

Question of Development in the Iranian Baloch Society: The Other Side of the Issue

Ahmad Reza Taheri ^{1*}

¹Department of Political Science, Zahedan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Zahedan, IRAN

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract: The Baloch are adhering to their traditional and religious beliefs. Religious elites promote these beliefs and hence they have a special place in the hearts of the people. However, due to the influence of modern Persian culture and globalization, modern way of life have somewhat overshadowed some of the Balochi traditional values. Yet, modern values like secular world view have not totally undermined the Balochi religious values. Some aspects of traditionalism, such as fatalism have often challenged the issue of development in the Baloch society. Thus, the present paper which is descriptive analytical deals with the role of Iranian Baloch elites in cultural, economic, and political development of the Baloch society under the Islamic Republic by focusing on three major questions: First, how far the local culture has pushed forward the Baloch society? Second, does the Baloch elites' contribution in private sector help in privatization or entrepreneurship? And, third, to what extent the political participation of Baloch has lifted their political culture? The paper suggests that local culture has strengthened the religious values but these values have not turned progressive. The Baloch's role in privatization failed to create a privatization culture. And, the political participation of Baloch, relatively, has lifted their political culture.

Keywords: Iran, Balochistan, Sunni Baloch, Local elites, Development

1. Introduction

Iranian Balochistan consists of two regions: Sarhad and Makoran. The northern part is called Sarhad (Zahedan and Khash are regarded as the main cities) and the southern one is known as Makoran (Iranshahr, Chabahar, Saravan, Sarbaz, and Nikshahr are considered to be the major cities). The overwhelming majority of Baloch belong to the Sunni sect (Hanafi branch). Most live in the province of Sistan and Balochistan. Iran's Baloch population is estimated to be between five to six million. On Iranian Baloch population there are no official reports available; the figure given above is based on personal discussions and observations [1]. The Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization has claimed that 4.8 million Baloch live in Iranian Balochistan (2017) [2]. The Baloch, in general, are

*Corresponding author: taheri.political@gmail.com

adhering to their traditional and religious beliefs. Religious elites promote these beliefs and hence they have a special place in the hearts of the people. However, due to the influence of modern Persian culture and globalization, modern way of life has somewhat overshadowed some of the Balochi traditional values. Yet, modern values like secular world view have not totally undermined the Balochi religious values. Some aspects of traditionalism, such as fatalism have often challenged the issue of development in the Baloch society. These challenges are divided into the following categories: cultural, economic and political.

2. Theoretical Foundation

This study is inspired by modernization theory. Modernization was promoted by classical liberals such as John Locke, Adam Smith and John Stuart Mill in the 19th and 20th centuries, who called for the rapid modernization of the economy and society to remove the traditional hindrances to free markets and free movements of people [3]. Modernization theory also emphasizes on cultural liberalism i.e., freedom of individuals from cultural norms. Modernization leads to progressivism which believes that advancements in science, technology, economic development and social organization are vital to the improvement of the human condition [4]. On modernization and development, Weber argues about the impact of culture. In his work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), Weber emphasizes the importance of cultural influences embedded in religion as a means for understanding the genesis of capitalism. He identifies Protestantism as one of the most important factors in the progress of Europe and believes that the evolution of cultural beliefs and religious values has been the cause of economic change and development [5]. Modernization theory suggests that traditional beliefs and cultural traits usually become less important as modernization takes hold [6]. In this paper, while the economic factor for development has not been ignored, cultural factor is preferred to both economic and political factors; many of the problems that arise in the social, economic and political spheres are rooted in the culture.

3. Literature Review

Whenever the question of development in Iran's Baloch society is raised, usually a top-down approach would be taken into view. However, most of the works are historical; some have put the issue of Baloch under the context of "Iranian nationalism" and some others have dealt with "Baloch nationalism". Hence, this ignores the role of local elites in a sub-culture as far as the question of development is concerned. The present work is a "down-up" approach. The assumption is that in each society there are problems which are partly rooted in the local elites' way of thinking; the theme this paper intends to highlight. Therefore, this work is considered a new study, for two reasons. First, so far, no work has been published on the role of Iranian Baloch elites in the development of their community. Second, this study follows a critical approach to the social and political culture of Iranian Baloch; such opportunity of critique so far has not come up from within the Baloch themselves.

4. Iranian Baloch Society: Question of Development

Balochistan is a parochial society. Compared with other regions of Iran, it has always been regarded as a deprived area. When one reviews the history of Balochistan, deprivation (poverty, poor infrastructure, discrimination, and gender inequality) appears as the most prominent feature of the land. Behind the Baloch deprivation, there are some factors: colonial policies, poor governance, repression and war, cultural and religious disputes, and natural phenomena are among the historical reasons that have hindered the development in Balochistan. These will be briefly discussed below.

In political context, ignoring the long history of Balochistan and beginning with the Qajar, when they sought to advance in this part of Iran, Balochistan was considered important by European countries, because of its proximity to India. The rivalries between the French and British over India forced the British to take control of Balochistan. This was met with reaction from Iran. To separate

Balochistan from Iran, the British began extensive efforts to establish relations with local (Baloch) rulers. On the other hand, the Iranian state tried to expand its power in the region, but did not pursue the right policy for this purpose, and thus it resulted in violence [7]. On the whole, the operations which temporarily had strengthened the Iran's central government's influence in Balochistan remained destructive; meaning that not only the Iran's rulers could alter the status quo, but further had damaged the Baloch society through political repressions. It is because the period that lasted until the complete consolidation of one king was the period of assassination, destruction and taxation, and as soon as this period ended, the king would be replaced by another one [8]. As a result, there could be no opportunity for development. Under the Pahlavi dynasty the central government expanded itself in Balochistan and the Baloch gradually witnessed the direct presence of military and administrative personnel. But these did not change the view of the Baloch towards the central government.

As far as the economic factor is concerned, the historians who lived in Balochistan refer in their memoirs to the deplorable economic conditions of the Baloch. It is said that more than 98 percent of Baloch were small ranchers. Naser Asgari writes that:

Central governments were indifferent to the Baloch poverty. Not only were they indifferent, but people were forcibly taxed. Their agricultural products, though scarce, were looted by government and extortionists. If anything remained after looting by tax-collectors, they would be looted by local rulers. Later on, under the Pahlavi regime, the budgets which allocated for Balochistan were mostly spent on issues that were of concern to the government employees. The Baloch, who compared their situation to that of the non-Baloch wage earners, considered them the cause of their misery. Gradually, the distance between Baloch and non-Baloch increased, especially when most markets fell into the hands of non-Baloch. Subsequently, due to famine, Baloch sold their lands to the non-local businessmen or government employees and in large numbers migrated to the Arab states where they had to give in to the meanest jobs. However, after the Baloch found their way into the Arab world, money flowed into Balochistan. Many of those who went to the Arab states returned after one or two years with an amount between ten to thirty thousand Tomans which according to the standards of the time it was large money [9].

The Baloch who raised money in this way maintained their distance from the non-Baloch officials. Even by the end of the Pahlavi period, Balochistan lacked proper infrastructure. Therefore, as a result of poverty and economic deficiencies, concepts such as "privatization culture" or "entrepreneurship" were foreign to the Baloch.

The political and economic problems noted above were responsible for high illiteracy rates, cultural gaps, religious disputes, and shortage of health care centers. Under the Pahlavi administration, the main problem was that government officers and military personnel were not familiar with the social spirit and psychology of the Baloch. Many officials who came to Balochistan did not know how to communicate with the Baloch. In this regard, Asgari adds that:

"Most officials were not committed to go among the locals to examine the Baloch's needs. The officials ignored the Baloch, and the Baloch's ego did not let them to make relations with such officials. State employees were familiar with the new ideas, while the locals were within their parochial culture. The anti-Shia and anti-Sunni feelings was also another problem. The Baloch (Sunni) and officials (Shia) were pessimistic about each other and their judgments were based more on the sayings of the fanatical clerics. The Shia entered Balochistan with this image of the Sunni, and the Sunni faced them with a similar view" [10].

Thus, the government failed to deal with educational and cultural affairs of the Baloch. Meanwhile, in this period, tribal chiefs were the only so-called elites of the society, whom for variety of reasons, were against cultural reforms. However, many of the problems mentioned above disappeared or decreased under the Islamic Republic. The Islamic revolutionaries were aware of the problems and limitations of the Baloch. That is why when they came to power they began to work on the weaknesses. For example, in political sphere, Baloch participation expanded. In economic field, performance of the state has been more satisfactory than that of pre-revolutionary governments. In cultural affairs, the

state's support has been developmental. Yet, despite the efforts made by the government in Balochistan, the Baloch are still suffering from cultural, economic and political weaknesses.

5. The Other Side of the Issue: Baloch Elites

In political and sociological theory, the elites are a small group of powerful people who hold a disproportionate amount of wealth, privilege, political power, or skill. Based on this concept, the Iran's Baloch elites may be referred to different groups of individuals whom due to social status, academic prestige, and economic or political privileges, enjoy superior position in relation to others. They can be divided into four groups: traditional, religious, academic, and economic elites [11]. They exercise influence over the Baloch, but the impact of their influence on the Baloch is different.

5.1. Traditional Elites

The influence of traditional elites (tribal chiefs) in the Baloch community goes back to long before the Islamic Revolution. Their influence is deep rooted in the traditions and customs. Factors such as inbreeding, familial links, close localities, illiteracy, primitivism, dangers, and lack of modern communication had created solid relationship among the members of tribe; the individual and group interests of the Baloch demanded such solidarity. This unwritten social contract facilitated the way for tribal chiefs (Sardars and Khavanin) to rule over the Baloch community for generations. Before the Islamic Revolution, the Baloch remarkably abided by the commands of the traditional elites, and these elites were also approved by the political system of the time (second Pahlavi).

The reason for the Pahlavi regime's dependence on tribal chiefs over the local issues was due to their strong base and authority in the Baloch society. The government facilitated the way for obedient tribal chiefs to find their way into the Parliament. It was taken for granted that these local elites were representatives of the Baloch. After the Islamic Revolution, due to the changes in the political structure from Monarchy to the Islamic Republic, the role of traditional elites was reduced. The new state tried to eliminate the role and influence of traditional elites by establishing direct contacts with the Baloch. Thus, the long-standing base of traditional elites has been undermined in the Baloch society. It has declined dramatically in some areas like Iranshahr and Saravan. In Zahedan and Khash, tribal masters still preserve their influence, yet relatively. But, in maintaining peace and security within the Baloch society, traditional elites have had effective contribution, and such contribution more or less continues.

5.2. Religious Elites

Religious elites (Molavis) can also be regarded as another type of traditional elites, but with the difference that their influence is essentially based on religion. In the Baloch mind, *Molavis* are somehow representatives of the Sunni Islam. Due to the political structure of the Pahlavi government which was a monarchy this group was excluded from politics. But, under the Islamic Republic religious elites maintain a high profile. The existence of various religious (Sunni) ceremonies, freedom of action in the religious schools' syllabuses, and establishment of significant number of Sunni schools throughout Balochistan shows the Islamic Republic's good-will gesture toward the *Molavis*, while none of the aforementioned was carried out under the Pahlavi monarchy. Before the Islamic Revolution, the number of Sunni religious schools was handful. To receive Islamic education, Baloch religious students had to travel to India and Pakistan, for example. Today, Sunni religious students attend religious schools in Balochistan itself. There are about 6,000 mosques and close to 320 seminaries and schools where almost 22,000 Baloch Sunni students, male and female, have registered themselves for Islamic education [12]. Under the Islamic Republic circumstances facilitated the path for the popularity and authority of religious elites in Balochistan. The economic elites and the majority of Baloch academics have grown under the influence of *Molavis*. Of course, the root of this influence can be found in the political structure of the Iran's post-revolutionary Islamic system and its typical approach toward the Baloch. In social and cultural affairs, religious values are dominating in the Baloch society. Aside from the active role of religious elites in social affairs, their direct or indirect role and influence in political

participation is vividly noticeable. In articulating the demands of the Baloch to the government, religious elites, more than any other elitist group, have played role. Likewise, in line with the national interest of the Islamic Republic, prominent religious elites play effective role in dealing with or resolving security or political crisis in Balochistan.

5.3. Academic Elites

This group is mostly related to the training and administrative spheres. Their relative influence is measured by their competency and expertise or experience and background in various areas of administration, education, and research. Like the religious elites, the academic elites too are a product of the Islamic Revolution. In the last decade of the Pahlavi monarchy (1970s) the total number of Baloch postgraduates did not exceed fifty individuals [13]. Due to the educational policies of the Islamic Republic, their number has increased dramatically since the 1979 revolution especially after the third decade. Today close to thirty higher educational institutions and universities exist in Balochistan of Iran. According to the observations, close to one hundred Saravani Baloch have been holding Ph.D. degrees in 2018-19. It should be added that the number of master's degree holders, doctoral students, and the educated Saravani Baloch migrated abroad is not included. With this addition, the number of the highly educated Saravani Baloch can be multiplied. Approximately, a lesser figure can be estimated for the number of highly educated Baloch in Iranshahr, Nikshahr, Khash, and Zahedan.

However, the academics have never been able to establish social and cultural or independent economic institutions outside the influence of religious elites. They have distanced themselves from the masses and have played little role in dealing with the affairs of the Baloch society. It is opined that one of the most important reasons for such a distance lies in the fact that there are no "communicating channels" for the academics to reach the people en masse [14]. Contrary to the religious elites who mostly enjoy harmony and unity among themselves, there is no such unity among the Baloch academics, and therefore their weight and influence in the Baloch society is not serious enough. Of course, it must be reminded that the unity which exists among the religious elites is based on a consistent pattern of values or a set of ideological principles, whereas as far as the Baloch academics are concerned, there are no such ideological principles among the academics to tie them together. In cases, academics may gain from religious elites. For example, they may approach influential religious elites and receive their support to win in the elections or to take over governmental positions.

5.4. Economic Elites

This group of Baloch is financially rich. Hence, their influence and power are based on their wealth. The financial capability of the wealthy Baloch allows them to exercise their influence over the provincial, as well as, central authorities in obtaining, for example, personal, familial or tribal privileges. Economic elites can also exercise their influence over the traditional and religious elites in sociopolitical decision-making process like electoral politics in City and Village Councils or Islamic Consultative Assembly, for instance. Among the local elites, economic elites have the largest share in the private sector investment. Yet, due to political reasons and religious factors, their investment is mostly limited to religious affairs, such as constructing mosques or financial contributions to religious institutions and ceremonies. As is the case with the academicians, the wealthy Baloch too lack unity and cohesion among themselves.

6. Baloch Elites: Cultural Affairs

A culture is collection of thoughts, customs, attitudes, and values that makes life meaningful. But, cultural features and characteristics may be both progressive and retrogressive. Hence, this is not exceptional with the Baloch culture; their culture is a combination of traditional customs and religious beliefs. The Baloch have longstanding traditions and values which are regarded as important signs of their identity. Some of these values, such as poetry and music, traditional arts, and hospitality, reflect

the rich Balochi culture, but some other values have slowed the process of cultural development. These are discussed in the following manner.

6.1. Perspective on Female Gender

Since recently a few Baloch women have been succeeded to play important role in social and political affairs, it is therefore important to first deal with female gender by focusing on three themes.

Freedom or discretion: To the most Baloch elites, women must not exercise that kind of freedom which is exercised by modern Iranian women. Failure to conform to traditional Islam and adherence to Western-like customs are behavioral pattern of a significant proportion of women in today's Iran. The root of such reactionary approach to women's freedom can be found in the Balochi customs and Islamic conservatism. Religious elites have been more concerned with the interpretation of traditional Islam. These elites believe that the values of modernity are inconsistent with their cultural features. Among the Baloch, a small proportion of academics hold trans-religious or trans-ethnic perspectives. But due to the parochial fabric of the society, such ideas are marginalized. For most Baloch the sense of male superiority over female has been consolidated. The Baloch are so indoctrinated with this idea that even today in the daily discourse the word "Ajezak" (weak or incapable) is often attributed to Baloch woman. This term at times is officially used by Baloch on radio and television programs during interviews occasionally taken from them to opine over the role of women in the family or community. The use of this term is not deliberate; it has become a habit of the mind. However, similar attitudes and practices that restrict the freedom of Baloch woman indicates that the freedom of woman is defined mostly within the framework of tradition. In cases even where freedom of women is guaranteed by the law, traditions or customs may violate the law.

Divorce: Many marital conflicts are resolved through the mediation of traditional or religious elders whom usually recommend reconciliation. As a result, the lowest divorce rate in Iran is allocated to Balochistan [15]. However, due to the Baloch women's low level of education and lack of awareness about their legal rights, in the male-dominated Baloch community the men's approach to divorce has become more unilateral. In many cases, without considering the social expedients or religious teachings, it is sufficient to repeat the word "divorce" merely three times to divorce a woman. Usually, after divorce, Baloch women suffer much more than the Baloch men, both socially and financially. It is mainly because Baloch women live in patriarchy.

Honor Killing: There are different reasons which may lead to the so-called honor killing, including adultery, sexual abuses, and even a mild relationship beyond the established customs. For the Baloch, loss of honor, as it is believed so, is equal to the loss of life. Those who kill in the name of "honor" use the concept of shame to justify their conduct. The murders which are committed in the name of honor mostly remain confidential, because they are considered to be extremely shameful. The spread of news related to the honor killings are considered so sensitive and dangerous that even state media or cyberspace channels usually do not dare reporting such incidents.

6.2. Literal Sphere

In Iran, the Balochi language is applied orally and rarely in writing. Even the spoken Balochi is not up to the mark. Most Baloch while converse in Balochi use Persian words. Today, a significant number of educated Baloch prefer to communicate with their children in Persian. It should be reminded that the Balochi programs such as *Mehr-e-hankin*, broadcast several times a week from the official media are in fact rooted in the cultural policies of some state institutions such as the Voice and Television Organization (Seda va Sima). Undoubtedly, complex bureaucracy and educational constraints are some important preventive factors in promoting the Balochi language and literature. Yet, as far as the context of our discussion is concerned, the most significant weaknesses of the local elites in promoting Balochi language and literature are: lack of expertise at home, restrictions to access foreign specialists, no systematic pursuance at educational centers, and demotivation among the Baloch elites.

6.3. Artistic Field

This area seems to be more alive than the literal domain. Although in some spheres such as performing arts like Theater Baloch are lagging behind, in some other areas namely music Balochi art is active. Even though the vast majority of religious elites strongly believe that music is forbidden in Islam, the other Baloch do not hold such views. In recent years, the Balochi singing, and music has taken on modern form, yet this practice so far has not been institutionalized. In addition, embroidery and sewing are also among the most beautiful artistic activities of the Baloch women. However, the scope of Balochi art is mainly limited to their historical honors. The displays of historical arts such as Kalporegan pottery (a village in Saravan) or the lady's beautifully designed costumes are among the Baloch's artistic prides. These types of artistic activities are only observed in seminars or cultural showrooms held by the Baloch. But, there is no slightest innovation or creativity in Balochi artistic products. The Baloch are merely repeating something that has already been said or written.

6.4. Role of Elites in Cultural Progress

Due to proximity of the two fields of education and art, expectation for a developmental role, arises mainly from the academic elites especially cultural activists. But, aside from maneuvering over the historical arts, academics have not played a significant role in the cultural development of Baloch community. Rather, in cases, they themselves have been influenced by the stereotypes of the community. There are no Balochi literary centers to promote cultural activities like language, poetry, music, theater, etc. Likewise, in reforming rituals that are most reactionary, such as unregistered marriages, honor killings, and parochial attitudes toward female gender, local elites have been unable to change the status-quo. The situation of Baloch women can be seen as a prominent example. Some of the misconceptions expressed by Baloch clerics about women--women should focus on raising children and housekeeping and should not participate in sociopolitical affairs - cannot be simply attributed to the Islamic teachings, because the interpretations put forward by some modern Islamic scholars are against the conservative or reactionary approach which exists in the Baloch community [16].

Although, recently the cultural atmosphere of the community has progressed relatively and in some places a few Baloch women have entered politics, the credited on this development cannot be given to the Baloch elites. This cultural upswing was more due to the influence of Farsi culture and policies of the system. The emergence of nuclear families, choosing Iranian names for the newly born, the use of Persian words in Balochi conversations, and the compliments or behavioral patterns that are commonplace in Farsi culture are now becoming common in Balochi culture particularly among the educated Baloch.

However, if we place religious practices under the category of culture, it can be inferred that the only group that has tried to promote the religious practices of the Baloch are religious elites. Hence, comparatively speaking, it can be concluded that among the Baloch elites, religious figures have played more active role in cultural affairs. Recruiting the youth to the religious schools, rebuilding or constructing mosques, religious gatherings, publishing and promoting Islamic [Sunni] teachings, and resolving family or tribal differences are among the issues highlighting the role of religious elites in cultural affairs. Yet, such active role does not mean to say that it has lifted the Baloch culture.

6.5. Roots of Cultural Problems

The Baloch's philosophy of world view is based on determinism and predestination. This view by itself is retrogressive, because it implies that people have no free will. The Baloch maintain that their traditions are valuable inheritance received from their ancestors and so must be preserved and respected. They believe that their customs and traditions are aligned with the Islamic beliefs and teachings. Hence, to the most Baloch, those concepts or values which are not in line with their customs and traditions likewise may not be aligned with the Islamic beliefs. Therefore, this approach considers the so-called non-Islamic values illegitimate. As a result, red lines would be highlighted and these highlighted lines create intellectual constraints, which in some way impede cultural innovation. This issue so far has made it impossible for Baloch elites to adapt themselves to the conditions of the time. If such intellectual nutrition changes the range of vision will also change. This mental nutrition results from the elites' conservative approach to tradition and religion, and such conservative approach results from their parochialism. Thus, in such state of affairs there would be little arena for women, musicians, actors, and poets to expand or enrich their talents.

6.6. Developmental Prescriptions

In order to reform the present cultural status of Baloch, three issues need to be considered. The first is "cultural diversity." It is like language diversity, that is, while we learn another language, we learn better our own language. The same can be true with cultural diversity. Cultural diversity encourages different subcultures to study each other's values and customs. In turn, the subcultures would be able to explore the strengths and weaknesses of each other, and therefore, each seek to focus on their cultural strengths. Cultural diversity is recommended for extreme homogeneous societies. In Saravan, for example, where most residents hail from the Baloch community, the role of other subcultures and their participation in social affairs may push the city forward. Under such atmosphere, locals would be acquainted with different cultures, and so they would become aware of different perspectives, and therefore general knowledge of the community increases. Cultural diversity is more observed in Zahedan, and comparatively, Zahedan is more developed than other Balochi cities; cultural diversity leads to dynamism and growth. The second factor is "stereotyped prescriptions". The biggest weakness of tribal or religious elders is that they present old answers to the new questions. Many elites do not believe that they are in need of intellectual reforms, because, they do not feel that they are intellectually poor. The third is about "religious interpretations" which are often superficial and tendentious. This comes into light particularly when some religious figures who lack qualification but enjoy mass support, interpret the Qur'anic verses. Since religion is a sacred institution a preacher must take at most care in how to convey the Islamic teachings and its philosophy to the masses; injudicious preaching not only damages the reputation of Islam but also enhances social and cultural problems in the society.

7. Baloch Elites: Economy -- Privatization and Entrepreneurship

The overwhelming majority of Baloch have been engaged in farming and husbandry. This used to be a source of income for many, however, not beyond the livelihood. But, according to a report of Iran's Planning and Administration Organization, roughly speaking, from 1990 onwards, the role of agricultural sector in absorbing workforce has reduced considerably [17], and presently agricultural productions fail to meet the domestic food requirements. Aside from farming and husbandry, Baloch are also active in fishing and this is particularly true with those living in and around Chabahar. A report shows that, "In Pasabandar close to 90 percent, in Briss around 90 percent, and in Hamidgaah almost 80 percent of the people have been engaged in fishing [18]. In Konarak, almost all the Baloch who belong to this city and are engaged in the private sector earn money through fishing. The good profit made from the sea has led some Baloch from other cities and even a number of non-natives to enter the fishing profession. Since Balochistan is situated in a strategic location, trade and commerce are considered as excellent sources of income for many Baloch. Today, some of the local markets are owned by the Baloch and the rich Baloch have a notable share in the economy of the society. But, the Baloch

usually invest in those areas which are far from the government's influence. Hence, the Baloch's financial contribution in education, health care services, and industry is not prominent. In fact, the rich Baloch have been more at the service of religion than economy. The economic elites' financial contribution to the construction and rehabilitation of mosques and other religious activities is the most important sign of religious elites' influence over the economic elites.

Investing in private sector requires entrepreneurship and innovation, whereas the Baloch economic and even academic elites are alien to these concepts. Today, one of the main concerns of the universities in Balochistan is lack of entrepreneurship. Although there are a number of knowledge based companies, most of these have failed to achieve entrepreneurship. Like many Iranian academics, Baloch academics too have not played a role in producing or commercializing the sciences. The nature of the meetings held by the universities in this regard is mostly formal, and the academic community in general has not gone beyond the stereotypical presentations. Let us take an example of date. In Balochistan the main date producer cities are known to be Saravan, Nikshahr, and Iranshahr. Many products can be produced from date itself. However, despite the significant number of faculty members in agriculture and economic disciplines and the presence of agricultural experts in training centers and universities of Saravan, for example, the city has not made any progress in producing palm products. Thus, in view of what stated above, it is not possible to provide a satisfactory report on the role of Baloch elites in privatization and entrepreneurship.

7.1. Barriers to Privatization and Entrepreneurship

It is very difficult to imagine entrepreneurship or innovation without privatization. Privatization should start from the private sector, but it must be formulated and valued by government. The followings are some of the most important barriers that have prevented privatization and entrepreneurship:

“Weakness in reforming some of the economic laws such as heavy custom duties and tax regulations which has encouraged many to bypass the legal ways of conducting business; most of Baloch merchants do not comply with the import and export formalities, for instance. No efficient financial education; financial education is inconsistent with the practical knowledge. Economic monopoly by elements close to the centers of power has discouraged others to play their part in privatization. Nepotism or favoritism which is exercised by many officials has prevented meritocracy in the economic sector; the industrial towns' inefficiency in entire Balochistan can be taken as a prime example. Inadequate confidence between government and private sector has led to poor government support or guarantees; date factory in Saravan which was supposed to be a sign of collaboration between the private and public sectors, to this date, never succeeded, for example. Government-employed mentality among the educated Baloch. Lack of relations between research centers and the local rich for investment on local products. Discrimination in tax assessments” [19].

Apart from the aforementioned barriers, following points are the two major obstacles toward privatization or entrepreneurship as far as the Baloch elites' role is concerned. First, the Baloch approach toward the philosophy of life and business is based on fatalism, determinism or predeterminism. This world view, in economic context, cannot lead to entrepreneurial progress, as for a free economic system such concepts may be detrimental. Second, poor quality of education and research at Iranian universities, particularly in Balochistan, is one of the most important barriers to entrepreneurship. The root of this problem can be found in the syllabuses and the poor knowledge of professors on financial intelligence.

7.2. Progressive Trends

Privatization not only reduces the burden of government but also helps the government in developmental plans. The concept of this theory, as Adam Smith says, is “Instead of encouraging people to directly benefit the society, ask them to work for their own interests, because people's efforts to

maximize their own interests often would benefit the society.” According to Smith, “Social benefits are unwittingly caused by individual actions.” Therefore, the state mechanism should function in a way that it reduces the government intervention in the economy and promote privatization. The importance of privatization must be taught systematically and exercised effectively so that the culture of “self-employed” replaces the culture of “government-employed.” Also, academic elites, namely the economists or the educated employed at the state-owned industrial and commercial agencies, should establish links with the local wealthy so that guide them how to invest in industrial or commercial fields, and as well instill a sense of innovation in them.

Besides, just as religious education is deemed vital, financial education must be considered equally important. Instead of inviting professors to lecture on theoretical concepts of privatization and entrepreneurship who are not familiar with the real risks, entrepreneurs must also be invited at the universities to clarify the challenges of the market. After all, they are dealing with the actual problems and can better guide the applicants.

Moreover, privatization and innovation can leave a progressive impact on political culture of the society. In this regard, Sariolghalam writes:

“Freedom of action and avoidance of negative characteristics of political culture depend on private wealth. The more the government delegates the task of production and all its derivatives, such as investment, banking, employment, and distribution, to the citizens, the more it pursues and stabilizes non-governmental growth. The government can manage, oversee, and provide public security through taxes. Hence, reforming the economic structure of the society comes first. Once society is able to generate wealth, it may then have independent media and political parties. If a society intends to move in the direction of development, it must first move within the economic frameworks and then make changes in social and cultural contexts” [20].

8. Baloch Elites in Politics

In order to explain the role of local elites in political development of the Baloch society, the following themes will be discussed.

8.1. Scope of Political Participation

The scope of Baloch political participation can be determined in the “elections.” The history of Baloch's participation in elections goes back to the post-1979 period. Before that, i.e., during the Pahlavi rule, elections were conducted formally. For example, before the polls began, it was clear for the state that who had to be elected to the parliament, and those elected were usually from the tribal chiefs. Many of these appointments were made during the second Pahlavi era by Asadullah Alam. With the fall of the Pahlavi regime, such system collapsed and replaced by the Islamic Republic. The change of political structure from Monarchy to Islamic Republic can be considered the beginning of “democracy” in Balochestan. Until the first half of the second decade of the Islamic Republic, the activities of Baloch were not significant. But in the last half of the second decade, after the victory of Syed Mohammad Khatami (1997-2005), the Baloch's electoral participation increased. This period is referred to be the peak of the Baloch's political activities; different meetings used to be held among the local elites throughout Balochestan especially in Zahedan. However, the height of such activities can always be seen in the elections' season. Hence, the scope of Baloch's participation is limited to the elections of City and Village Councils, Islamic Consultative Assembly (parliament), Presidency, and Experts' Assembly for Supreme Leadership. These elections are regarded as the most prominent signs of Baloch political participation.

8.2. Causes of Political Participation

The most important motivations for the Baloch political participation are “religion” and “tribe.” Religious Sensitivity: Religious sensitivity is mainly observed in Zahedan, center of the province. This is significant due to the mix of Shia and Sunni population. In Zahedan, religious motives play key role

in the elections of the City and Village Council, Islamic Consultative Assembly, Experts' Assembly for Supreme Leadership, and Presidency. In the elections of City and Village Council, after the candidates are approved by the concerned commission, often a coalition would be established through the influence of tribal chiefs and religious elites. Usually such a coalition wins the elections. The focal point for such developments in Zahedan is Makki mosque. In the Islamic Consultative Assembly's elections, after the candidates' approval by the Guardian Council, Baloch elites leading by religious leaders hold sessions to analyze the competency of the candidates. In such meetings, tribal expedients would also be taken into consideration and ultimately among the candidates one would be elected, and the Baloch would be asked to cast their vote for the same individual. The results of the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth parliamentary elections show that religious elites have played key role to appoint the Sunni representative of the Islamic Consultative Assembly in Zahedan. In the Presidential elections, Baloch stand close to the candidates with reformist or moderate tendencies. As a result, those presidential candidates associated with the rightist factions do not win the majority in Balochestan. Therefore, after the legal formalities are followed, the electoral process in Zahedan is led by religious elites. The same issue has most probably led to the process of electing a Shia MP in Zahedan with expedients to balance political power between the Sunni Baloch and the Shia Sistani. In Zahedan, two individuals can be elected to the Islamic Consultative Assembly and usually this trend would be engineered in such a fashion that one [Sunni] Baloch and one [Shia] Sistani would be introduced to the parliament. As a result, Baloch people grow under the influence of the competitive atmosphere and propaganda of religious elites. However, this process is not so well organized in other Balochi cities. In Zahedan, the intensity of religious rivalry in the elections is so high that it has overshadowed the tribal rivalry.

Tribal Rivalry: With the exception of Khash, a city in Sarhad, tribal rivalry can be seen more in Makoran. Due to the less Shia population in Khash and Makoran, elections in these areas are partly influenced by tribal rivalry. Since elections of the Experts' Assembly for Supreme Leadership is held on provincial basis and Presidential elections on national basis, "religion" in Makoran is still decisive. At these two elections, Baloch stand behind their Sunni leader and usually whatever the Makki mosque leadership decides they abide by. In other words, in Makoran and Khash city, tribal rivalry is limited to the City and Village Councils and Parliamentary elections. It is noteworthy, the influence and decisive power that the prominent Sunni religious elites exercise in Zahedan's electoral activities, to this extent, is not practiced in Makoran, especially in Saravan. In Makoran it cannot be precisely determined which group of Baloch elites have the final voice in the elections. In this regard, politics of elections may not be identical; different elites influence the elections differently. In Saravan and Iranshahr, for example, religious elites of each city often try to back those candidates who enjoy mass support or have more tribal influences. In cases, religious elites do not publicly support candidates until the final moments of the elections, that is to say, they evaluate the electoral process and extend their support to that candidate who is likely to receive the most votes. But, the case of Chabahar is a bit different. The religious elites of Chabahar enjoy stronger popular base than their counterparts in other cities of Makoran, though such base might not always be decisive. One of the most important causes of this phenomenon can be seen in the level of education; the greater the number of the educated in a city, less will be the influence of religious masters. There are far more educated people in Iranshahr and Saravan than in Chabahar. The Baloch in Saravan are partly influenced by the charming character of the candidates. The charisma of the candidate in cities like Zahedan and Chabahar is not important for the masses. In Saravan, a candidate with charisma can attract the attention of both religious and tribal masters. The elections of the City and Village Council in 2013 and that of the Parliament in 2015 can be seen as two distinct examples. However, more than forty years of experience since the 1979 revolution suggests that *Molavis* have played both direct and indirect role in electoral activities, yet their role have been stronger in Zahedan. Since Shiaism is the ideology of the state, the official values that govern the country's atmosphere are based on Shia teachings. As a result, religious diversity has emerged in the Sunni areas like Balochestan. In turn, the factor of religion has made religious [Sunni] figures more prominent than other Baloch elites.

8.3. Baloch Women in Politics

Since Balochistan has a patriarchal structure women are largely excluded from politics. Inability of women in politics is a concept which is taken for granted in the Baloch society. This is endorsed by most of the local elites who attribute such concept to the sayings of Prophet Mohammad. In March 2016, for example, when the elections for the Parliament were carrying on, messages and notes on the “inability of women to participate in political affairs” shared among the Saravani people on cyberspace (Whats App & Telegram). Whether the “inability of women to participate in political affairs” is a Mohammadian concept is debatable and beyond the present context. But, this much is sufficient to note that majority of Baloch elites, especially *Molavis*, oppose the women's entry in politics. Assigning important positions to [Baloch] women, such as city governorate, which happened in the eleventh government (Rouhani's administration), was faced with opposition from religious elites and even from some parliamentarians. To the religious elites, these types of assignments are “in contradiction with the Balochi customs and contrary to the Islamic values.” Under the administration of Rouhani, the conditions for the presence of Baloch women were further provided in the executive and political spheres. In the elections held for the Parliament (2016), in Saravan a few educated women participated and contested the elections. Khash (2017), for that matter, ranked among the first cities where women participated in the elections of City and Village Council. In this city, 347 women were enrolled for the city council elections, of which 70 were elected [21]. In addition, several appointments were made for few Baloch women in politically sensitive offices, such as: city governorship of Qasrqand (2014), ambassadorship of Brunei (2018), and deputy chief for governorship of Sistan and Balochistan province (2019). Moreover, a number of Baloch women are active as prefect, member of city council, mayor, and faculty member at different universities. Certainly, government policy in this regard is vital. Usually governments with reformist or moderate tendencies are more concerned with the role of women in social and political affairs. Under the administration of Rouhani, officials occasionally held briefings with local elites such as religious figures and influential trustees to support Baloch women in elections and government appointments. Such tactics have played a role in assigning executive or political posts to few Baloch women. However, the overall role of [Baloch] women in the history of Baloch's political participation can be described very poor.

8.4. Nature of Political Participation

The Baloch elites' participation has increased since the third decade of the Islamic Republic. Yet such participation seems to be of quantitative nature. For example, there is no healthy competitive environment among the candidates in the elections and quite often meritocracy is sacrificed for religious and tribal expediencies. Or, for that matter, since masses are being influenced by religious elites, their votes cannot be considered effective. Also, the common people and even in many cases the elites do not correctly identify the duties and powers of their representatives. This has made most people's demands either personal or superficial. Consequently, most Baloch parliamentarians have devoted much of their time and energy to the personal and superficial demands of the people and therefore have departed from their true mission. Besides, in Baloch society religious and tribal interests are more highlighted than national (Iranian) interest; the enthusiasm and fanaticism which is observed in the Balochi religious and tribal tendencies is not that much obvious in their national tendency. In a way or other, the political participation of Iranian Baloch elites has gone beyond the traditional formation, yet it is not free from the tribal or religious clutches. In a more balanced sense, although the political participation of Baloch elites may not be considered progressive, the on-going process is growing relatively. The nature of this type of politics which is shaped by religious rivalries, tribal influences, and parochial expediencies seems to be more formal than effective, but not sort of “formal traditional” which had existed during the second period of the Pahlavi's administration. The nature of such political participation appears to be “formal modern”.

8.5. Upgrading the Elites Role in Politics

In order to upgrade the political participation of the Baloch, a stable party system is required. Stability, as Samuel Huntington argues, is necessary for development. The basic assumption is that

political institutionalization is the key to stability, and that stability is both normatively good in itself and also a necessity for political development [22]. Of course, it takes years for party culture in Balochistan to be institutionalized. However, for political growth parties have to start functioning from somewhere. No doubt, to bring about an effective party system state's will is required; otherwise, according to a Baloch expert, "when there are no parties, the preference of tribal or religious interests over national interest becomes a natural matter in the Baloch society" [23].

9. Conclusions

In order to conclude the present paper, the following may be presented. 1) Local culture has strengthened the religious values more than before, yet these values do not appear to be progressive. 2) Baloch's role in privatization failed to create a privatization culture. 3) Political participation of Baloch, relatively, has improved their political culture. 4) In the Baloch context, cultural development is a priority to economic and political development. Many of the problems that arise in social, economic, and political areas are rooted in the culture. Thus, those cultural features that hinder development must be examined, criticized, and reformed; criticism of the culture does not mean to negate the customs and traditions. 5) With regard to economy, the most appropriate way is to promote the culture of privatization. Privatization itself will be effective in reforming some of the major cultural traits such as predeterminism. 6) The higher the quality of political participation, richer the political culture will be. The path to an effective political participation begins first with local political parties. The tribe factor strengthens the tribe and the religion factor strengthens the religion. These two are considered sacred in their place but as far as the experience of the Baloch society indicates, they do not lead to political growth. Finally, without the support of government, Baloch elites can hardly move forward. For example, government policies should be executed in such a way that cultural diversity may not lead to dissatisfaction. Government must prepare the necessary grounds for privatization so that those who wish to enter the private sector do not get discouraged. Or, the emergence of parties, for instance, depends on the will of the state.

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