

Political Violence as Commitment Problem: Evidence from Balochistan, Pakistan

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Existence of a social contract ensures cooperation among ethnically-diverse groups, especially when they are characterised by power asymmetries. Alternatively, constitution or any other form of social contract is meant to ensure resource and power sharing mechanisms in ethnically-diverse societies. In this regard, adherence to the commitments accentuated in the contract is Pareto superior outcome that not only prevents exploitation by the powerful group but also mitigates the risk of rebellion by the minority groups. A break-down arises when, in the presence of power asymmetries, the dominant coalition has an incentive to renege on the social contract by appropriating more than the agreed-upon share of resources. In this study, we focus on this aspect by exemplifying it with the issue of Balochistan, Pakistan, which is an important saga of deprivation and political violence. We utilise the post constitutional game-theoretic analysis of Kirstein & Voigt (1999) to establish the need for accountability for renegeing on the social contract and then contextualise the framework for the case of Balochistan. We posit that while the existence of a formalised social contract in the form of a constitution is necessary, it is not sufficient for ensuring lasting peace. In other words, it is always essential to protect the constitution through ensuring accountability for violating its terms and commitments. We conclude that the recent surge in political violence in Balochistan highlights the urgent need for the country's leadership to implement the 18th Constitutional Amendment, address Baloch grievances, and ensure that initiatives like the Peaceful Balochistan Programme to prevent civil conflict and uphold constitutional rights.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Violence is undesirable in all of its forms but the potential scope and scale of political violence can be particularly detrimental to national prosperity and development. It is generally believed that political violence takes place in an environment of relative deprivation (Waker & Pettigrew, 1984) and mistrust (Murer, 2018; Muller & Rauh, 2018). Deprivation and mistrust mostly arise due to frictions in resource and power sharing mechanisms. Most of the modern nations have worked towards developing and formalising a social contract for power and resource distribution. One method they employed was to arrive at a consensus regarding terms for cooperation and maintenance of peace, achieved through formulating and documenting a 'constitution' that represents 'general will' (Rousseau, 1762). A constitution, as a legal document, formalises the general will by defining the structure of government, and elaborating the rights and

responsibilities of citizens. It can play the role of a peace accord (Saad & Jacob, 2012). It can also be instrumental in replacing violent means of resolving conflict with political ones. That can be achieved through provisions to regulate access to power and resources (Samuels, 2006). However, if such provisions are either not framed or not implemented, then the possibility of political violence increases. In majority of the cases, the constitutional provisions are there in the constitution but they are not implemented in their true spirit, resulting in the emergence of 'commitment problem'. This situation is often framed within the context of a social contract, where the ruling coalition is expected to uphold promises made to the minority groups, as initially agreed upon in the constitution (Fearon, 1995; North, et al. 2009). Rousseau's theory of the social contract (1762) posits that people in society form a collective agreement with the state, surrendering certain freedoms in exchange for protection and security. The social contract, therefore, can be considered a moral and political commitment by the state to act in the well-being of its citizens. If this commitment is broken, the state risks losing its legitimacy, which can escalate into violence. The prevalence of political violence, in any society, demonstrates that there persists a commitment problem (Fearon, 1995). This means that despite cooperation being a Pareto superior strategy, parties involved are unlikely to cooperate, without some way of making the commitments credible.

We posit that, in the presence of power asymmetries, the dominant coalition will have an incentive to renege from the social contract¹ (formalised in the constitution of the country) by appropriating more than the agreed-upon share of resources (Acemoglu, 2003). This breach undermines constitutional legitimacy as a binding pact (Rousseau, 1762; Locke, 1689) and, thus, can be potentially violence-inducing. In this paper, we argue that violating the terms of constitution by the group in power comes at a cost in terms of loss of goodwill and political support, emergence of opportunist opposition parties, judicial accountability, and need for redirecting resources towards damage control and image building. This cost would occur even if violence does not take place. The magnitude of this cost determines whether the majority or incumbent group will honor its commitment or not. A high enough cost of renegeing can be violence inhibiting by making exploitation unprofitable. From the perspective of the group outside the dominant coalition, the choice remains to decide on the effort exerted towards production or engage in rebellion. A high effort implies higher levels of investment and labor force participation but carries opportunity costs. In contrast, the choice of rebellion depends on the level of exploitation or appropriation (resource deprivation), on one hand, and the costs of rebellion, on the other. The costs of rebellion include actual resources allocated to rebellion, human losses in case of conflict, and the potential adverse implications in case of a loss in rebellion. We hypothesise that, at lower levels of exploitation, the minority group will choose not to rebel. However, there is always a critical level of exploitation at (or above) which the group will opt for the gamble of rebellion. In order to explain this phenomenon, we use the post-constitutional game proposed by Kirstein & Voigt (1999) as our take-off point. We make changes to the parameters of that proposed game in order to make it represent the situation on ground. Against this theoretical backdrop, our study

¹The Constitution can be seen as institutionalisation of the social contract, though the two concepts are fundamentally different. While the social contract is a moral and philosophical theory about how individuals form societies and grant authority to the state (as argued by Hobbes, Locke, & Rousseau), the constitution is a legal document that formalises the terms of governance, rights, and duties within a political system. However, the constitution can represent a social contract by explicitly defining the moral principles and agreements that underpin a society's commitment to mutual cooperation.

aims to explore these dynamics in the context of diverse societies with power asymmetries.

The main objective of work is to examine how commitment problems manifest in the presence of constitutional arrangements, particularly in societies with power asymmetries leading to political violence and inhibit economic development. We seek to understand the conditions under which dominant groups choose to honor or renege on the social contract, and how the costs associated with renegeing and rebellion influence these choices. By developing a theoretical framework and applying it to the case of Balochistan in Pakistan, we address the following key research questions: (i) under what conditions does the dominant group uphold or violate constitutional commitments? (ii) how do the costs of renegeing and rebellion affect the likelihood of political violence? and (iii) in what ways do constitutional structures shape the bargaining power and responses of marginalised groups?

Pakistan's inception in 1947 has been an outcome of unification of a number of different ethnicities under the banner of common religion i.e. Islam and the implicit understanding that the exploitation faced under the British rule as well as prospects of the exploitation under a Hindu majority in the subcontinent in post-British scenario could be prevented in a Muslim majority state. This signifies an implicit social contract between the powerful Punjabi ethnicity and the rest of smaller ethnicities. As Fearon (1995) explains such a contract entails a commitment by the elite offering empowerment and protection from exploitation to the minority group. Therefore, an effective strategy in Pakistan could have been an institutional setup that could give bargaining power to the minority groups, on one hand, and hold the powerful elite to their commitments effectively, on the other. However, the early institutional arrangements gave the center immense powers over both the tangible and intangible resources, inducing the powerful Punjabi elite to become unwilling to cede and devolve the political power structure. This real relative deprivation has been, at times, exploited by domestic regional political leadership and external vested interests, to mount rebellion and secession movements. In case of Pakistan, the costs of violence have been significant for all parties involved. We posit that ethnic violence in Pakistan is not an outcome of primordial animosity among the various ethnic groups but a case of failed bargaining.

Social contract (formalised and spelled out in the Constitution) implies that the groups outside the state would provide the necessary innovations, investments, and manpower to ensure economic activities while the state would be responsible for providing security from physical harm and exploitation in return of an agreed upon level of taxation and control². Keeping this presumption in background, we elaborate on the state of ethnic strife in Pakistan in a game theoretic perspective in order to explain the incidences of political violence and lower levels of economic development in the country. By employing a post-constitutional model, we want to make a case for consociational democracy and equality of economic opportunities as is framed in the constitution of Pakistan.

Rest of the article is organised in five sections. Section 2 reviews the literature which is mainly covering the transmission mechanism from marginalisation to political violence in societies. Also, it also cites some studies which are relevant to marginalisation

²This arrangement reflects Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651), wherein the people give up some freedoms to the state in exchange for safety from chaos. Unlike Hobbes' absolute sovereign, the constitutional order also embeds Lockean protections (1689) against state overreach guaranteeing civil rights as limits on state power. Violations of these terms dissolve the contract's reciprocity, justifying resistance or rebellion.

or violence inhibiting mechanisms in social contract. In Section 3, we develop our theoretical framework which explains how commitment problem between asymmetric groups could go to a larger political conflict. Moreover, through this model, we also elaborate on the potential determinants that can cause the prevalence of constitutional rules or avoid the emergence of commitment problem. Section 4 provides the constitutional background to the Balochistan issue in Pakistan. We substantiate the theoretical model with a detailed explanation of the Balochistan uprising while section 6 concludes the paper.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In this section, we primarily discuss the findings of studies which are related to the alteration from marginalisation to political violence or civil conflict. Ethnic cleavages mainly stem from distributive differences over power and resources, and political institutions have long lasting effects on its onset and intensity. Alternatively, inclusive political institutions are highly instrumental in mitigating the adverse consequences of ethnic fractionalisations. Saideman, et al. (2002) elaborates the issue through the theory of ethnic security dilemma to explain the role of democratisation and political institutions in controlling ethnic violence. The authors while testing their hypotheses on the data from 1985 to 1998 covering all ethnic groups in the Minorities at Risk dataset. The authors find that proportional representation can play a significant role in reducing incidences of violence. They also established that the electoral system is more effective than the type of government. On the other hand, Brancati (2006) explores the role of decentralisation in reducing ethnic conflict and secession movements and tries to explore the reasons for inconsistent impact of decentralisation on conflict. Upon carrying out the empirical analysis of 30 democracies from 1985 to 2000, the author found that while decentralisation can increase opportunities for political participation of the minorities, it can also result in emergence of regional political parties, that may reinforce the “us-versus-them” ethnic mindset and produce legislations that favor certain ethnic groups over other. The emergence of regional parties may explain the inconsistent effects of decentralisation on ethnic conflict.

Aside from political solutions to ethnic or cultural fractionalisation, attempts have also been made to mitigate the rifts with the help of religious values as is the case with many countries, including Pakistan. However, such reorganisation has rarely been successful. In Africa, ethnic and cultural diversity is the key to understanding the causes of civil war and political strife. As a case the political elite in Sudan in an attempt to undermine the cultural diversity used the “Arab-Islamic” model for instituting national unity. This negation of cultural identity led to frustration among the rural Sudanese populace which translated into violent conflict against the ruling elite. The second Sudanese civil war ended with the Naivasha agreement (Comprehensive Peace Agreement-CPA). The CPA provided accommodation for cultural differences and incorporated provisions for Southern independence through referendum in 2011 (Deng, 2005). Considering the central and authoritarian nature of state institutions Sudan still faces repeated bouts to ethnic conflict. In Asia, Wilkinson (2000) study the case of India to assess the role of consociational power sharing in reducing incidences of ethnic violence. The author argues that during the 1950s and 1960s India was a non-consociational state especially from the perspective of the important Muslim minority. The author posits that since the mid-1960s India has become more consociational yet ethnic violence has risen. However, the author acknowledges that that consociational power

sharing can be instrumental during the transition from more centralised or authoritarian rule, especially when dominated ethnic groups would demand guarantees to secure themselves against potential losses in the new regime.

Saad & Jacob (2012) analyse and compare the management of ethnic conflicts in Malaysia and Nigeria in terms of their respective constitutions. In Malaysia, the constitution guarantees freedom to citizens in democracy and protects the rights of the ethnic groups. However, the state of minority rights in the country is questionable given certain restrictions on assembly. In contrast in Nigeria the constitution is subject to manipulation by the ruling elite, leading to ethnic tensions, signifying that unless constitutions are adhered to by all parties including military and civilian bureaucracy, the prospect of violence remains expected. The case study of constitution-making in Libya and Yemen during time of conflict signifies the excessive involvement of military in constitution making is facilitated in a conflict. This transform a constitution from an instrument for conciliation to a source of conflict unless a credible arrangement can be ensured that commits the armed forces to a more consensus-based process. This can be done by mobilising public support for the constitution. In case of Libya the third party intervention in the form of United Nations (UN) ensured the creation of unified state under the new constitution, while Yemen failed to achieve political consensus. Yemen is a case where the strong-armed approach of the incumbent and foreign vested interests made consensus building for a unified single state impossible (Johnson, 2017).

Adeney (2009) contends that the absence of consociational institutions in Pakistan has been the primary cause of political conflict in Pakistan. The author uses the case of Pashtun nationalism as an example that co-option into core state institutions has resulted in accommodation of the ethnic group to the extent that no secession movement has emerged in the province. The author also highlights the alienation of Sindhi and Balochi ethnic groups in both democratic and non-democratic regimes has led to severe inequities in representation and resource allocation between ethnic groups. The allocation of resources between and within provinces signifies that the ethnically dominated center has priorities other than welfare of rural Sindhis and Balochis. This has led to repeated and continued violent secession and ethno-nationalist movements in Balochistan. Sindhi ethnic group, however, has been different despite economic inequality. The group has been represented by a major political party in the center (Pakistan People's Party-PPP). This might signify the absence of secession movements in Sindh. The paper posits the need for radical change in the political institutions along consociational lines, while acknowledging that to be a tough ask. Continuing in the similar vein, Majeed (2010) holds the view that without giving proportional representation to the diverse ethnic groups in the national policy making, national integration cannot be secured. This involves not only power-sharing institutions but also distribution of economic resources. The authors allude to inter-tribal conflict in KPK and Balochistan, the Sindhi and Mohajir conflict in Sindh and the regressive sectarian violence as outcomes of policy failure.

Literature from around the world and from Pakistan indicates not only the need for establishment of a mutually beneficial social contract between the powerful majority group and the minorities but also for the existence of checks and balances on the power of executive (who generally belongs to the powerful ethnic majority), in order to ensure adherence to the contract. In the subsequent sections we will make the case for institutional constraints that would increase the cost of reneging from the social contract for the elite ethnic group using post-constitutional game.

3. POLITICAL CONFLICT AS COMMITMENT PROBLEM: A POST CONSTITUTIONAL MODEL

We understand the need for consensus building and establishment of social contact in co-existence among diverse groups. The phenomenon of the Prisoner's Dilemma offers a useful lens to understand inter-group dynamics in diverse societies. While mutual cooperation between groups would maximise social welfare, pervasive distrust often leads different groups to adopt strategies that result in suboptimal outcomes for all. This dynamic highlights the importance of a well-designed social contract that can guarantee rights, mitigate fears of exploitation, and incentivise cooperation. In this section, while using the work of Kirstein & Voigt (1999) as baseline, we analyse whether the groups involved would have the incentive to comply with the terms of constitutional agreement. We employ game theoretic modeling (C7) in conjunction with institutional analysis (D02) to analyse the post-constitutional scenario i.e. constitutional nonadherence as failure of social contract.

For simplicity we assume the existence of two groups; the majority group is labeled M while the minority group is labeled m . The size of the group is not under consideration here in determining majority, it is the capacity to exercise authority. The minority groups invest their resources in production, which Kirstein & Voigt (1999) call effort. In a formalised social contract, the minority group makes commitment to invest its resources in production i.e. make high levels of effort. In contrast, the majority group commits to provide protection or security from private predation, on one hand, and avoid exploitation by the state, on the other. The total output, while depending on the effort by the minority groups, is divided according to the respective shares, with x_0 goes to the majority group while the rest, $(1-x_0)$, goes to the minorities, if the social contract is adhered to. The social contract between the two groups is that the minority group m will put in high effort in production and the majority group will cooperate by not asking for more than the agreed upon share (x_0) of total production, in return for providing the necessary security. Complete compliance with the social contract is defined as ($e = h, x_h = x_0$). In this section, we derive the threshold conditions for compliance with the social contract. The stability of the social contract relies on the credibility of the commitments. Rousseau (1762) emphasised that for any social order to be stable, individuals must agree to the general will and also be bound by credible commitments to uphold them. In our context, the constitution formalises such a social contract, but the incentives to renege create a commitment problem. Building on this intuition, we now model the dynamics of constitutional compliance and breach using post-constitutional game.

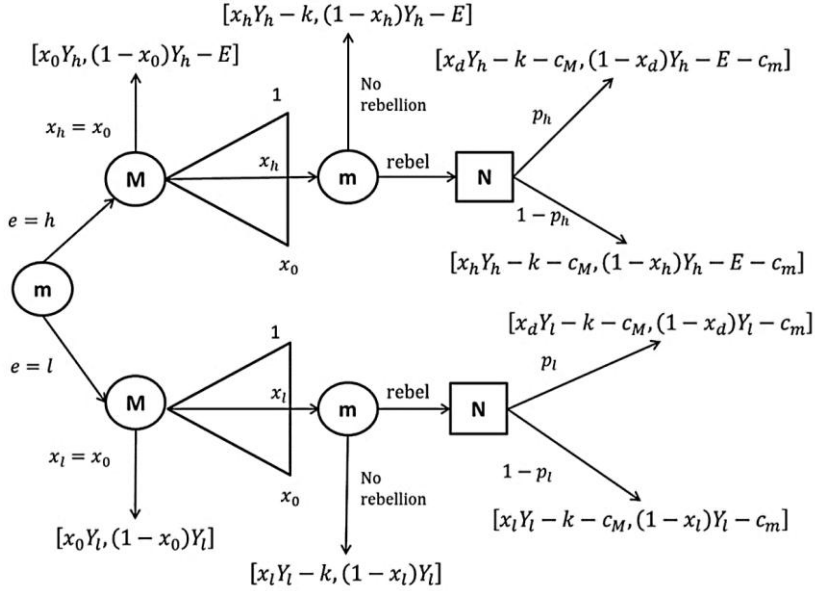
In a framework of a one-shot multistage game, the game takes place the following three stages:

- **Stage 1:** Minority group (m) decides the level of effort (e) which would determine the level of production (Y).
- **Stage 2:** Given the level of effort and production, majority group (M) would decide whether to comply with the terms of social contract or to exploit.
- **Stage 3:** Given the choice made by the majority group, the minority group makes a choice to either mount a rebellion or not.

We start with the sequential game where m moves first decides on its level of effort. For the sake of simplicity, e can only exist in two states low effort (l) and high effort (h)

i.e. $e \in \{l; h\}$.³ Production (Y) is a function of the level of effort $Y = Y_e$ with $Y_l < Y_h$. However, higher effort would cost m an incremental cost E . After m makes the move, we enter stage 2. Here the group M decides whether to demand the agreed upon share of private good ($x_e = x_0$) or to ask for a higher share ($x_e > x_0$). At the same time if group M chooses to exploit it would have to bear the cost $k > 0$. k is the cost of producing violence for appropriation and oppression. A stage-wise detailed analysis is given in Figure 1.

Fig.1. Post-Constitutional Game



If $x_e = x_0$ then the payoffs of minority and majority groups would be $((1-x_0)Y_e - E, x_0 Y_e)$, where, $E = 0$ if $e = l$. If M chooses to exploit and renege on the social contract, then group m decides whether to attempt a revolution or not. If the group m decides not to revolt the payoff would be $((1-x_e)Y_e - E, x_e Y_e - k)$. If group m chooses to revolt, it would have to incur the cost ($c_m > 0$), in this case group M would have no choice but to fight back and incur the cost c_M . There is a probability (p_e) that the rebellion is successful. The payoffs in case of successful rebellion would be $((1-x_d)Y_e - E - c_m, x_d Y_e - k - c_M)$ and in case of failure the payoffs would be $((1-x_e)Y_e - E - c_m, x_e Y_e - k - c_M)$, where x_d is the share of total output received by the majority group M in case it loses the rebellion which means that $x_d \in [0, x_0]$. This factors in the possibility that even in case of a loss the majority group may suffer lesser losses. Additionally, we are also acknowledging that M is not likely to lose all the output.

Expected outcome from revolting for m is:

$$\begin{aligned} p_e((1-x_d)Y_e - E - c_m) + (1-p_e)[(1-x_e)Y_e - E - c_m] \\ = (1-x_e)Y_e + p_e Y_e (x_e - x_d) - E - c_m \end{aligned}$$

³See, Kirstein & Voigt (1999).

The minority group m will choose not to revolt if

$$(1 - x_e)Y_e + p_e Y_e (x_e - x_d) - E - c_m \leq (1 - x_e)Y_e - E$$

This can be simplified as

$$p_e Y_e (x_e - x_d) \leq c_m$$

On the other hand if $p_e Y_e (x_e - x_d) > c_m$ rebellion will take place. Kirstein & Voigt (1999) call this “revolution condition”. It simply states that if the additional expected share of output of the minority group if it revolts is higher than the cost of rebelling, then it would choose to rebel. This also specifies the threshold level of x_e as $\hat{x}_e = \frac{c_m}{p_e Y_e} + x_d$. If $x_e < \hat{x}_e$ revolution condition would not hold. We have determined that rebellion depends on the value x_e . We will proceed by explaining how the decision to exploit is made i.e. what are the factors that would prevent the onset of rebellion. This brings us to the behavior of M . If the group M chooses $x_e > \hat{x}_e$ group M faces the gamble of rebellion with the expected payoffs:

$$p_e(x_d Y_e - k - c_M) + (1 - p_e)(x_e Y_e - k - c_M) = p_e x_d Y_e + (1 - p_e)x_e Y_e - k - c_M$$

There are three distinct scenarios available to the majority group are:

- Scenario 1: No exploitation i.e. $x_e = x_0$ in which case its payoff would be $x_0 Y_e$.
- Scenario 2: Low levels of exploitation so as to avoid rebellion i.e. $x_e \in [x_0, \hat{x}_e]$ in which case the payoff would be $x_e Y_e - k$.
- Scenario 3: High levels of exploitation i.e. $x_e \in [\hat{x}_e, 1]$ in which the group M would face the gamble of rebellion with expected payoffs $p_e x_d Y_e + (1 - p_e)x_e Y_e - k - c_M$.

The choices available to M can be seen on spectrum represented by Figure 2. In all these scenarios, payoffs for M are monotonically increasing in x_e , essentially rendering only three courses of actions relevant i.e. $x_e = x_0$ to cooperate and not exploit m , $x_e = \hat{x}_e$ moderate levels of exploitation that prevents rebellion and $x_e = 1$ to risk the gamble of rebellion. The optimal actions for M are:

- Option 1: i.e. $x_e = x_0$ if and only if $k > (\hat{x}_e - x_0)Y_e$ and $k > (x_d p_e + (1 - p_e)x_e - x_0)Y_e - c_M$

In this case k has to be greater than the additional advantage M would get if it opts for appropriation, regardless to the level of exploitation. In Figure 2 it is represented as the area above the horizontal dotted line and the positively slopping diagonal line.

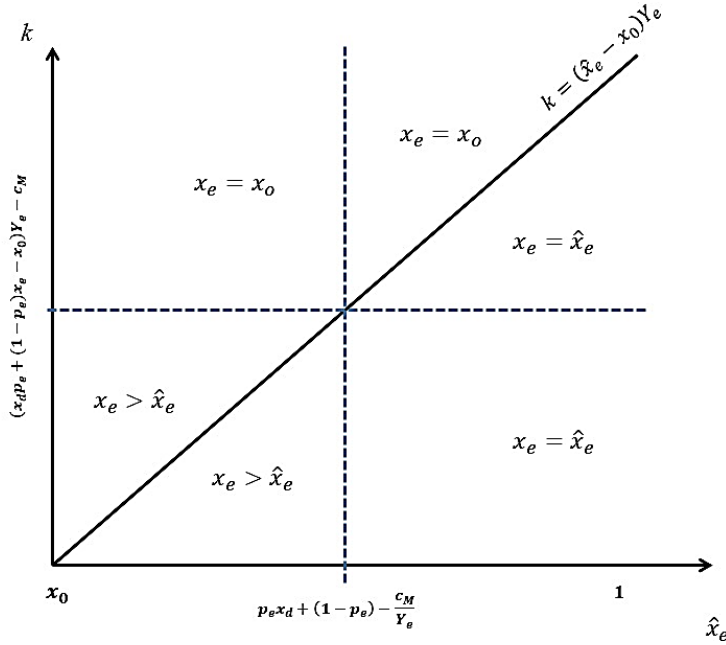
- Option 2: i.e. $x_e = \hat{x}_e$ if and only if $k < (\hat{x}_e - x_0)Y_e$ and $\hat{x}_e > p_e x_d + (1 - p_e) - \frac{c_M}{Y_e}$

M will choose option 2 if k is less than the additional advantage derived through lower level of exploitation (\hat{x}_e) and the violence inhibiting maximum level of exploitation (\hat{x}_e) is greater than the return M will get if the group decides to face the gamble of rebellion per unit output i.e. if the group M chooses $x_e \in [\hat{x}_e, 1]$. In figure 2, this is that area below the diagonal line and to the right of the vertical dotted line.

- Option 3: i.e. $x_e = 1$ if and only if $k < (p_e x_d + (1 - p_e) - x_0)Y_e - c_M$ and $\hat{x}_e < p_e x_d + (1 - p_e) - \frac{c_M}{Y_e}$

M will opt for higher levels of exploitation risking the gamble of revolt if k is less than the difference between expected returns from the gamble and the returns from honoring the social contract and \hat{x}_e is less than expected returns from rebellion per unit output. In Figure 2, this is the area below the horizontal dotted line and on the left of the vertical dotted line. The analysis posits that high values of cost of exploitation (k) would make cooperation by the majority group M more beneficial than exploitation. If the cost of exploitation is low due to lack of institutional oversight and accountability the group in power is more likely to renege on the agreement and choose exploitation, potentially instigating violence. Considering there are three distinct options available to M with differing outcome depending on levels of k and \hat{x}_e .

Fig. 2. Choices of the Majority Group



From the perspective of the minority group we will consider the choice of effort. In this context the cost (E) of high effort becomes relevant for the decision making. One scenario is that higher effort will lead to higher output and therefore $x_0 Y_h > x_0 Y_l$ then it makes sense that if $e = l$ then M is more likely to exploit. However, if the conditions for $x_e = x_0$ hold regardless to the level of effort, then the minority group would choose to exert higher effort if:

$$E < (1 - x_0)(Y_h - Y_l)$$

The analysis signifies that higher effort and consequently higher levels of production without risk of violence and resource wastage is possible if the cost of appropriation (k) incurred by the group in power (M) is high enough to eradicate any advantages derived from exploitation. k represents the loss of goodwill and support,

institutional cost through independent judiciary, negative media coverage and also the cost of bribing local leaders into siding with center. In case of highly autocratic governments k tend to be very low or negligible. While in our analysis k remains constant however, in repeated games k can be revised every time a new regime negotiates with the minority group. The most desirable outcome for any nation would be no exploitation accompanied by high levels of effort. This can be done through increasing k and reducing E .

Proposition 1: *If the cost of reneging on social contract to powerful group, in the presence of power asymmetries, is high enough, the risks of rebellion by the weaker groups and, thus, violence, decrease. This in other words implies that the weaker groups would engage in productive activities and there would widespread prevalence of social contract or constitutional rules despite power asymmetries.*

4. CONSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND TO THE BALOCHISTAN ISSUE IN PAKISTAN

In this section, we provide a detailed constitutional background to the Balochistan issue in Pakistan. First, we discuss how the 1973 constitution serves as a social contract or how ethnic federalism is highlighted in the 1973 constitution. Onwards, we provide a brief background to the Balochistan problem. Through this discussion, we want to contextualise how commitment problem or reneging on the social contract, as is envisaged in the 1973 constitution, has led to the current mess.

4.1. The 1973 Constitution in Pakistan as a Social Contract of Ethnic Federalism

The 1973 constitution was the first step to formally establishing provincial autonomy and self-government in the four provinces of the country.⁴ Alternatively, it instituted, for the first time, constitutional-political recognition of the ethno-linguistic groups which dominated the provinces. It provided these major ethnic groups means for better political bargaining with each other and the center. This particular Constitution had unique strengths that were absent in case of the previous two constitutions. For starters, this constitution was an outcome of consensus between varying political groups and lobbies in Pakistan, including, religious parties, opposition parties, conservative groups and even socialist parties. Active participation by law experts, analysts and religious scholars was ensured to produce a Constitution that reflected the will and wishes of the people. Thus, the constitution represented a formalised social contract between the governing bodies and the masses. It covered not only religious fundamentals to be adhered to for running the state of Pakistan and responsibilities of government like the last two constitutions but also spelled out issues pertaining to commerce, finances, federal debt and separation of power. Most importantly it presented an enduring document stating the underlying ideology and guidelines for future legislation.

The distribution of legislative power of the center comprised of two lists; a federal list, comprising of 67 items, and the concurrent list of 47 additional items. At the time of passing of the constitution it was promised that the concurrent list would be cancelled in 10 years but it took the 18th constitutional amendment in 2010 to abolish that. This means that the separation of legislative powers of the center and provinces was not completed till then. Additionally, on the same issue federal law takes precedence over provincial law, effectively undermining provincial autonomy. Further, Article 245

⁴This Constitution was established on August 14, 1973.

expanded the power of the center to use violence against political opponents. Clauses 2, 3, and 4 of the articles also limited the accountability through judiciary. Khan, *et al.* (2017) are of the view that the opposition parties have shown remarkable accommodation on a number of issues like provincial autonomy especially, pertaining to Articles 232 and 234⁵, despite the fact that earlier the same year the elected government in Balochistan was dismissed and the government of (then) NWFP had resigned. This may be attributed to the fact that the alignment within opposition was quite weak and there was a distinct lack of trust between National Awami Party (NAP), Jamiat-i-Ulema Islam (JUI) and Jamaat-i-Islami (JI). It could also be because of opposition's relative strength, or lack thereof, compared with PPP. Council of Common Interest (CCI) established through Article 153, could have been a very effective tool for ironing out any disputes arising from power sharing between provinces and the center. However, till the end of 1976 only one formal meeting of CCI took place. Instead to deal with routine disputes the Ministry of Provincial Coordination was established and the constitutional concerns were largely ignored (Khan, Khan, & Rehman, 2017). In 1975 a number of amendments to the 1973 constitution namely 3rd, 4th and 5th Amendments, worked towards curtailing the power of High Court. The Fifth Amendment especially, restrained the higher judiciary from providing recourse to detained political opponents of the government. This severely hampered the independence of judiciary and its ability to oversee government operations particularly government's treatment of its opponents. Effective democratic institutions require an active and independent opposition. However, by exerting political influence for suppressing the opposition parties through Constitutional amendments resulted in weak democratic civilian institutions.

The institutions of conflict management and resolution, like CCI, were established to resolve conflict between the provinces not between ethnicities. In addition to the concurrent list a regional quota was introduced to ensure population-based share in resources, revenues, representation in national legislature and public sector jobs. This arrangement failed to acknowledge or even provide of ethno-political grievances within the constituencies. It did not recognize ethnic diversity within the provinces and the possibility of emergence of grievances accruing due to unequal distribution of power and resources within the province (Ahmed, 1996). Further, the constitution lays out ground work for a local government system through Article 32 and Article 140A. However, little practical work has been carried out to implement such a system in letter and spirit. Any attempt at giving this third tier of government constitutional support through Amendments or extensions is generally met with resistance.

4.2. Background of the Balochistan Crisis Amidst 1973 Constitution

Balochistan, while more sparsely populated than other provinces in Pakistan, is the largest province in terms of area. The province comprises of three major ethnic groups, namely, the Balochs, Brauhis and the Pashtuns. The Brauhis and Balochs are generally considered to be one political group. The history of the province is rife with tribal rifts and rivalries. However, the region faced a number of invasions throughout the 17th and 18th century. In the 19th century, Balochistan became part of the British empire in the sub-continent. Immediately after independence in 1947 the issue of secession rose in 1948 and then 1955 due to implementation of One Unit policy. The issue of One Unit and loss of Baloch ethnic identity were key issues that resulted in leaders of Mengal, Marri and

⁵These two articles of constitution gave emergency rights to federal government for assuming power in the provinces.

Bugti tribes entering politics and even winning seats in the National Assembly. However, their stance regarding relative deprivation in Balochistan was met with brutal resistance in form of assassinations, imprisonments and stripping down of centuries-old Sardari titles.

The aggressions ceased in 1965 due to war with India but in 1966 the hostilities started again. The government of General Ayub Khan consistently tried to suppress dissent through strong-armed measures. A new dimension to the conflict was added when the Pat Feeder land was allotted to nonlocals (Ali, 2005) resulting in resistance and state violence. It was in this background of persistent grievances and strong armed reaction by the state that Balochistan entered the decade of 1970s and became part of the process for establishing the new Constitution for the nation. The Constitution of 1973 was formulated through participation and consensus building among the dominant ethnic groups and political parties of the time. While it did not guarantee complete provincial autonomy, it did lay down a framework towards more autonomous existence. Further, it did expand provincial authority over many issues of regional importance. In this way it allowed for some bargaining power going to the provinces. However, the ground work laid by the constitution was undermined by political expediencies and pre-existing rivalries. The constitution was at times amended to facilitate interference by the center, leading to re-emergence of previous grievances. With frequent regime changes the commitment was revised through suspension of the constitution during Zia and then Musharraf era. Many commitments made in the constitution pertaining to rights of the provinces were not met till 2010 through the 18th amendment. This led to repeated large-scale efforts towards violent insurrection. Since Musharraf era relatively small scale but highly disruptive acts of violence took place in the region. The next section will elaborate post-constitutional game theory to explain the factors and implications of renegeing from the social contract and show how this resulted in repeated episodes of political violence in Balochistan.

5. EXPLANATION OF BALOCHISTAN UPRISING WITH THE POST-CONSTITUTIONAL MODEL

In this section we provide a detailed analysis of uprising in Balochistan from the perspective of our theoretical model.

5.1. The Breakdown of Social Contract in the Early Years of the 1973 Constitution

In Pakistan we understand that that social contract ($x_h = x_o$) involved the understanding regarding provincial share of economic output as well as administrative, political and legislative autonomy. Following case study depicts the precarious nature of the contract as well as the impetus for violence due to non-adherence to the contract by the majority group (M). The Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) defines the power dynamics in ethnic terms, explaining the status of Sindhi ethnic group as that of “Junior Partners” to the dominant ethnic group (Punjabis) while categorising Balochis as “Discriminated”. Alternatively, the breach of social contract is attributed to the dominant coalition or the majority (M).

In the 1970-71 general elections, National Awami Party (NAP) and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) formed government in Balochistan by winning 11 out of 20 provincial assembly seats. The new provincial government was accused by the federal government of pursuing agitation activities. These alleged activities included interfering with the operations of the federal coastguard in Lasbaila, smuggling, attacks on settlers in

Pat Feeder area and extradition of Balochistan Reserve Force from the province. The provincial bureaucratic restructuring by the new government by placing indigenous people in key positions was also opposed by the federal government. The provincial government of Balochistan was, therefore, dismissed in February 1973. Within weeks of the sacking of provincial government unrest began in the province. Two organisations were in the forefront of this uprising, the Baloch People's Liberation Front and the Baloch Students' Organisation (BSO) (Harrison, 1981). This eventual unrest clearly depicts that the people of Balochistan found the level of control or exploitation by the government excessive ($x_e = [\hat{x}_e, 1]$) enough to engage in rebellion. The government's response was to arrest the political leadership of all major regional parties including NAP and JUI. Instead of defusing the situation this reaction led to exacerbation of the conflict. A full-blown military operation was launched against the guerrilla militants by the Pakistan Army in 1974. While the 1974 White Paper on Balochistan posited that the military action was conciliatory in nature in order to make the province and its people "equal partner in Pakistan's national enterprise", the on-ground reality is that it was brutal and resulted in a number of civilian casualties. In 1976, Balochistan was directly placed under federal rule. Following the ban on NAP, all political activities were suspended in the province, in direct contradiction to the 1973 Constitution. Ninety members of the party (NAP) were accused of treason and were arrested in Hyderabad Conspiracy Case (Jetly, 2004). It is fascinating that the legal basis for this action was incorporated in the Constitution through the 3rd Amendment in 1975, which depicts manipulation of the Constitution for achieving political goals.

On the other end of the spectrum are some very solid steps taken for the development of the province, which were necessitated by the Constitution. The leaders have successfully negotiated greater share for the province from the royalties and excise duties on Sui gas. Public sector investment in the province also increased significantly in the seventies (Jetly, 2004). This did little to address the grievances of the Baloch people. Economic concessions were given to make up for political disenfranchisement. Removal of the democratically elected provincial government in times of stability, seem more like power-move than a repercussion for corruption and misuse of power. Any genuine and effective effort for development in the province would have had to involve the people of Balochistan and their elected representatives. Failing to do so, intensified the feelings of relative deprivation among the populace and created room for militancy and ethnic strife. Further, major tenets of the Constitution dealing with provincial autonomy and regional democratic practices were ignored or manipulated for central government's political expediencies; little effort was made to devolve political power to the regions where opposition parties held popular sway. The cost of reneging (k) from the social contract, at least in the short-term, remained low due to limited judicial oversight and the ability of the majority party to manipulate the constitution. The contradiction in such strong-armed governance tactics is that it fails to understand and plan out effective development policies in regional context. As a result the distance between federal authorities and regional leadership of Balochistan widened in the 1970s. The overall economic development in the county also declined. This is generally attributed to aftereffects of 1971 Civil War and nationalisation policy. However, the trend of GDP per capita growth tells an interesting story. The GDP per capita growth rate fell abruptly from 4.15 percent in 1973 to 0.683 percent in 1974. A similar decline in the country's per capita GDP growth is apparent after the province was placed under federal rule in 1976.⁶ This unrest culminated into

⁶The GDP per capita growth rate fell again from 2.074 percent in 1976 to 0.836 percent in 1977.

imposition of martial law by General Zia ul Haq bringing an abrupt end to the first elected government in the country and exile of the sardars of Mengal and Marri tribes.

5.2. Reconciliation of the Social Contract in Zia Era

In his attempt to legitimise his rule, the martial law administrator General Zia ul Haq adopted much softer and reconciliatory approach, quelling the stimulants for violence for the time being.⁷ Within the alliance, the separatism of Mengal came in direct conflict with the more conciliatory approach of Bizenjo. This led to weakening of the warring factions in Balochistan, resulting in a period of relative peace. Zia's era also represented a period in time when the autocratic government made any favorable outcomes from violent revolt highly unlikely. This may have also led to a split between rationalists and idealists within the movement, giving credence to the rational approach of Muller & Weede (1990). The split reduced the amount of resources at the disposal of the regional leadership at both end of the spectrum, making another civil war quite infeasible.

While the civil war had ended, the long standing Baloch grievances about being marginalised in power-sharing and decision-making in their own province persisted. The softer approach of Zia was intermixed with elements of autocratic means. Attaullah Mengal claimed that many members of the Marri tribe who had returned after announcement of amnesty were interred and arrest warrants were not withdrawn. Islamization of Zia regime created political space for religious parties especially, in (then) North Western Frontier Province and Balochistan. The purpose for that was facilitating civilian militia for "*Jihad*" in Afghanistan and creating a popular narrative for Pakistan's involvement in the Afghan War. The autocratic nature of Zia regime and internal conflicts ended any concentric effort of mass violence in the province but the persistence of old grievances and denial of self-rule by central government even after democratic rule was restored in the country managed to keep the militant elements alive (Ali, 2005).

5.3. Military Coup of 1999 and Resurgence of Baloch Separatism

The central power struggle during the 1990s, relegated regional issues to the back burner doing little to assuage regional frustrations. Meanwhile, the militant elements in the region were not completely eradicated. Policies of Islamisation created enough ambivalence among the rural population, to generate support for insurgency that emerged in response to Pakistan's alliance with USA in the aftermath of 9/11. However, this time the issue of royalties on natural resources was the main cause of the conflict. Lack of representative participatory institutions denied any peaceful recourse to resolution of the issue intensifying the feelings of alienation and animosity towards military and other ethnicities.

The simmering resentment from the last two decades placated by Zia's (somewhat) conciliatory approach and some level of political representation in the decade of 1990s became a violent conflict during the Musharraf Regime. Despite the regional political parties striving for attaining political and economic rights within the parliamentary framework, such as it was, militants became active again. The military leadership responded by increasing military presence in the province. The leadership's retaliatory response, made any efforts for peaceful reconciliation ineffective (Mushtaq, 2009). In 2000 Nawab Khair Bukhsh Marri was arrested on charges of assassination of a

⁷Zia released 6000 Baluch prisoners held in Kohlu and Loralai prisons. Prominent Baluch leaders Mengal, Marri and Bizenjo were also released. Hyderabad tribunal was also disbanded and amnesty was announced in 1978.

provincial high court judge. Shortly after that Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) emerged which claimed responsibility for a number of terrorist attacks. A main stimulant in this case may be the discovery of gold and copper mines in Reko Diq. The licenses of extraction were given to foreign companies. The Baloch Sardars accused the government of not accounting for the needs and demands of the Baloch people. The government of General Musharraf asserted that the Baloch elite are unwilling to share royalty and revenues from natural resources with the common Balochi people. Therefore, even if royalty is increased or more autonomy is given it is not going to benefit the masses in any way. Musharraf further, angered the local populace by announcing mega-development projects in Balochistan which included construction of Gwadar Port and army cantonments, with little participation of and benefits to the local populace. More egregiously, when the project agreement for Gwadar Port was signed in 2002, no representative of provincial government was present, further cementing the disinterest of the federal government in local participation. The locals see the government projects as a plan to “colonize” them. Till now the old Gwadar city lack basic amenities like health, education and sanitation. The influx of massive numbers of workers from KPK, Punjab and Sindh to fill in positions for these projects had also led a sense of insecurity among Baloch people (Khan, 2009). The situation was aggravated by the heavy handed approach of Musharraf government and its refusal to even negotiate demands for political and economic autonomy.

The situation came to head in 2005, when in response to militants trying to take out the gas supply the military carried out operation that reportedly caused 400 to 500 deaths and 85 percent of the population of Dera Bugti had to be displaced. In 2006 Sardar Akbar Bugti was killed in Bhambore Hills, which escalated the situation in the province. Aslam (2011) is of the view that the military operations often targeted political leaders and activists suppressing any alternative narrative. In August 2007, opposition leaders in the provincial assembly moved three motions asking the government to take notice of the “violation of the constitution by intelligence agencies and arrest of political activists” without due process. The situation in Balochistan deteriorated in the 2000s because of two main reasons. On one hand was continued refusal by the center in allocating reasonable share of resources to the province and transferring the power of self-government to the provincial government. Further, the entrenchment of military presence by building the cantonments made it seem like colonisation. The deprivation of the masses from the fruits of new development projects also played a significant role in the emergence of militancy. The government tactics in appealing to religious sentiments by supporting religious political parties in the province also backfired due to emergence of sectarian violence.

Foreign intrusion owing to September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in USA and the resulting involvement of Pakistan in the Afghan-US war further destabilised the situation. The increased terrorist activities in Pakistan had two-fold narratives. The political narrative in Balochistan, which was contained within the regional boundaries of the province for the most part and religious narrative which affected even the most secured and central areas of the country. While the violence of the decade was motivated by regional and/or religious sentiments, the conflict took a more severe turn owing to the refusal of the central government to negotiate with the political representatives of the masses. The people were not taken into confidence while making important policy decisions, whether it was Pakistan’s involvement in war against terror or building of Gwadar Port. In case of Balochistan, the decisions of regional importance with significant implications for local population were made without consultation with the local

representatives, leading to emergence and festering of unresolved grievances among the local populace. This eventually, led to the sentiment that the center is developing at the cost of the province. The constitutional provisions for participation of provincial authorities were generally ignored in the name of national interest. The protests of the local leaders were labeled as rebellious and treacherous. Any opposition by the masses was either ignored or suppressed through militaristic and (at times) excessive means, making the situation worse.

5.4. Post-Musharraf Reconciliation, 18th Amendment and the Current Status

End of Musharraf regime and reinstatement of elected parliamentary system has created a possibility of reconciliation and peace. Although low level insurgency and frequent terrorist activities are still taking place, infighting and danger posed to the common public has made the separatist groups unpopular. Reestablishment of electoral system and focus on coalition building between central parties and regional political elite has created opportunities for regional representation in national legislative bodies providing a somewhat better alternative to direct conflict. Further, initiation of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has created a unique opportunity to address the issue of economic deprivation of the region. Most importantly, the 18th constitutional amendment is a major step towards reinstating the social contract. It not only abolished the concurrent list but also promulgated the management of education, health and local government to the provinces. It added three fundamental rights i.e. rights to a fair trial (Article 10A), rights to education (Article 25A) and the right to information (19A), addressing major concerns of people of Balochistan (Iqbal, et al. 2021). The 18th amendment also ensured that the revenue share of provinces would be determined based on NFC awards raising the share of Balochistan. The 7th National Finance Commission (NFC) significantly increased the resources available to the provinces, with the share of provinces increased from 45 percent to 57.5 percent of the divisible pool. Inter-provincial distribution of revenues was also revised as criterion broader than population were added, including contribution to national exchequer, levels of poverty (or backwardness) and inverse population density (especially important for Balochistan). This decreased Punjab's share by 5.6 percent, while simultaneously increasing the shares of KPK and Balochistan by 1.1 percent and 3.8 percent, respectively. Further, it also afforded equal rights to center and provinces over natural resources (Khan, 2017). While complete provincial autonomy remains elusive the amendment has proven to be an important first step. The political leadership for the most part also responded positively to the amendment and called it a step in the right direction (Mujahid, 2012).

At the same time since many Baloch nationalist parties had no representation in the Parliamentary Committee on Constitutional Reforms, major nationalist leaders have rejected the amendment. This led to political disenfranchisement. Exploitation continued to be the focal point of the relationship between the central government and Balochistan (Iqbal, et al. 2021). Therefore, small scale agitation persisted in the region. The intra-provincial heterogeneities still persisted due to ineffective system of local governments. Iqbal, et al. (2021) found a disconnect between the provisions under the 18th amendment to the Constitutions of Pakistan and the on-ground reality. More than 48 percent of the population of the province still lives below the poverty line (Kagabo, et al. 2023). Balochistan has the lowest literacy rate of 46 percent as compared to Punjab's 64 percent and Sindh's 58 percent (Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement, 2019-20). Unemployment in Balochistan has also been much higher than the national

average (Khosa, 2015). From 2010 to 2015 ACLED reports a rise in political violence in Balochistan. In 2015 383 casualties were reported in 96 events. As is shown in Table 1, Ethnic Power Relations Core Dataset (2022) shows no change in the power status of the Balochis after the 18th Amendment.

However, after 2015 violent events decreased up until 2020. That may be attributed to the Peaceful (Pur-Aman) Balochistan Programme launched in April, 2015 with the intension to bring the disenfranchised Balochis in the mainstream. This entailed among other steps, an offer of amnesty to insurgents who lay down arms. According to reports, over 1000 Baloch militants surrendered just in August, 2016. However, the process was not extended further, making it ineffective in ensuring lasting peace. Further, upon the death of Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri in 2014 and the resulting breakdown of BLA into two different armed groups, namely, BLA and United Baloch Army (UBA) led to weakening of armed Baloch resistance, which may partially have contributed to the downward trend in violence (Nabeel, 2017). Another point of contention may have been the 21st (2015) and 23rd (2017) Constitutional Amendments that established military courts for prosecution of terrorists. However, its scope is focused on religiously motivated terrorism, and ethnic and regional organisations are out of the purview of these amendments.

A summary of the historical narrative is depicted in the prevalence of widespread economic and social inter-provincial disparities. Especially, the situation with respect to Balochistan is worrisome. As is shown in Table 2, per capita income in Balochistan and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa is only 71 percent and 79 percent, respectively, of the national per capita GDP.⁸ Similar is the case in terms of the Human Development Index (HDI) of UNDP. In particular, Balochistan's HDI is only 64 percent of the national HDI, reflecting stark inequalities.⁹ Moreover, according to middle income poverty line (US\$3.65/day 2017 PPP), poverty in Balochistan stands at 71.4 percent compared to 45.62 percent in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and, only, 23.39 percent in Punjab. Similarly, literacy and labor force participation rates are low while the percentage of out of school children is high in Balochistan. Further, in terms of other characteristics such as use of electricity for lighting, wood and gas for cooking, toilet facilities, immunisation, availability of water and food security, Balochistan is worse off compared to the other three provinces (see Table 2 for details). Further, this state of relative deprivation has been persistent over time, resulting in emergence of long-term grievances (Figure 4). Finally, societal and institutional frameworks is fragile in Balochistan as is reflected in higher percentages of the incidents of political violence in the province.¹⁰ This, in other words, implies that persistent incidents of political violence is a clear reflection of a sense of marginalisation across Balochistan. With the lack of follow up on Peaceful Balochistan Programme, persistence of economic and social grievances and formulation of coalition between the militant groups, i.e. the Baloch People Liberation Coalition or Baloch Raaji Ajoi Sangar (BRAS), the decade of 2020 has seen a rise in armed conflict in Balochistan with the trend somewhat waning in late 2023, with declining trend in explosions and remote violence, but little change in the number of battles (Raleigh, et al. 2023).¹¹

⁸Pakistan's current per capita GDP is US\$1680.

⁹Pakistan ranks low on the Human Development Index (HDI), with ranking of 164th out of 193 countries and 2023-24 national HDI of 0.699.

¹⁰Data on political violence is taken from the *BFRS Dataset* which contains incident-level data on political violence in Pakistan from January 1988 to December 2010 based on press reporting.

¹¹See Figure 3 for the details of Political Violence in the decade of 2020.

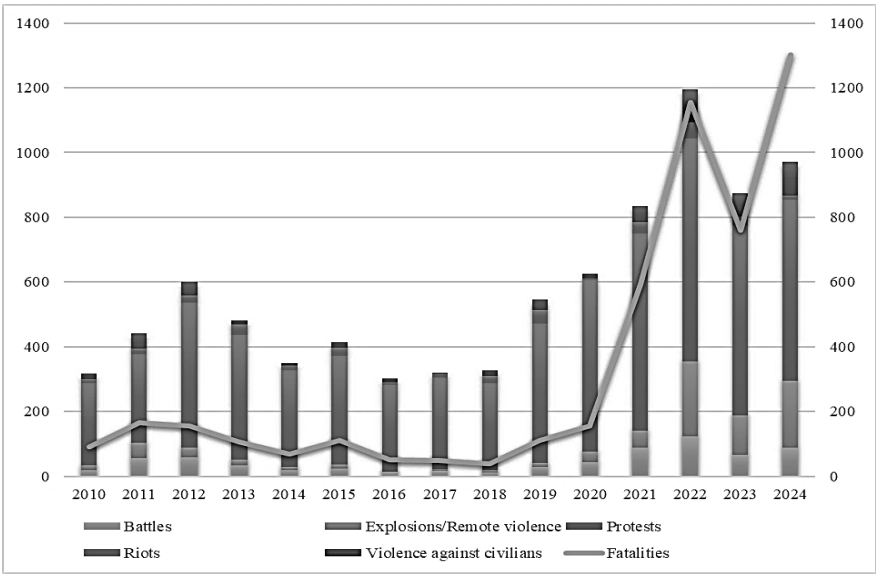
Table 1

Ethnic Power Relations in Pakistan

Year	Status					
	Bengali	Punjabi	Pashtun	Sindhi	Mohajirs	Balochi
1947-71	Discriminated	Senior Partner	Junior partner	Powerless	Senior partner	Powerless
1972-73	-	Senior Partner	Powerless	Junior Partner	Powerless	Powerless
1974-77	-	Senior Partner	Powerless	Junior Partner	Powerless	Discriminated
1978-83	-	Senior Partner	Junior Partner	Powerless	Junior Partner	Powerless
1984-88	-	Senior Partner	Partner	Powerless	Junior Partner	Powerless
1989-99	-	Senior Partner	Powerless	Junior Partner	Powerless	Powerless
2000-08	-	Senior Partner	Junior Partner	Powerless	Junior Partner	Discriminated
2009-13	-	Senior Partner	Junior Partner	Junior Partner	Powerless	Discriminated
2014-18	-	Senior Partner	Powerless	Junior Partner	Powerless	Discriminated
2019-21	-	Senior Partner	Junior Partner	Junior Partner	Powerless	Discriminated

Source: The Ethnic Power Relations (EPR) Core Dataset.

Fig. 3. Organised Political Violence in Balochistan



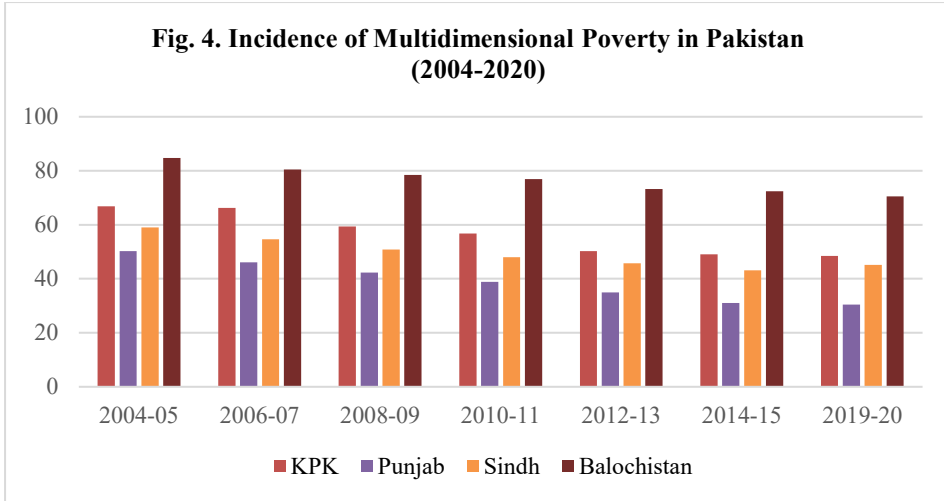
Source: Raleigh, et al. (2023).

Table 2

Pakistan's Province-Wise Economic and Demographic Indicators (in Percentage)

Indicator	Pakistan	Balochistan	Punjab	Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa	Sindh
Per Capita Income as Percent of National per Capita GDP	100.00	71.00	98.69	79.00	122.20
HDI as Percent of National HDI	100.00	64.00	109.00	93.00	92.00
Percent of Population Living below Middle Income Poverty Line	40.10	71.40	23.39	45.62	37.82
Out of School Children aged 6-16	24.41	47.20	19.60	34.60	25.30
Labour Force Participation Rate	32.26	27.23	34.86	27.63	30.86
Literacy Rate for Persons Ten Years Old and Above	58.91	43.58	64.01	54.02	54.57
Percent of Households using Electricity for Lighting	87.87	69.62	93.95	89.89	80.44
Use Wood for Cooking	58.44	75.07	57.85	72.70	49.50
Use Gas for Cooking	37.86	21.43	37.92	25.52	47.39
No Toilet	15.02	20.63	13.69	12.15	17.99
Toilet: Pit with Slab	21.47	31.88	22.59	29.76	13.80
Moderate or Severe Food Security	16.44	23.36	15.66	14.44	17.52
Tap as main Source of Drinking Water (2014-15)	27.00	18.00	33.00	35.00	41.00
Full Immunisation (2014-15)	82.00	51.00	90.00	78.00	73.00
Incidence of Multidimensional Poverty (2019-2020)	39.5	70.5	30.4	48.5	45.2
Incidents of Political Violence as percent of Total in Pakistan	100	30.92	19.40	35.60	14.08

Sources: Fair, et al. (2024); Human Development Report 2023-24; Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2023; Pakistan Economic Survey 2023-24.; Bueno de Mesquita, et al. (2015); Haque, et al. (2024).



Source: Haque, et. al. (2024).

The policies implemented by successive governments in Pakistan have played a significant role in exacerbating the commitment problem in Balochistan, consequently instigating political violence. Centralisation of power, exclusionary political tactics, and disregard for Baloch economic and cultural rights have effectively violated the social contract between the state and the Baloch population. These actions directly correlate with the commitment problem outlined in our post-constitutional game theory model. Specifically, the breaches of political and resource-sharing agreements have significantly weakened the Baloch people's trust in the state's commitments. This has led to escalating violence, as the dominant group (in this case, the state and the ruling elites) failed to provide credible assurances for cooperation. As the Baloch people faced economic deprivation and political exclusion, the dissident groups were able to recruit easily by framing rebellion as a necessary strategic response, despite the associated costs. This analysis exhibits that the lack of effective policy reforms and the historical failure to address systemic relative deprivations have fueled a commitment problem that is symptomatic to the violence in Balochistan. This insight aligns with the theoretical framework that political violence arises when commitment problems remain unresolved.

6. CONCLUSION

This study is motivated by recent research on distributive conflict or distributive justice among diverse ethnic groups which mainly presume that reneging on social contract, as is embedded in constitutions, might be costly as it usually involves violent conflict among different groups. Alternatively, engagement in productive activities amongst different ethnic groups, without the risks of violence and resources wastage, is only possible if the cost of reneging on the social contract is high enough. We model this situation and exemplify it with the Baloch separatist movement in Pakistan. We find that higher effort and consequently higher levels of production without risk of violence and resource wastage is possible if the cost of appropriation (k) which is also the cost of reneging on the social contract incurred by the group in power (M) is high. It should be enough to eradicate any advantages derived from exploitation with and without the risks of rebellion. In contrast, if the cost of reneging on social contract is low, the group in

power (M) has the incentives to engage in expropriation which might be a potential cause of rebellion amongst the exploited communities.

Given these finding, we conclude that the recent upsurge in political violence, in Balochistan, is not a spontaneous phenomenon, but a manifestation of long-standing grievances rooted in political exclusion and economic marginalisation. If these concerns are not addressed, they risk pushing the province as well as the country toward deeper instability. The opportunities to alter this trajectory through comprehensive reforms. Firstly, the 18th Amendment need to be implemented in true letter and spirit with devolution of power to local governments and indiscriminate provision of fundamental rights, as is enshrined in the Constitution. Ensuring regular local bodies elections, equitable resource distribution, and active political participation can strengthen the social contract between the people and the state. Secondly, engagement of Baloch labor force in mega projects under CPEC can be achieved through investment in technical education and skill-enhancement. Establishing technical training institutes, assigning local hiring quotas, and supporting local entrepreneurs through targeted microfinance programs are practical pathways to enhance economic ownership among the Baloch population. Thirdly, there is the need to fight the narrative of nepotism and discrimination that is used for recruitment in the militant organisations through actively prioritising key Baloch concerns in policymaking. The government must dismantle narratives of exclusion by promoting merit-based recruitment, institutionalising Baloch representation at federal decision-making forums, and fostering programs that celebrate Baloch cultural identity. Initiatives such as Peaceful Balochistan should go beyond security measures into comprehensive rehabilitation and civic engagement programs for the Baloch youth. No matter how sparsely the region is populated and how small the population is they are for all intent and purposes Pakistanis. The history of political violence in Balochistan is a testament to the ineffectuality of heavy-handed approach to conflict resolution and solution lies in following through with the commitments made to all Pakistani citizens in the Constitution of the country. A rights-based, inclusive model of governance centered on political empowerment and distributive justice offers the only sustainable path forward. Finally, while this study offers important analytical insights based on available evidence, it offers a baseline for future research enhanced by incorporating field-based perspectives through interviews with local stakeholders, community leaders, policymakers, and former militants.

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