fellow Baloch friend from Lyari. The friend was employed as a guard at the headquarters and claimed to be trusted ally of the officer in charge of recruitment – a Karachi-born, retired Pakistani army officer. Due to the shared bond of Karachi, the recruiter hired Shamim without a formal interview. Moreover, when the recruiter found out that Shamim knew some English and could read and write Urdu, he offered him his choice in posting.

Shamim argued that in Bahrain, a soldier's career trajectory was determined by the postings he received. Getting a choice posting was even better than getting a rank promotion. Rank promotions only marginally increased salary – they did not change the nature of work or even an individual's social standing within the mercenary community. A good posting, though, could place a soldier directly in the corridors of

power. For example, by standing guard outside the house of an Al-Khalifa – a member of the Bahraini ruling family – one had the opportunity of building personal ties with the state elites. A handful of Baloch soldiers in Bahrain had remade themselves into elite Sheikhs by working in close proximity to the ruling family. Alternatively, by gaining appointment to a foreign embassy or a diplomat's residence, Baloch guards could rub shoulders with international elites. During fieldwork I met one such individual who used his position as a guard for an American diplomat to obtain a NATO subcontract for transporting supplies from Karachi to Kabul.

Instead of trying to build political ties with either the Bahraini or foreign state elites, Shamim claims that he was more focused on building his reputation within the migrant Baloch community. For his posting, Shamim thus chose the airport rather than a Sheikh's house. In 1973, a collection of Gulf countries – including Bahrain – purchased the British Overseas Airways Corporation and rebranded it as Gulf Air.<sup>72</sup> In addition to flights to Europe, Gulf Airways initially offered direct routes to a range of cities in South Asia, such as Karachi. Air travel across the Arabian Sea began just as oceanic mobility became restricted. Only a year before the inauguration of Gulf Air, British-India Steam Navigation Company (later absorbed into P&O) ships moving between Mumbai-Karachi-Gwadar-Muscat-Sharjah-Bahrain had stopped their passenger service. The shift from sea to air meant that by working at the airport, Shamim could theoretically greet all the Baloch who came into Bahrain at his job.

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<sup>72</sup> Gulf Airlines Website: <https://www.gulfair.com/about-gulf-air/about-gulf-air>



Beyond being a familiar face for those coming to Bahrain for the first time, Shamim claims he would help Baloch in other ways. The Gulf Airways top management was maintained as British across the transition, but most of its technical, clerical and baggage staff was recruited from South Asia. A large portion of the first batch of employees were poached from Pakistani International Airlines. Over time, Shamim developed close ties with some of the Karachiite Gulf Air employees based in Bahrain. Upon Shamim's request, his friends in Gulf Air would allow extra baggage of Baloch going home after a long time with suitcases full of gifts and household appliances.

However, as part of a security apparatus that was at least nominally bureaucratized, Shamim claims that he did not have a lot of leeway in wielding his authority. He could not quite act like a *Wadera*. He was not free to take others under his protection without first getting legal approval. In order to assist fellow Baloch settling into Bahrain, he had to follow the proper protocols. Over time, however, Shamim came to the realization that by following orders and carrying out all chores required of him he could build a personal cachet within the security fraternity. This cachet could then later be used for the assistance of other fellow Baloch in small but not insignificant ways.

For example, Shamim recalls that on his assurance immigration officers would usually turn a blind eye to Baloch who overstayed their visit visas. He would use his standing as a loyal soldier to guarantee the loyalty of other newer Baloch migrants. With the freedom to stay for extended periods visiting Baloch had the freedom to search for jobs, for which they again turned to Shamim. Shamim realized that if he deployed his own connections within the military hierarchy, he could easily find jobs for other Baloch in the protection industry. Bahrain, he knew, was always looking for new Baloch

soldiers. As long as he himself had a good reputation, the applications of those with his recommendation would not be rejected.

After about a decade in service, Shamim had developed a neat model for rebuilding himself as a *Wadera*. For a decade he proficiently carried out his duties. Unlike other Baloch, Shamim claims, he would never abandon his post or show up late for work. He would willingly carry out all orders from his supervisors; even if they required activities well beyond his officially prescribed responsibilities. For example, when he was temporarily transferred from the airport to stand guard outside the house of a member of the royal family, he agreed to cook food for all other laborers employed in the house. Shamim claims that he would bear though the ignominy of a *Wadera* being turned into a cook by keeping the bigger goal at the center of his mind. Loyal service without complaints, Shamim knew, helped accumulate personal capital within the Bahraini state. Shamim could then trade this capital with residents of Qiyamahsari *wanting* to migrate to Bahrain, for recognition as the *Wadera*. By using his personal cachet within the Bahraini police, Shamim could help fellow Baloch from Karachi settle in Bahrain and in the process become the *Wadera* once again.

Beyond getting people jobs, as a *Wadera* Shamim also helped new immigrants find accommodations. In his first few years on duty, Shamim stayed inside the military camps and saved money. He then requested being allowed to live outside and used the money he had saved to rent a large house that had several rooms in the neighborhood of Muharraq. The house he rented belonged to a Bahraini national living in the UAE but had been with Baloch renters for a long time. Consequently, the rates he got were much less than the market standard. Whenever a new immigrant would arrive and complain

of not having a place to stay, Shamim would offer to host him for free. Once his guest found a job, he would offer them permanent housing at a very nominal rate. After some time, his house was filled to capacity with several people in one room, and so Shamim decided to rent out nearby houses and sublease rooms to new arrivals. Shamim proudly claims that he always had room for a migrant Baloch, particularly those coming from Karachi.<sup>73</sup>

By resettling around a hundred individuals from *Qiyamahsari* by the nineties Shamim was well on his way to become the *Wadera* of Muharraq. Just like his great grandfather, Dad Muhammad, Shamim was helping fellow Baloch migrants find work and housing in a foreign land. However, unlike Dad Muhammad, Shamim was only helping the settlement of Baloch men and not entire families. Like other migrant-laborers in the Gulf, the Baloch men coming to Bahrain had left their families behind. Unlike Karachi in the 19th century, the Persian Gulf was not conducive for permanent settlements of Baloch families. It only offered migrant men economic resources for supporting their families back home. Thus, unlike Dad Muhammad, Shamim could not limit his efforts to consolidating his position as the *Wadera* in his site of exile. He had to simultaneously also think of ways to support the *Waderas* back in Karachi.

Shamim claims that the best way for him to support the *Waderas* of *Qiyamahsari* was regularly sending money to Karachi. The police salary he received though was

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<sup>73</sup> Andrew Gardner presents such living arrangements as type of a labor camp. He writes "Throughout the region, aging or otherwise undesirable villas are rented out as labor accommodations. Although these villas vary in size, they can (and often do) accommodate 50 or more laborers." Gardner, Andrew, "Labor Camps in the Gulf States," Viewpoints: Migration and the Gulf. The Middle East Institute. Pp. 55-57.

barely enough to support him in Bahrain. In order to earn additional income, Shamim decided to look for other business opportunities. While officially soldiers were officially not allowed to hold another job, unofficially the Bahraini government overlooked business activities they undertook on the side to compensate for the low salaries. Most Baloch soldiers, Shamim claims, make use of this implicit agreement to take on side jobs or small businesses during the three days a week they were off from work.

Shamim himself though did not have to wait for an off-day to build an entrepreneurial portfolio. While working at the airport, Shamim recalls that he was always kept abreast of how much various items cost in different countries. He knew what people were exporting from Bahrain, and what they imported. Gold and electronics, for example, he knew cost less in Bahrain than in Pakistan. Thus, whenever anyone he had helped settle in Bahrain would go back to Qiyamahsari, he would send with them these items for his brother to resell in Karachi. Similarly, he knew that costs of repair cost less in Pakistan. With this knowledge he was able to create a circuit of damaged goods going to Karachi, and repaired goods coming back to Bahrain.

Postings at transit points – such as the airport, shipping port, or the Saudi causeway – provided limited possibilities of building a political portfolio but it gave Baloch guards an entryway into a career in trade. As a small city-state, Bahrain had always been dependent on the outside world for both, basic goods needed for sustenance, as well luxury goods. As an island ideally located in a high-traffic zone in the Indian Ocean, Bahrain has also been an important transit hub since at least the 19th century. Following the late 20th century rise of global trade flows in the nearby city-state of Dubai, Bahrain too has sought to make itself a trading center with modern

infrastructure and low import/export duties.<sup>74</sup> The Baloch guards standing outside transit points—monitoring all that came in and went out of Bahrain—were thus ideally situated to benefit from Bahrain's position in the global commodity flow.

After gaining trading experience by exporting and importing suitcases of electronics, Shamim decided to scale up his operation. There was only so much one could carry in a suitcase on an airplane. In order to expand his trade, he had to instead look towards the sea once more. While air had displaced sea the preferred mode of travel for individuals, shipping containers continued to be the preferred medium for commodity flows. To gain access to the port, Shamim was able to get one of his roommates posted as a customs guard. Initially, Shamim and this roommate, working in partnership, started small. They imported dish satellite receivers on board dhows from India, which were in high demand in Bahrain despite being banned; they would sell these receivers to another Baloch friend who ran a dish installation business on his days off from police duty.

Later Shamim and his business partner decided to further expand into exporting used trucks to Pakistan. Despite the heavy investment, Shamim's truck export business initially did not produce the returns he had expected. The problem, as Shamim soon discovered, was that trucks in Bahrain were more expensive than in other parts of the Persian Gulf. People exporting trucks from the other Gulf States outpriced Shamim. In order to get trucks for less he had to buy them from other nearby countries. The most accessible nearby country with cheap trucks was Saudi Arabia.

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<sup>74</sup> Hamouche, Mustapha Ben. "The changing morphology of the gulf cities in the age of globalisation: the case of Bahrain." *Habitat International* 28, no. 4 (2004): 521-540.

As it so happened, a friend Shamim had helped settle in Bahrain already had a semi-successful car rental business that required him to drive for an hour to Dammam (Saudi Arabia) to rent a car at low rates and then sub-rent them in Bahrain a higher price. To cover his own travel costs, he would also bring containers of cheap oil from Saudi Arabia to sell at the higher market rate in Bahrain. With the help of this friend's knowledge of cars in Saudi Arabia, Shamim was able to buy and drive trucks from Saudi Arabia to Bahrain.

Since its completion in 1986, the twenty-four-kilometer-long King Fahd Causeway, or as it is better known, the Saudi Causeway, offers the only land connection from Bahrain to a foreign country. The bridge has in effect made the Saudi Arabian city of Dammam a suburb of Bahrain (or perhaps vice-versa). It is estimated that over fifty thousand individuals cross the bridge each day. Due to Bahrain's relatively more liberal laws, such as permission for women to drive, a large number of foreign expats working in the oil fields in Saudi Arabia reside in Bahrain and drive across the border each day. Additionally, with entertainment facilities such as bars, clubs and cinemas, every weekend a large number of Saudi residents come to Bahrain for recreation.

Just like at the seaport and airport, Shamim maintained close personal relationships with the guards posted on the causeway and would assist if there were any issues with importing goods from Saudi Arabia. The friend, I later found out, also operated a very clever business of reselling confiscated alcohol. Despite traveling across the border frequently, as the friend informed me, the Saudis always forgot that liquor could not be taken across the border. He confiscated several bottles of alcohol every day. As per official orders, he had to throw these bottles off the bridge into the waters below.

Seeing an opportunity, he hired a local fisherman to scoop the bottles he threw and would sell these recovered bottles to a liquor store on the other side of the causeway. Put simply, Shamim's friend would sell bottles bought by Saudis leaving Bahrain to the Saudis entering Bahrain.

Shamim's businesses were thus only one amongst the many entrepreneurial ventures of the Baloch portfolio-mercenaries. During fieldwork in Bahrain many of the Baloch military personnel expressed that only with successful side 'gigs' could one afford managing two homes, one in Bahrain and the other one in South Asia. Many of them further argued that business only became profitable after they become citizens. Bahrain, like the other Gulf-States strictly enforces the regulation that non-citizens cannot own the majority share in any legal business or property. Until they become citizens, portfolio-mercenaries have to pay a substantial fee to local partners officially registered as proprietors.

In Bahrain Shamim lives a very basic life. He still lives in a house shared with many other men. He drives an old car, mostly eats at home, and does not waste his money on alcohol and other such luxuries. His police salary, he claims, is enough to sustain him in Bahrain as well his immediate family in Pakistan. All of his business schemes, Shamim argues, are not meant for his own personal enrichment. The additional income he earns from his business he invests in Karachi with the help of his brothers. It is because of his investments, he believes, his family is on its way to regain their lost glory as the *Wadera* of Qiyamahsari.

## 5.6 Waderas once more

In the decades that followed Shamim's exile, the authority of the *Waderas* continued on its downward decline. In 1977 General Zia-ul-Haq declared martial law and brought political activities in the country to a screeching halt by banning all public gathering and rallies.<sup>75</sup> This meant that Naseem could no longer hold his daily *baithak*. Furthermore, the military dictator reversed the earlier government's policy of increasing employment opportunities by nationalizing industries. Privatization resulted in sizeable layoffs and the elimination of labor unions.<sup>76</sup> For the *Waderas* this change further constricted their ability to find jobs for other Baloch.<sup>77</sup>

During the eighties, ethnic tensions in Karachi escalated to new heights with the outbreak of war in Afghanistan. The war between the US and the Soviets — fought in Afghanistan through Pakistani proxies — led to over half a million Afghan refugees migrating to Karachi. Afghan refugees and other Pashtun migrants by the eighties constituted the largest minority in Karachi.<sup>78</sup> Most of the Pashto-speaking migrants settled in tightly knit ethnic enclaves located on the outer peripheries of the city. By that time the Pashtuns had already established their stranglehold over both inter and intra

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<sup>75</sup> Ziring, Lawrence. "Public Policy Dilemmas and Pakistan's Nationality Problem: The Legacy of Zia ul-Haq." *Asian Survey* 28, no. 8 (1988): 795-812.

<sup>76</sup> Khan, Tariq Amin. "Economy, society and the state in Pakistan." *Contemporary South Asia* 9, no. 2 (2000): 181-195.

<sup>77</sup> Naseem claims that during the seventies they were able to get jobs for at least some Baloch using their connections with labor unions and Pakistan People Party. Ethnic Baloch in Karachi were known to have had a prominent presence in both.

<sup>78</sup> Gazdar, Haris, J. Crush, and M. Balbo. "Karachi, Pakistan: Between regulation and regularisation." *International Migrants and the City: Bangkok, Berlin, Dakar, Karachi, Johannesburg, Naples, São Paulo, Tijuana, Vancouver, Vladivostok* (2005): 150.



city bus/truck networks.<sup>79</sup> The city's Muhajir majority as a result became increasingly paranoid about being trapped in their own city, with no control over the paths in and out of it.<sup>80</sup>

The growing ethnic tensions were set aflame with Karachi being flooded by American arms and ammunition intended for the mujahedeen in Afghanistan. By some estimates as much as 50% of the arms sent by CIA for fighting against the Soviets never made it out of Karachi.<sup>81</sup> Due to this surplus of guns in the black market, various political parties with strong ethnic support bases, raised militant wings equipped with the latest American technology. In the decades that targeted sectarian and ethnic killings became commonplace. The change in the scale of violence can be seen from the fact that the ethnic riots of 1972, the most brutal ethnic conflict until that time, claimed the lives of four individuals; ethnic riots in 1985 between Pashtuns and Muhajirs are estimated to have caused over two hundred deaths.<sup>82</sup>

The retracting of the state, proliferation of arms, and ethnic enclavisation in the broader space of the city led to emergence of armed Baloch gangs in the urban hub of Lyari. These 'gangs' came to replace jobbers and union leaders as the neighborhood's mediators. They formed a well-oiled protection racket in Lyari, collecting 'taxes' from residents and providing protection from other Muhajir and Pashtun gangs in

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<sup>79</sup> Gayer, Laurent. *Karachi: Ordered disorder and the struggle for the city*. Oxford University Press (UK), 2014.

<sup>80</sup> Verkaaik, Oskar. *Migrants and militants: fun and urban violence in Pakistan*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

<sup>81</sup> Hilali, A. Zahid. "The costs and benefits of the Afghan War for Pakistan." *Contemporary South Asia* 11, no. 3 (2002): 291-310.

<sup>82</sup> Hussain, Akmal. "Karachi Riots of December 1986: Crisis of State and Civil Society in Pakistan." *Economic and Political Weekly* (1987): 450-451.

exchange.<sup>83</sup> During the nineties and aughts Baloch gangs, like the classic Mafia, became the paralegal state in Lyari, providing a range of services (such as running hospitals, schools, and developmental agencies) in the neighborhood.

The urban Baloch villages outside Lyari, however, were too small to develop their own protection and governing mechanism. Dad Muhammad Village, for example, consisted of less than three thousand Baloch surrounded by much larger Muhajir and Pashtun settlements. As a result, the *Waderas* could not mold themselves in the image of the gangs of Lyari completely. They did, however, take on some the attributes of the gangs and consequently, the state.

For example, one of *Wadera* brothers — Kaleem — has taken on the responsibility of securing connections to utilities such as telephone, electricity and gas. As mentioned earlier, due to the village's jurisdiction, it had been marginalized by the city's municipal authorities. Acquiring access to these utilities used to take months of visits to governmental offices, hefty bribes, and meticulously worded letters. Since the last few years, thanks to Kaleem, residents of the village can gain access within a few days. Even calls for repairs to pipes, wires, and poles get an immediate response.

Similarly, yet another brother, Waseem, has become the guarantor of land and tenancy rights. Since the village predates the Pakistani government, the residents of the neighborhood do not have property leases with the stamp of the Pakistani government. As a result, the residents used to have no access to legal recourse in the case of an outsider unjustly occupying their land. The territory of the village shrank precisely

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<sup>83</sup> Kalia, Sumrin. "Criminal networks and governance: a study of Lyari Karachi." *The South Asianist* 4, no. 2 (2016).

because of the absence of legal documents. Moreover, not having property papers also made the sale, trade and renting of housing a risky enterprise. Occupants could refuse to leave after selling their property or tenants could claim permanent occupancy. However, since the rise of Waseem, trade, sale and renting of property has become much more systematized. Through his 'property office', Waseem oversees the transfer of land between different parties, resolves competing claims over a single property, and ensures the eviction of tenants unwilling to pay the rent. He has helped the residents produce property documents that look just like the ones the state issues. These documents he helped produce might not officially be recognized by the state, but they have come to be socially recognized as the required proof of ownership.

The eldest brother, Naseem, has taken the mantle for leading the social activities in the neighborhood. The year 2013, when I first started spending time at Naseem's always empty *baithak* in Karachi, was one of the most violent years in the city's history. Human Rights Commission of Pakistan claims that around 3,251 people were killed that year in instances of urban violence.<sup>84</sup> Due to the ubiquity of violence, Naseem claims, he was unable to convince people that they would be safe sitting outside under his protection. In order to improve the image of the neighborhood, Naseem inaugurated an annual Pigeon High Flying competition that would attract pigeon enthusiasts from all over the city. Qiyamahsari today is the hub of competitive pigeon flying in Pakistan. He had a number of non-Baloch pigeon flyers under his tutelage, who would regularly

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<sup>84</sup> Ali, Rabia 'Death toll rises: Over 3,200 killings in Karachi make 2013 deadliest year so far.' The Express Tribune, Karachi. January 18 2014. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/660098/death-toll-rises-over-3200-killings-in-karachi-make-2013-deadliest-year-so-far/>

come and train in the mohallah, and in the process promote a positive 'soft image' of the neighborhood.

These emerging gang/state like roles of the *Waderas* can partially be understood within the context of broader socio-political changes within Karachi. In 2015 the urban wing of the Pakistani military, the Rangers, conducted military operations across the city against various sectarian and ethnic militias. The brutal raids led by Punjabi soldiers of the Pakistan army brought at least temporary calm to the city, making events like the Annual Pigeon High Flying Competition possible. A few years earlier (2009), electricity supply had been privatized, making it easier for areas not recognized by the city's municipal authority to get a regular connection. Even Waseem's property management business was part of a growing phenomenon of local strongmen overseeing exchanges and development of lands that did not have a private owner recognized by the state. It is estimated that around 35 % of Karachi's annual housing demand is met by the informal market, like the one established by Waseem.

While political developments in the city explain how non-state actors came to take on functions of the city, they do not explain why the *Waderas* in particular assumed these roles. As the earlier sections mentioned, the authority of the *Waderas* had been on a steady decline since at least the seventies (or since the fifties, according to Shamim). Their reemergence in the new millennium, I argue, needs to be understood within the context of Shamim's growing portfolio in Bahrain. As the brothers in Karachi would testify, they owe a large part of their recent success to Shamim's financial support.

The trucks Shamim was exporting from Bahrain were received in Karachi by Kaleem. Initially, Kaleem used to rent out these trucks to earn additional income for the

family. After the privatization of the Karachi Electric Supply Corporation, Kaleem fitted the trucks with large ladders that could reach electricity wires on tall poles. He then applied for a subcontract for managing repairs and installing new connections on behalf of the now-private Karachi Electric company. After receiving the contract, he could provide his areas residents direct service. To get a connection they only had to approach him. One of the biggest benefit of this business, according to Kaleem, is that he can easily get electricity connections for the houses without property documents Waseem was managing.

Waseem's big break as a property manager also came as a result of Shamim's relationships in Bahrain. At the turn of the millennium, many of the first wave of Bahraini soldiers from Qiyamahsari started to retire. As part of their retirement agreement these soldiers received sizeable retirement funds. Shamim once told me that whenever someone was close to retirement, they would come to him for investment advice and he would always tell them that housing was the most secure investment sector in Karachi. For those who wanted further assistance, Shamim would suggest contacting Waseem. Through Shamim's referrals, Waseem had steady access to investors willing to trust him on all matters related to property trade and construction.

Even the growth of Naseem's Pigeon Flying Club owes a great deal to Shamim's sponsorship. Naseem claims that the sport had been dying in the ever-busy city of Karachi due to the excessive time commitment it demands.<sup>85</sup> Enthusiasts found it hard

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<sup>85</sup> Pigeon racing is an old sport. Enthusiasts celebrate it as a dying sport of the *Nawabs* and landed gentry. According to Naseem it is demands of time that make pigeon racing conducive to a *Nawabi* lifestyle. A typical high-flying tournament lasts a week. Each day starts on the *Fajr adhan* with contestants releasing his/her flight of pigeons. It ends at Maghreb with each participant

to justify spending hours sitting on rooftops, watching pigeons fly. Shamim, though, made the justification easier by generously offering a motorcycle and refrigerator as the first and second prize at the annual event in Qiyamahsari. Moreover, for the last few years Shamim has given money to Naseem to print a two-page centerfold advertisement about the annual competition in the National Pigeon Flying Association's annual magazine. Thanks to Shamim, the competition in Goth Dad Muhammad is now the largest pigeon flying event in the country.

Shamim's career in Bahrain has thus put the *Waderas* back on the political map of the village. The brothers are currently involved in various projects for rebuilding their lost authority as jobbers, housing managers, protectors and mediators. Kaleem, for example, has emerged as the foremost protector of the neighborhood. After establishing a monopoly on subcontracts in his immediate *mohallah*, Kaleem expanded his electricity repair business to Lyari. By working in close collaboration with gangs in Lyari, he has himself developed a reputation for being the 'protector' of Qiyamahsari. While Kaleem denies any direct involvement with the gangs, residents of the village often call on him for providing physical protection in conflicts with other ethnic groups in the surroundings. Moreover, Kaleem himself frequently uses the 'gangs' for evicting non-paying tenants on properties managed by Waseem.

Through his property management business, Waseem claims to have created space within densely packed neighborhood for new and returning Baloch migrants.

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calculating the average aggregate flying time. Those that don't return till the evening adhaan are disqualified. Longest average time per pigeon per day is declared the winner at the end of the week.

While population expansion in the surrounding made it impossible for the village to expand horizontally, Waseem has managed to grow the neighborhood vertically.

Waseem used the remittances sent by soldiers from Bahrain to convert old single-story houses into tall multi-storied apartment buildings. On behalf of the investors in the Gulf, he rents out individual apartments on subleases drawn out by him. Interestingly, just like prices of government backed land fluctuate with the stability of the state, the rates of these apartments also fluctuate with the standing of the *Waderas*.

Naseem meanwhile has become the new 'jobber' of the neighborhood. In addition to getting jobs for residents in his brother's property and trucking business, each year Naseem recruits a sizeable number of people for assisting in the annual hunting trips of elite ruling families from Bahrain. In the last two decades ruling elites from various parts of the Persian Gulf have been frequently leading 'luxury' hunting excursions in parts of Balochistan, Sindh and Punjab. Logistical planning for the excursions pull together a large labor force of locals designated with the task of organizing a secure caravan to take the Sheikhs from Karachi to the hunting grounds and setting up a moving tent city in the wilderness. Through Shamim's connections in Bahrain, Naseem became part of the local contingency hired by the Sheikhs. Each year Naseem hires a group of men from his neighborhood in Karachi and takes them to Balochistan a month before the trip to arrange for the various needs of the Bahraini Sheikhs. The salary and gifts offered by the Bahrainis during this brief trip is usually equivalent of what one earns in a year.

## **5.7 Conclusion**

Since Shamim's exile, he has visited Qiyamahsari twice. In the early aughts he went to settle a property dispute between two of his brothers. About a decade later he again had to go to Karachi to deliver his nephew's coffin; who had died in line of duty during the Arab Springs protest.

Why has he visited only twice, I asked him? Surely, the four decades old arrest orders did not still have him in exile. Moreover, I knew from my other interviews that every two years the mercenaries in Bahrain are allowed to return home for a couple of months. Shamim claimed that he would accept the ticket and the leave offered by Bahrain but would just quietly stay in Muharraq. Two months off from police duty just meant he could focus on his businesses full time. In any case, he argued, his heart was just not in Karachi anymore. While until he recently he had been very driven by the desire of rebuilding their status in the city, but now he has been thinking about other alternate cities for settlement.

Like Shafiq from Chapter 4, Shamim received his passport after the Arab Spring protests. With this passport not only could Shamim now live in Bahrain permanently, but also own land and business under his own name in Bahrain and other countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Currently, Shamim is in the middle of starting a more elaborate business that requires trade across several countries. He hopes to use a company registered in Dubai to buy waste products from oil refineries in Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, transport it to a factory in Sharjah for converting oil by-product into resin for fiberglass waterproofing, and exporting it to ship builders in India, Pakistan, and



Bangladesh. Once the business is established, Shamim believes he can establish a permanent factory in one of the other cities in the Gulf.

The passport also allowed Shamim to get more Bahraini passports for his nuclear family. Thanks to the passport, one of Shamim's son managed to get a scholarship for Gulf citizens to study in China. He has even married a local woman from the Hunan region in China. What routes would be turning to China lead his family to, Shamim is not sure.

The intergenerational story of the *Waderas* brings into question the one-to-one migration model used for studying labor movement between South-Asia and the Persian Gulf. It instead points to a continued pattern of Baloch mobility across centuries. This mobility though should not be read as Baloch being modern cosmopolitan subjects for whom the entire world is their oyster. These Baloch are not free to easily move to any part of the world and claim belonging on the fact of being a citizen of the world. Their mobility instead was limited by larger structural openings — - such as a city on the rise facing a critical labor shortfall.

Moreover, it was not enough to just identify this opening. The openings were meaningless without having access to routes moving across it. The routes for the Baloch were the social networks created by movements of the generations that came before them. Access the different openings thus required reconnecting with relatives who had moved to different places decades, or even centuries earlier.

The routes that Shamim used in the mid-seventies took him first to Balochistan, and from there to his long-lost cousin to the Persian Gulf. The opening he found there was in the protection industry. As the chapter narrates, a military job was only the

opening. By stepping into army boots, one could walk into other arenas of social, economic and political activities. By working in Bahrain's military infrastructure, mercenaries could access a portfolio of possibilities both within and beyond the recruiting state.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1 *Mercenaries as a norm*

For medieval historians of the 'old world', free-floating mercenaries switching between employers far from home would appear as a persistent feature of political order. For example, each of the three-large medieval Muslim Mongol empires — Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal — required freelancing mercenaries in order to function regularly. Kings imposed rule on both new and established territories through mercenaries. Mercenaries allowed merchants to expand their arena of trade by securing new areas of sale and purchase. Bureaucrats depended on mercenaries to ensure that taxation and other necessary bureaucratic tasks could be carried out smoothly. Legal apparatus would have not held its efficacy without the coercive backing of mercenaries.

In the interconnected world of the Eurasian landmass and its oceans, mercenaries were everywhere. For example, Karen Barkey claims that the Ottoman empire was able to bring order amidst rebellions in broad swathes of land by recruiting rebels as mercenaries, rather than relying on a centralized permanent army<sup>1</sup>. In self-armed groups ready to turn away from rebelling to working for the empire, the Ottomans found allies already present everywhere. Similarly, Dirk Kolff argues that the massive armies that Mughal rulers so proudly documented were in reality population censuses of temporary

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<sup>1</sup> Barkey, Karen. *Bandits and bureaucrats: The Ottoman route to state centralization*. Cornell University Press, 1994.

*Qasbas* (villages) selling military labor along all significant trade routes and cities in South Asia.<sup>2</sup>

While the recruitment of mercenaries was an active state strategy for bringing to order self-armed living within the empire according to both Barkey and Kolff, mercenarism attracted populations from beyond the ambits of the empire itself. As Kolff himself acknowledges, military-markets were multi-ethnic spaces: sources of employment for local yeoman farmers, as well as, crucially, a source of mobility various groups from far and wide. As scholarship the on African diaspora in India has highlighted, soldiers from parts of North and East Africa were a recurrent presence in the militaries of medieval South Asia<sup>3</sup>. Particularly in territories around the coast, African and other Indian Ocean diasporic communities such as Yemenis constituted a political class without whom political order could not have been thought possible<sup>4</sup>.

Additionally, for populations perched on the frontiers of large empire—Caucasia, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Balochistan—mercenarism provided one of the most common strategies for physical, social, and economic mobility. Many of the

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<sup>2</sup> Kolff, Dirk HA. *Naukar, Rajput, and Sepoy: The Ethnohistory of the Military Labour Market of Hindustan, 1450-1850*. Vol. 43. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

<sup>3</sup> See: Alpers, Edward A. "The African Diaspora in the Northwestern Indian Ocean: reconsideration of an old problem, new directions for research." *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 17, no. 2 (1997): 62-81. Also, Robbins, Kenneth X., and John McLeod. *African Elites in India: Habshi Amarat*. Mapin Publishing Pvt, 2006. And, Hawley, John C., ed. *India in Africa, Africa in India: Indian Ocean Cosmopolitanisms*. Indiana University Press, 2008. Perhaps the most well-known African mercenary in India was Malik Ambar who remained a prominent rival of the Mughal Emperor Akbar.

<sup>4</sup> Spodek, Howard. "Rulers, merchants and other groups in the city-states of Saurashtra, India, around 1800." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 16, no. 4 (1974): 448-470.

historically prominent elite mercenary armies — Cossacks, Qizilbash, or Janissaries, for example — emerged out of mobile groups moving to imperial centers from these peripheries. Alongside these better-known elite forces, military markets mediated the settlement of large populations from the peripheries into the heartland of empires. For example, across India there still exist significant Muslim settlements of ‘Pathans’ who trace their genealogy through *jammadars* or military chiefs under the employment of various rulers<sup>5</sup>.

One might even argue that foreign mercenaries, rather than permanent citizen-soldiers, have been the norm for state armies across global history. Even European states, despite claiming to be early converts to the professional national-army model, recruited mercenaries from the private market well into the twentieth century. In opposition to the popular perception that Western Europeans moved away from using mercenaries after the consolidation of national territories with the treaty of Westphalia, historians of Europe document continued use of non-national and non-state means of violence<sup>6</sup>. For example, even as states prevented their own citizens from joining armies to fight in other treaty states, they continued to heavily recruit mercenaries from ‘neutral’ states like Switzerland<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> For example see: Digby, Simon. "Dreams and Reminiscences of Dattu Sarvani a Sixteenth Century Indo-Afghan Soldier." *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 2, no. 1 (1965): 52-80.

<sup>6</sup> Thomson, Janice E. *Mercenaries, pirates, and sovereigns: state-building and extraterritorial violence in early modern Europe*. Princeton University Press, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> Casparis, John. "The Swiss Mercenary System: Labor Emigration from the Semiperiphery." *Review (Fernand Braudel Center)* 5, no. 4 (1982): 593-642.

European states' use of mercenaries in territories outside of Europe was even more evident. European expansion in the Indian as well as Atlantic Ocean, at least in its early years, was largely in the hands of freelancing merchants, privateers, mercenaries, and trading companies operating through royal charters and even state funding. The structure of the European empires abroad was built by private entrepreneurs of violence, working through tacit and tactical agreements with European states. Despite massive standing armies at home, colonial empires abroad were dependent on the implicit or explicit support of private actors who could go from being privateers to mercenaries (or vice-versa) in an instant<sup>8</sup>.

In fact, even after the European empires had absorbed territories initially conquered by trading companies and privateers under their direct imperial structures, most of their military rank and file continued to be recruited through military-markets in the colonies. As Thomas Metcalf argues in 'Imperial Connections: India in the Indian Ocean Arena, 1860-1920', the expansion of the British empire in the Indian Ocean would not have been possible without sepoys, police, and levies recruited from India<sup>9</sup>. Mercenaries from India were protectors of the British empire and its subjects in places as diverse as Egypt, Iraq, Aden, Persian Gulf, East Africa, Mauritius, Manila, Sumatra

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<sup>8</sup> Thomson. 1996.

<sup>9</sup> Metcalf, Thomas R. *Imperial connections: India in the Indian Ocean arena, 1860-1920*. Vol. 4. Univ of California Press, 2008.

and Malacca. As late as the Second World War, the Union Jack was carried to the battlefield by military-labor from India.

It was only in the post-Second World War international order that national armies came to replace mercenaries as the norm. Janice Thomson argues that mercenaries were eliminated from the global political order not with the emergence of nation-states, but with the internationalization of the nation-states system during the mid-twentieth century<sup>10</sup>. As the entire world after the Second War started to be carved into contiguous territorially bounded units, nation-states came to not just claim monopoly over legitimate violence within its borders but also responsibility for violence emanating from its borders. Under this new international diplomatic agreement, no longer could states hire mercenaries temporarily, and later go on to shed responsibility for their actions in another state. In order to maintain control over violence both within borders and across them, states collectively switched to recruiting permanent full-time citizen soldiers already tied to states through the nation.

Despite being a recent innovation that had yet to prove its durability, national-armies completely replaced mercenaries as an essential feature of the post-Second World War political order, both within popular and social-scientific imaginations. The second half of the twentieth century saw the rise of mammoth national military industrial-bureaucratic complexes all over the world. In what was considered the First World, the

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<sup>10</sup> Thomson. 1996.

United States and the Soviet republic heavily spent on their military budgets to build technologically advanced armies of citizen-soldiers and sophisticated weapons of mass destruction<sup>11</sup>. As Americans came to so harshly realize during the Vietnam draft—war could not be outsourced to foreign labor. Armed with expensive weapons of mass destruction, modern militaries could not be entrusted in the hands of ragtag crews of foreign mercenaries<sup>12</sup>.

The phenomenon of large modern national armies was not limited to the Global West. In the Third World, the state apparatus left behind by the colonial empire fell into the hands of generals and military dictators. In many of the post-colonial countries, national armies became the most dominant player within the formal state structure<sup>13</sup>. Funded partly by global powers competing for influence in the cold-war era and partly by appropriation of disproportionately large chunks of national budgets, even the poorer nations raised massive modern bureaucratic armies<sup>14</sup>. Consequently, in the latter half of the previous century, all over the world it became impossible to imagine political order without national armies. As a popular joke in Pakistan says, it is easier to imagine

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<sup>11</sup> Hammond, Paul Y. *Organizing for Defense: The American Military Establishment in the 20th Century*. Princeton University Press, 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Cortright, David. *Soldiers in revolt: GI resistance during the Vietnam War*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> For example see: Yong, Tan Tai. "Punjab and the making of Pakistan: The roots of a civil-military state." *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* 18, no. s1 (1995): 177-192.

<sup>14</sup> Deger, Saadet, and Ron Smith. "Military expenditure and growth in less developed countries." *Journal of conflict resolution* 27, no. 2 (1983): 335-353.



a Pakistan army without Pakistan, than it is to imagine Pakistan without a Pakistan army.

Furthermore, in many of the developing countries, militaries became one of the largest employers. For populations living in impoverished conditions with limited economic opportunities, national armies provided a ladder for social mobility<sup>15</sup>. For a poor farmer from a rural area, rising up in the military hierarchy was a more realistic possibility than becoming a successful industrialist. Even politically, militaries remained an important channel for forwarding ideological agendas. For example, in the broader middle-east the military in many states came to be recognized as a liberating, progressive, nationalist force that could once and for all end the colonial hangover. Unlike civic political parties often monopolized by established elites— military culture of egalitarianism, impersonalized bureaucratized structure, and merit-based assessment promised able individuals a possible route to the highest echelons of state power<sup>16</sup>. Again, it was easier for a poor farmer to become an influential general than an important popularly elected minister.

Within Weberian Social Science, the recruitment of soldiers for national armies became a thread that could not be cut without destabilizing the civic contract between state and society. The state monopoly of legitimacy over violence required at least an

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<sup>15</sup> Johnson, John Asher. *Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries*. Princeton University Press, 2015.

<sup>16</sup> Horowitz, Irving Louis, and Ellen Kay Trimberger. "State power and military nationalism in Latin America." *Comparative Politics* 8, no. 2 (1976): 223-244.

explicit commitment to recruit citizen-soldiers from within the nation as their means of legitimate violence. States needed citizens to guard national borders and fight wars in the name of the nation, across those borders<sup>17</sup>. Even from the perspective of the citizens, the possibility of joining the national army was essential for imagining the state as a representative of the nation<sup>18</sup>.

Literature on nationalism further consolidated the importance of national armies for producing social order<sup>19</sup>. It showed national-armies as an important symbol around which states could build national solidarity, on two levels. Through military parades and public displays of armaments, states showcased their strength and might for the nation; on the other hand, the deaths of soldiers in defense of that nation are venerated, making the national army the morally highest form of sacrifice a citizen could make<sup>20</sup>. Militaristic images dominated nationalist propaganda material. Posters, stickers, and other such paraphernalia with pictures of tanks, jets, generals, and ordinary soldiers,

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<sup>17</sup> Paret, Peter. "Nationalism and the Sense of Military Obligation." *Military Affairs: The Journal of Military History, Including Theory and Technology* (1970): 2-6. Also see: Posen, Barry R.

"Nationalism, the mass army, and military power." *International security* 18, no. 2 (1993): 80-124.

<sup>18</sup> For example, see: Cowen, Deborah, and Emily Gilbert, eds. *War, citizenship, territory*. Routledge, 2008. Also, Woodward, Rachel, and K. Neil Jenkins. "Military identities in the situated accounts of British military personnel." *Sociology* 45, no. 2 (2011): 252-268. And; Cowen, Deborah. *Military workfare: The soldier and social citizenship in Canada*. Vol. 31. University of Toronto Press, 2008.:

<sup>19</sup> For example, see: King, Alex. *Memorials of the Great War in Britain: the symbolism and politics of remembrance*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Monger, David. *Patriotism and propaganda in First World War Britain: The national war aims committee and civilian morale*. Liverpool University Press, 2012. Also see: Reese, Roger. "Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought." *The Red Army's Military Effectiveness in World War II*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas (2011).

became ubiquitous presence all over the world<sup>21</sup>. These images are further corroborated by movies and oral narratives of the sacrifices and valor of citizen-soldiers defending the nation<sup>22</sup>. Together these symbolic artifacts placed the entire weight of the nation on the shoulders of citizen-soldiers, without whom the nation would either fall into disarray or, worse, be conquered by another state.<sup>23</sup>

With the rise of citizen-armies across the globe, mercenaries withdrew into the background during the 'short twentieth century'<sup>24</sup>. During the period following the second World War to the end of the Cold War during the nineteen nineties, mercenaries disappeared from both academic literature and popular imagination. Consequently, when mercenaries reemerged with the beginning of modern globalization, they appeared as exceptions to the global norm<sup>25</sup>. The end of the cold war led to a decline in foreign military funding by global superpowers. Under economic pressures third world rulers and other non-state political players— like the resource extracting corporations— downsized military budgets by turning to private security companies (PSC). Instead of spreading military resources thin and dividing the military budget between multiple

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<sup>21</sup> For example, see: Bodnar, John E. *Remaking America: Public memory, commemoration, and patriotism in the twentieth century*. Princeton University Press, 1992.

<sup>22</sup> Sluka, Jeffrey A. "From graves to nations: political martyrdom and Irish nationalism." *Martyrdom and Political Resistance*, op. cit (1997): 39.

<sup>23</sup> MacKenzie, John M., ed. *Popular Imperialism and the Military: 1850-1950*. Manchester University Press, 1992.

<sup>24</sup> I borrow this term from Eric Hobsbawm. See: Hobsbawm, Eric. "Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century (London: Abacus)." (1994).

<sup>25</sup> Krahmann, Elke. *Private Security Companies and the State Monopoly on Violence: A Case of Norm Change?* Frankfurt am Main: PRIF, 2009.

factions within the state, despots and corporations outsourced protection of key sites for symbolic sovereignty and economic resources to a small group of highly trained foreign mercenaries<sup>26</sup>. PSC's registered in one state and recruiting soldiers from another, for deployment in a third state, worked with great indemnity to enforce a coercive control mechanism that proved much cheaper than the persuasive order of nationalism.

Though scholars of Africa connected the phenomenon of private security companies to an emerging global neoliberal order<sup>27</sup>, mercenaries were treated as pathologies of 'weak', mostly black states<sup>28</sup>. Rather than trying to rethink the ways in which PSC challenge our conceptions of bounded societies and national states, the literature coming out of Africa was parochialized as descriptions of an exceptional order. PSC's were seen as symptoms of societies which lacked formal state structure<sup>29</sup>. In the absence of state structures that could enforce the sovereignty of the state and monopolize legitimacy over violence, PSC provided an acceptable solution<sup>30</sup>. Through PSC, rulers of weak states could revert back to their older model of controlling particular territories and factions rather than the entire nation-state. Yet it was believed that in

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<sup>26</sup> Muthien, Bernedette, and Ian Taylor. "The return of the dogs of war? The privatization of security in Africa." *Cambridge Studies in International Relations* 85 (2002): 183-202

<sup>27</sup> Ferguson, James. *Global shadows: Africa in the neoliberal world order*. Duke University Press, 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Avant, Deborah. "NGOs, corporations and security transformation in Africa." *International Relations* 21, no. 2 (2007): 143-161. And: Cilliers, Jakkie, and Richard Cornwell. "Mercenaries and the Privatization of Security in Africa." *African Security Review* 8, no. 2 (1999): 31-42.

<sup>29</sup> Musah, Abdel-Fatau. "Privatization of security, arms proliferation and the process of state collapse in Africa." *Development and Change* 33, no. 5 (2002): 911-933. Also,

<sup>30</sup> Ndlovu-Gatsheni, Sabelo J. "Weak states and the growth of the private security sector in Africa: Whither the African state." *Private Security in Africa*, edited by S. Gumedze. Pretoria: Institute of Security Studies (2007): 17-38.

most other parts of the world, strong states continued to work with national armies as the norm, rather than the exceptional PSC's<sup>31</sup>. Such was the hold of mid-twentieth century political order, anything that did not fit within its model was deemed exceptional.

William Reno, a scholar of state and violence in Africa, argues that the profitability of PSC attracted larger political players who by the 21st century established bigger Private Military Companies (PMC)<sup>32</sup>. In contrast to the PSC in Africa, PMC managed a much broader portfolio of activities. The much smaller PSC were in most cases nothing more than glorified security guards. Their duties were limited to securing key state and corporate installations, protecting key individuals, organizing caravans, and every so often cracking down on local protests and uprisings. In contrast the much larger PMC established by economic and political elites in the North Atlantic world, undertook a much broader range of activities that yielded great profits. They could train foreign armies, manage sophisticated weaponry, secure borders, manage entire cities, and even fight wars. As Anna Leander claims 'PMCs appear to have gained considerable power over security understandings and discourses. They increasingly shape which issues and problems are 'securitized' – turned into existential threats and

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<sup>31</sup> Musah, Abdel-Fatau, Kayode Fayemi, and J'Kayode Fayemi, eds. *Mercenaries: an African security dilemma*. Pluto Press, 2000.

<sup>32</sup> Reno, William. *Warlord politics and African states*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999.

which kind of action is to be considered most appropriate. They are part of a general process in which security is not only privatized but also re-militarized<sup>33</sup>.

Peculiarities of weak states notwithstanding, mercenaries seem to be everywhere in the globalized world of porous state borders. G4S, an American Private Military Company (PMC) with military-labor deployed in more than hundred countries around the world, is now the third largest private employer in the world<sup>34</sup>. Academie, better known as Blackwater, has replaced the American army abroad in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Its notorious CEO Erik Prince even made a passionate public appeal to the President of the United States to recognize Afghanistan as its colony with Prince himself as the Viceroy<sup>35</sup>. In the third world, along with weak African states, strong, oil-rich states in the Persian Gulf are adapting to the mercenary war. As recent reports suggests, the Saudi-led war in Yemen has been outsourced to mercenaries from places as far as Columbia<sup>36</sup>.

In the last decade, security studies scholars have written more about mercenaries than any other global issue; other than perhaps global terrorism<sup>37</sup>. Along with

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<sup>33</sup> Leander, Anna. "The power to construct international security: On the significance of private military companies." *Millennium* 33, no. 3 (2005): 803-825. P. 804

<sup>34</sup> Staff Reporter 'The Largest Company You've Never Heard Of: G4S And The London Olympics'. August 6 2012. <http://www.ibtimes.com/largest-company-youve-never-heard-g4s-london-olympics-739232>

<sup>35</sup> Prince, Erik 'The MacArthur Model for Afghanistan' Wall Street Journal. May 31 2017. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-macarthur-model-for-afghanistan-1496269058>

<sup>36</sup> Hager, Emily 'Emirates Secretly Sends Colombian Mercenaries to Yemen Fight.' The New York Times. Nov 25 2015. <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/11/26/world/middleeast/emirates-secretly-sends-colombian-mercenaries-to-fight-in-yemen.html>

<sup>37</sup> O'Brien, Kevin A. "PMCs, myths and mercenaries: The debate on private military companies."

International Law experts, the discipline of security studies has discussed various different permutations and combinations of states and private military companies. How do mercenaries impact state authority? How should mercenaries be legally regulated nationally and internationally? Do mercenaries promote or discourage peace? Do they increase or decrease militaristic and economic efficiency of state?

Despite the abundance of mercenary literature, their influence has not gone beyond the structural social sciences working with a formal understanding of political order. Methodologically and conceptually, the research on mercenaries remains limited in scope. In the more humanistic sciences, key exceptions aside, mercenaries only appear as an object of critique<sup>38</sup>. They are at best seen as born to a moment in which the old order has died but the new is yet to be born<sup>39</sup>. At worst they are harbingers of neo-liberal disorder; elements of chaos promising dystopian apocalyptic futures of unsystematic loot and plunder by hired guns on the behest of those with money<sup>40</sup>. In either case, mercenaries are seen as agents of disorder unable to produce or even sustain political order for an extended period of time<sup>41</sup>.

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*The RUSI Journal* 145, no. 1 (2000): 59-64.

<sup>38</sup> For a key exception see: Hoffman, Danny. *The war machines: young men and violence in Sierra Leone and Liberia*. Duke University Press, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Valente, Peter J., and Khalid Medani. "Mercenaries and Private Military Companies: How They Destabilize and Undermine African States A Case Study of Sierra Leone."

<sup>40</sup> Singer, Peter Warren. *Corporate warriors: The rise of the privatized military industry*. Cornell University Press, 2007.

<sup>41</sup> Zarate, Juan Carlos. "The emergence of a new dog of war: Private international security companies, international law, and the new world disorder." *Stan. j. Int'l L.* 34 (1998): 75.

One of the main reasons why mercenaries cannot be read as agents of order is because of they are understood in the context of the short 20th century citizen-army order. While there have been attempts at comparing Private Military Companies to their historical predecessors of pre-modern mercenaries particularly East India companies<sup>42</sup>, the literature still lacks a continuous historical genealogy<sup>43</sup>. The main stumbling block in making the historical connection remains the twentieth century. Disconnected from their older history by the 20th century world of national armies, mercenaries in the 21st century continue to be imagined either as vestiges of a bygone era, anomalies within the international system, or as agents of disorder.

To push against this limited understanding of mercenaries, my dissertation is an attempt to understand mercenaries as a persistent feature of political order. Across the chapters I highlight the fact that Baloch did not disappear from the political arena of protection during the twentieth century. Baloch mercenaries appeared on the regional political geography in the 16th century and continued to conquer in the name of others until the 19th century. With the rise of the British Empire in the Indian Ocean, they found for themselves a niche within the 'indirectly ruled' areas of the Persian Gulf. They

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<sup>42</sup> Percy, Sarah. *Mercenaries: The history of a norm in international relations*. Oxford University Press on Demand, 2007.

<sup>43</sup> The one salient exception to this rule has been the literature on Gurkhas in Africa. Like the Baloch, the Gurkhas too have managed to transition from being part of the colonial military to private security companies. See: Chisholm, Amanda. "Marketing the Gurkha security package: colonial histories and neoliberal economies of private security." *Security Dialogue* 45, no. 4 (2014): 349-372. Also, Vines, Alex. "Gurkhas and the private security business in Africa." *Peace, profit or Plunder* (1999): 123-140.



continued to form a salient presence in the Gulf armies even during the 'age of nationalism' in the mid-twentieth century. Even after the British empire left the region in the nineteen seventies, Baloch continued to be part of independent national armies in the Gulf. With the rise of PMC, Baloch have been remade as disposable military labor who still form the largest ethnic community in Bahrain's security apparatus.

This continuous history of Baloch mercenaries across the twentieth century provides us with not just a unique case, but a vantage point for rethinking our conception of political order. Baloch networks allow us to trace the historical genealogy of the ever-evolving relationship between states and mercenaries. Each chapter in this dissertation follows a particular charismatic case of a Baloch involved in the protection business during the twentieth century. The specific narratives of Baloch lives highlight the different ways in which mercenaries continued to operate even in a world in which citizen-soldiers had become the norm. The different narratives together present mercenaries as persistent political agents shaping political order from both within and without states.

## ***6.2 Seeing through mercenary eyes***

As I show in various chapters, at no point time were the Baloch alone in working as mercenaries. During Omani rule in East Africa, Baloch fort guards always shared duties with Yemeni mercenaries (chapter 1). In the colonial period, Baloch were competing with Nepalese and Sikh officers for foreign assignments (chapter 2). Even during the age of nationalism Baloch soldiers shared seats on airplanes with retired and

seconded Punjabi employees of the Pakistani army (chapter 4). Baloch mercenaries thus point not to any peculiar ‘martial race’, but to the persistent presence of mercenaries within the regional political order.

However, unlike these other groups the Baloch do not see their role as being limited to political order at a certain time period. They instead trace a history across both sides of the twentieth-century divide. In fact, even during the mercenary-less world of the mid-twentieth century, Baloch mercenaries continued to circulate within the various Persian Gulf states. As a result, Baloch mercenaries provide a case study that disrupts the commonly assumed historical arc—of national-armies displacing mercenaries, only to share space with them again. Baloch mercenaries allow me to shift the focus away from the discontinuities on both ends of the mid-twentieth century, to trace continuities in political-order across the century. By exploring life histories of Baloch operating across moments of structural discontinuity, the dissertation presents a long-established yet seldom discussed political constant of mercenaries.

The significance of Baloch mercenaries to political order, however, cannot be grasped from within a national history of any single state or even time period. Official state records seldom record the importance of Baloch mercenaries beyond their numeric strength in charts and statistics taking stock of military labor. At no point time did they rise up the ranks to form an empire of their own. In written histories, Baloch mercenaries seldom earned mentions beyond brief footnotes. Unlike the more renowned elite mercenary forces of the past such as the Janissaries, Cossacks, Hessians, Qizilbash,

or even the mammoth Private Military Companies in the present, Baloch never came to be recognized as an independent political force. Their service remained dispersed across a long period and an expansive geography, without implicit recognition in any particular place or time. Hence, to see their role in full required weaving together footnotes from across several states and an extended period of time.

History has a bias for conquerors who rule in their own name. Those who conquer in their own name also write histories in their own name. Conquerors who rule produce paper evidence of rule. Colonial conquerors even built large archives to neatly catalogue the ocean of documents through which ruled. The post-colonial states that inherited these archives reorganized them in the name of the territorially prescribed nation. In the process of stateizing, territorializing, and nationalizing history, these archival records all but forgot the motley crew of Baloch mercenaries present in a certain area at one point in time and employed by a different state at another.

In contrast to rulers, conquerors who do not rule in their own name — namely the mercenaries — do not leave behind the same kind of textual trail. Due to not being pressed by the exigencies of rule, mercenaries do not keep meticulous records of their services. In fact, their job often demands them to stay out of public records. Anonymity was an essential mercenary quality. The more a mercenary group gained recognition, the less suitable they became as a mercenary force. As the Ottoman empire realized with the succession of the slave-soldier Mamluk kingdom; as mercenaries gain prominence and cultural capital they come to threaten the state itself.

The continued prominence of Baloch mercenaries can at least in part be attributed to the fact that they have remained marginal within textual records and histories. Other than Beatrice Nicolini's work on Baloch soldiers in the Omani empire, there has thus far not been any substantial studies on the Baloch mercenaries. Even in the scholarship on Balochistan itself, mercenaries deployed abroad remain conspicuously absent. As I highlight in the first chapter, Baloch have been erased from the conquests they made possible by states memorializing such events only in their own name.

To make up for their thin textual written record, the dissertation offers thick ethnographies and micro-histories of the lives and livelihoods of key mobile Baloch mercenaries. The primary material used in this dissertation came out of two years of multi-sited archival and ethnographic research in Pakistan, Bahrain, Oman, UAE, England, Kenya, and Tanzania. Instead of focusing on the bare archival files on Baloch mercenaries, I collected descriptive historical records and narratives of prominent mercenary figures from a diverse range of sources: colonial reports on trade, court records, newspapers, magazines, poems, posters, epics, self-published books, memoirs, diaries, photographs and oral histories. Additionally, I conducted extended ethnographic interviews in Karachi with retired and aspiring mercenaries, and in Bahrain with Baloch currently in service in order to see up close the desires and practices driving Baloch mercenary mobility between these cities. By studying different stages of

the mercenary cycle, I was able to understand mercenary recruitment as part of an ongoing and systematic phenomenon.

The absence of state records on Baloch mercenaries in a way proved fortuitous. It allowed me to avoid the trap of seeing mercenaries only as means of violence in the hands of a state free to wield them as it may. By studying the phenomenon at the micro scale, I came to recognize Baloch mercenaries not as tools but agents of order. Through the empirically thick data on everyday mercenary lives, I could flip the perspective from the state to mercenaries. Instead of trying to locate mercenaries within a larger political order, through primary data on lives and imaginations of individual mercenaries I could construct political order from the perspective of mercenaries.

Seen through mercenary eyes, political order in the region does not divide into territorial holdings of discrete states or empires. The Indian Ocean instead appears as a interconnected zone with multiple mercenary employers competing over recruits, collaborating on import and export of soldiers, and fighting through similar sets of mercenaries. Baloch mercenaries saw themselves as part of a non-structural flexible pattern of Baloch mercenary order that could move from one place to another. Furthermore, from the perspective of Baloch mercenaries, history does not periodize into distinct forms of political order; such as medieval, colonial, post-colonial, and neoliberal. In their long careers as mercenaries, Baloch oversaw polities transitioning from medieval to colonial to national and neoliberal modes of governance. For the mercenaries, these different forms of rule do not appear as distinct moments in history,

but comparable modes of employment. Baloch thus see their contemporary recruitment as part of long continuous history.

Baloch mercenary order, as seen through mercenary eyes, was thus was neither limited to the sovereignty of a single state nor to a modality of rule particular to a specific period within global history. Unlike the political order established by states and empires, Baloch mercenary order did not maintain itself through visible structures contained within physical boundaries or dismantled over time. It instead moved in space and continued over time through a set of adaptive relationships and reproducible practices.

### **6.3 *Portfolio mercenaries***

The view from mercenary eyes also reveals that mercenaries were driven not by wages alone. Individuals turned to a mercenary career not only to earn a salary, but to open doors for other life possibilities. Being a mercenary was only the means, and not an end in itself. Baloch conquered territories abroad not to rule in their own name, but to open other opportunities for social, economic, and political mobility.

All of the characters I explore in this dissertation saw selling protection only as a temporary activity they could use as a stepping stone into other lines of work. As we see in the different chapters Baloch men used their position in the military to become international political leaders (Chapter 3), local strongmen back home (Chapter 5), recruiters abroad (Chapter 4), traders of arms and other commodities (Chapter 2), religious leaders (Chapter 2), local historians (Chapter 1), popular journalists (Chapter

1), and even poets ( Chapter 1). For all of these characters, becoming a mercenary was only a stepping stone to a portfolio of other activities. I label this archetypal figure as a Portfolio Mercenary who bartered protection service for other social, economic and political possibilities.

Other than in memoirs of retired mercenaries from the North Atlantic world, rarely does mercenary life outside barracks and warzones find any limelight. We seldom get to see the range of desires and possibilities motivating mercenaries. What mercenaries do when not in military uniform is seen only as anecdotal asides about the private lives of soldiers; tangential to a larger political history. The question for those working on mercenaries is not why they came to work, but how they work. However, through stories of portfolio mercenaries I present the two as being inextricably linked. The portfolio of desires in one way or another impacted mercenary work— and consequently the larger political order itself.

In chapter 5, for example, Shamim's mobile *Wadera* authority creates transnational political channels that can operate at the scale of neighborhoods. Operating in the relatively more porous post-cold war global world, Shamim and his family establish thick networks that inextricably tie together local political life in cities separated by the sea.

In chapter 4, the various recruiters boasting about the number of Baloch they helped get jobs sustained an informal but dependable and flexible system of military-labor supply. As dependable constants, Baloch 'jobbers' eager to build their reputation

stabilized the Bahraini ruling regime's authority across waves of riots and reforms. As mobile actors across an expansive 'Baloch Dunya', the recruiters provided the Bahraini regime a broad geography from which to choose its soldiers according to the regional political climate. Informal kin recruitment networks provided the Bahraini state a transnational mercenary pipeline that did not demand investment in formal military agreements with foreign states. By becoming agents of transnational mobility, Baloch recruiters established a malleable recruitment system that operated like a structure without actually having a bureaucratic structure.

In chapter 3, Jumma Khan's portfolio of political projects allowed states to spread influence beyond their borders while still maintaining the sanctity of international borders. In the cold-war world of tightly guarded borders, the 'proxy' activities of Jumma Khan and his expansive network of Baloch nationalists provided states, such as Iraq, deniable means of circumventing borders without having to take responsibility for the transgression. Jumma Khan's portfolios bring to light a thriving transnational *parapolitical* sphere absent from our understanding of international order.

In chapter 2, the arms trade portfolios of Baloch mercenaries proved a catalyst for international debates on arms and mercenary trade. Mercenaries, switching between soldiering and arms trading, hindered the intra-state project of monopolizing control over means of violence within separate colonies while allowing the international private trade of means of violence. As we see in the case of Bahrain, controlling imported means of violence required maintaining a separation between guns and soldiers. With soldiers



developing portfolios in the arms trade, the aspired separation remained an impossible dream as long as both arms and soldiers continued to circulate through private transnational markets. Even if access to guns was limited within state boundaries, mobile mercenaries could still procure arms from outside. The problem ultimately put the international state system in the dilemma of deciding between which one of the two, mercenaries or guns, should be “stateized” to allow the other to be internationally traded in the private market. The twentieth century international political order in which arms could openly be traded in the free market but mercenaries could not, I argue, could be seen as a product of the arms trade portfolios of mercenaries.

Together these narrative highlight portfolio-mercenaries as complex actors involved in a range of social, economic and political activities. With these range of activities in sight, soldiering sidelines into a very tangential activity. Only rarely does training or fighting as soldiers appear in their life histories. Yet, these low-ranked, badly trained, and ill-equipped portfolio-mercenaries were able to expand state power abroad, uphold regimes for a century, influence international law, and mold novel forms of political order.

## **6.4 States and networks**

Portfolio-mercenaries’ remarkable capability to influence political order makes sense only if one sees their ability to provide access to transnational networks — and not soldiering — as their main selling point. The key competitive advantage Baloch had in developing portfolio careers was their strategic geographical depth. Through social

connections dispersed across a variegated political geography, Baloch portfolio mercenaries provided states with challenges and possibilities of entanglement in political orders across their borders. Baloch portfolio mercenaries drew their agency not from the barrel of a gun, but a transnational network around the Indian Ocean.

As we see in the second chapter, mobile Baloch mercenaries develop portfolios in arms trade by transferring arms from areas where they were legal to parts where they were not. Through their broad geographical reach, mobile Baloch circumvented legal regimes to reach territories that were off limits to official arms traders. In the third chapter, we see Jumma Khan's rise as an informal diplomat with a seat on the beside state elites, by offering them the possibility of expanding beyond borders without having to take the responsibility for the extension. Informal Baloch networks offered states the possibility of building 'grey' transnational parapolitics while still officially maintaining their national boundaries as the limits of their sovereignty. The fourth chapter argues that Baloch recruiters remained in business over the short twentieth century by offering Bahrain recruits from various parts of the world. If changing political conditions hindered recruitment from one node, they could easily switch their recruitment center to another part of the Baloch landscape. In a similar vein, in the fifth chapter, we see mobile Baloch resuscitate and strengthen their political careers by switching their site of political engagement with changing political currents. When political careers in one city came to a roadblock, mobile Baloch diverted their politics to another. By building this intergenerational pattern of mobility, Baloch could provide

cities on the rise with the military, and otherwise, labor needed for establishing themselves as regional hubs of trade.

Portfolio-mercenaries' ability to influence political order points us to the contingent nature of political order beyond borders. States over the centuries inscribed intricate institutional systems of rule within their domain— such as bureaucracy, judiciary, police, legislative authorities, and municipal governments. Through these systems, states established forms of governmentality that could regulate broad populations and resist changes to political order. Within this order, reverberations from individual deviations from below, seldom were able to pierce through rigid hierarchies to influence larger shifts.

State structures, however, had geographical limits. The further a state went from its center of rule, the less efficient its systems of rule became. In places beyond the reach of formal structures, states had neither recourse to representative structure to interpolate populations, nor did they have permanent coercive apparatus to control society. While the twentieth century International nation-state system provided ways for states to cast impact on other states, it did not provide direct official channels for influencing the societies in these other states. Intra-state treaties and contracts offered a thin top layer of brittle connections between state structures, but not deep roots into populations abroad.

Under conditions of structural scarcity, states hoping to expand order beyond borders depend on contingent relationships with transnational networks, such as those of the portfolio-mercenaries. These networks might not have had either the political or

economic cachets of states, yet they could negotiate with states from a vantage point for two main reasons. Firstly, networks provided states the rare channel for exporting and importing goods, human resources, and ideology. Secondly, by being at once present in multiple political domains networks remained beyond the control of any one. Diasporic figures with nothing much to offer other than access to transnational networks could leverage their position in one state by using another. They could alternatively also avoid facing any repercussions of arrangement with one state going bad by fleeing to another state.

In claiming agency for networks vis-à-vis states, this dissertation joins a growing set of Indian Ocean histories replete with stories of non-elite diasporic figures using transnational networks to build influence in corridors of empires. Giancarlo Casale in his article 'His Majesty's Servant Lutfi' builds the narrative of a low-level Ottoman emissary building connections with the Sultan's of Aceh to claim position within the Ottoman royalty<sup>44</sup>. Similarly, Sebouh Aslanian details the Armenian network's 'distinct "techniques" of survival and prosperity that enabled it, as a stateless social formation, to compete and excel against its better-organized European and Asian rival networks of trade [backed by strong empires]'<sup>45</sup>. Mitra Sharafi explores ways in which transnational

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<sup>44</sup> Casale, Giancarlo. "'His majesty's Servant Lutfi'." *The career of a previously unknown sixteenth century Ottoman envoy to Sumatra based on an account of his travels from the Topkapi Palace archives, Turcica* 37 (2005): 43-81.

<sup>45</sup> Aslanian, Sebouh. "Trade Diaspora versus Colonial State: Armenian Merchants, the English East India Company, and the High Court of Admiralty in London, 1748-1752." *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 13, no. 1 (2004): 37-100.

Parsi networks mobilized differentiated colonial legal regimes to enshrine their own position as a distinct British subject under their own Parsi personal law<sup>46</sup>. Similarly, Anthony Reid documents the story of a middling Hadhrami trader using its position one state as a stepping stone to climb the hierarchy in another, and ultimately becoming a lynchpin between competing European empires<sup>47</sup>.

Collectively, these histories highlight a particular regional order in the interconnected space of the Indian Ocean in which empires and transnational networks worked from a position of relative parity. To reach spaces that states could not approach directly through its structures of rule, they had to pursue contingent relationships with transnational networks. Over time, through repeated enactment the relationships between states and networks begin to show definite patterns. Through both consciously and inadvertently developed patterns, state and networks come to operate regionally almost like a system. I say almost, because in the end they require continued reproduction of contingent relationships between bounded states and networks with regional reach. The state-network regional order may not be visible in formal state structures, but can be excavated from patterns of mobility and recurring activities.

Regionalism has recently become a much debated topic amongst global intellectual historians of the twentieth century<sup>48</sup>. Scholarship on regionally relevant

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<sup>46</sup> Sharafi, Mitra. *Law and identity in colonial South Asia: Parsi legal culture, 1772–1947*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

<sup>47</sup> Reid, Anthony. "Habib Abdur-Rahman Az-Zahir, (1833-1896)." *Indonesia*. (1972): 37-59.

<sup>48</sup> For recent examples, see: Aydin, Cemil. *The politics of anti-Westernism in Asia: visions of world*

movements with global aspirations— Pan-Islamism, Pan-Arabism, Pan-Asianism, Pan-Africanism, Third-Worldism, Communism— brings to the front specific networks of intellectuals and activists who imagined regional orders in opposition to local, national, and global logics. Due to their ambition to proselytize others into their regional imagination, regionalists produced considerable textual material in the form of newspapers, magazines, books, pamphlets, and even state records. Under the weight of this textual evidence, however, historians gloss over regional projects that did not carry the same ideological burden.

There is no recognized name for the kind of regional order this dissertation elaborates. The relationships on which order was based were forged not out of shared ideology, but a mutual recognition of the structural limitation— networks could reach parts of the region that states could not. In reaching places states could not, however, networks were not free to carve a geography of their choosing. Mobile portfolio-mercenaries were not like the contemporary global cosmopolitan citizens of the world who could claim to be at home anywhere in the world. Their geography of mobility was transcribed by a layered history intergenerational circulation across the Indian Ocean and beyond.

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*order in pan-Islamic and pan-Asian thought*. Columbia University Press, 2007. And: Ahmed, Shahab. *What is Islam?: The importance of being Islamic*. Princeton University Press, 2015.

## **6.5 Polythetic societies**

In the introductory chapter I argue that the diverse geography at the disposal of Baloch portfolio-mercenaries was shaped by a long history of similarly imagined Baloch in the past conquering territories abroad but not ruling in their own name. Instead of establishing rule, Baloch conquerors used conquest as an opportunity to open networks of mobility for other Baloch. Since the 16th century, Baloch people have been moving across the Indian Ocean and Indo-Persian territories using the threads of memory and material networks left behind by conquerors in the past.

However, as mobile Baloch societies moved in space, they began to change over time. While in some areas Baloch settled permanently and produced through exogamous marriage practices hybrid 'frontier' societies. In other areas they maintained themselves as a distinct endogamous 'nomadic' society moving across space while holding on to Baloch cultural and social elements. In yet other parts of the world, they formed hyphenated societies that formed commercial and political connections with other ethnic groups while maintaining a strong Baloch identity.

These diverse modes of Baloch mobility resulted in a dispersed Baloch society with pockets of population that looked very different from each other. They spoke different languages, developed diverse understandings of community, and built ties in distinct geographies. According to a Durkheimian understanding of society, based on a shared single totem, the dispersed Baloch populations would not constitute a society. However, they come together through a 'polythetic' conceptualization of society in

which individual parts can be chained through multiple linkages instead of a single shared thread<sup>49</sup>.

The connections between different parts of the polythetic society develop over time. As mobile Baloch conquer abroad, they add new parts to the society. Moreover, as the mobile Baloch who followed paths of conquerors before integrating, change directions, or get divided across state boundaries— polythetic society can also lose parts. A snapshot of the Baloch polythetic-society at any one slice of time thus would only highlight part of the historical Baloch geography. To see the entirety of the Baloch Dunya of thus requires a *longue duree* study of Baloch conquest and mobility.

For the portfolio-mercenaries in this dissertation, understanding the *longue duree* history was not just an academic issue, but a gateway into the Baloch geography. They too knew that the further back they went in time, the larger their space of possible mobility become. As individuals with successful portfolio careers, the individuals in my dissertation knew that parts of the polythetic Baloch Dunya that were lost at one point in time could be reconnected with in the future.

Bringing dead connections back to life at times simply meant contacting a long-lost cousin. At other moments it required going through a chain of acquaintances in different parts of the world to finally reach individual Baloch at several degrees of remove to either find them a job or offer opportunities of trade. At yet other moments it

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<sup>49</sup> Needham, Rodney. "Polythetic classification: convergence and consequences." *Man* (1975): 349-369.



required meticulously following traces of Baloch geography in Balochi folklore, or even making passionate appeals to the larger Baloch population in different parts to come together as one by owning their historical connections. Thus, by invoking connections in the past, portfolio mercenaries could orient activities and mobility in the future.

## **6.6 History as a resource**

The history of Baloch mobility, I argue, was a resource shared across the polythetic Baloch society and could be mobilized by portfolio-mercenaries for various ends. For example, by valorizing their distant pasts, Baloch mercenaries could give meaning to their activities in the present. It allowed them to believe that they were not just military-labor earning even less than other wage-laborers but as a continuous part of a great tradition of Baloch conquerors conquering to open doors for another Baloch. This fetish gave them the solace to drudge on through daily military service for a foreign ruling elite. Moreover, the shared history gave them reputations of being ‘conquerors who did not rule’. By invoking their record of loyal service, portfolio-mercenaries could demand representation in a foreign state and belonging in their nation. As historically proven loyalists, they could become part of the innermost circles of rule. They could even claim citizenship through a history of giving blood in the name of a nation, despite not being born with the blood of the nation.

Importantly, history was a mobile asset. It could be taken from one place to another. Shared historical connections allowed portfolio-mercenaries to be familiar with places they had never visited. Mary Louise Pratt argues that European travel writings

abroad gave people at home 'ownership, entitlement and familiarity with respect to distant parts of the world'<sup>50</sup>. In similar ways the aurally transmitted histories of conquest abroad and first hand accounts of relatives from other countries, gave portfolio-mercenaries the attachment, acquaintance, and aspirations attached to other parts of the Baloch world. Furthermore, recollections of acquaintances living abroad gave them a list of who's who in distant places. Through this knowledge they could find a connection with a Baloch abroad to assist in travel and accommodation arrangement, secure a job, and provide entry to established local networks. History in a way was their travel guide, passport and visa. It gave them information, modes of travel, and familiarity within places abroad.

History provided portfolio-mercenaries knowledge of changing patterns and seasons of political currents in the Indian Ocean. They knew cities could suddenly rise from the ocean and seem imperishable for a century before being washed back into the sea by another city with a sense of being imperishable. Similarly, they were familiar with patterns of rulers being staunchly against Baloch mercenaries for a decade, before heavily recruiting them in the next ten years. Knowledge of these changing patterns helped portfolio-mercenaries schedule their departures and chart their routes.

In using history as a resource, portfolio-mercenaries were not straitjacketed by an understanding of history peculiar to professional historians. For one, history did not

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<sup>50</sup> Pratt, Mary Louise. *Imperial eyes: Travel writing and transculturation*. Routledge, 2007. p 3.

have to be linear. It could instead also be circular or even swing like a pendulum.

History did not have to be serialized through a seamless chain of contiguous points in time. History could work through large gaps. Centuries could be skipped over to make connection between moments disconnected in time. The significance of the past was not neatly stacked with the recent past being the most important and distant history being the least. For what happened in the 16th century could be seen as much important that what happened last year.

The ancient past did not stand apart from the present. Portfolio mercenaries saw themselves as part of continuous history that stretched back to the 16th century but still unfolds in the present. They imagined the past in the present-perfect continuous tense and not past tense. At times the historical connections were made chronologically, that is by moving forward in time. At other moments the past was traced genealogically, that is moving backwards in time. At yet other moments the continuities were forged neither by moving up or down in time, but by moving sideways in space. Different places were embedded with different pasts. Baloch could travel in time by travelling in space. For example, as we see in the opening chapter Faqeer Shad had to look at different places for Baloch conquerors from different periods in time. 16th century epics were deposited in Punjab and East Africa, 18th century narratives were preserved with bards in Iranian Balochistan, and 20th century histories were best recorded in Karachi.

The novel ways in which historically minded portfolio-mercenaries forged continuities across time and space opens new lines of enquiry for anthropologists and

historians interested in questions of change and continuity. There is a tendency within both disciplines to associate change with agency and continuity with structure. For example, one could trace historical continuities in something called the 'American state' because of the continued salience of a structuring constitution. Other communities with no such parallel continuous structure are understood to be constantly evolving and pushing for change against a top-down continuity. The history of a Baloch mercenary system without a structure offers us an example of bottom-up actors forging continuities across changes in political order. They push us to think of continuities in practices, relationships, and desires across temporal and geographical changes. They allow us to think of long duree continuities as a product of mundane everyday activities of social agents, and not spectacular structures of the state.

## **6.7 Conclusion**

This dissertation is by no means a holistic history of mobile Baloch or even Baloch mercenaries. It is instead an attempt to conceptually understand the phenomenon of historical social networks shaping political order within and beyond state boundaries. It leaves ample room for future researchers to either corroborate or contradict the conceptual claims I make by using specific micro-historical cases, through further investigation into the lives of mobile Baloch. My goal in this dissertation was only to create the Baloch mercenary system as a coherent historical and ethnographic object that needs to be understood within a temporally elongated and geographically expansive scale.

Beyond Baloch studies, I hope my research brings up new questions within the field of military studies, in particular social military histories, through the figure of portfolio-mercenaries who use their position within the military to expand into other social, economic and political arenas. The dissertation also calls on scholars of international relations to think of the international order not just through formal relations between states, intra-state treaties, and international laws; but through the relationships and practices forged by networks without states. My research invites scholars of diaspora, mobility, migration, and transnationalism to conceptualize an alternative understanding of society better suited for studying communities that move in different ways at different places and times. Lastly, it pushes for anthropologists and historians to work together in highlighting the many pasts that shape the present.

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## Biography

Ameem Lutfi was born in Karachi, Pakistan in 1986. He completed his Bachelor of Arts degree, with a focus on South Asian Studies, from The University of Texas at Austin in 2008. After working as a journalist and independent researcher for a couple of years, he obtained his M.A from Duke University's department of Cultural Anthropology in 2013 and will receive his PhD from the same institution in May 2018. As a historical-anthropologist, his research explores the ways in which older social forms continue to shape contemporary form of political order. Lutfi's doctoral research revolves around the themes of mobility, temporality, and state-building.