

OPINION

Balochistan's Historical Account

*Colonial Legacies, National
Struggles, and the Quest for Inclusion*



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- Critically analyse Pakistan's political, security, socio-economic and foreign policy challenges and support efforts to integrate the country.
- Integrate youth in research work, particularly in conflict resolution and peace-making efforts.

Balochistan's Historical Account:

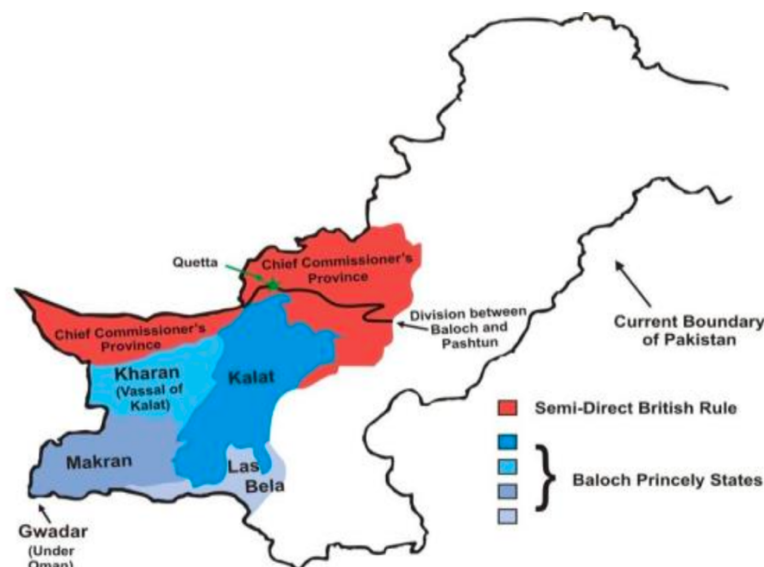
Colonial Legacies, National Struggles, and the Quest for Inclusion

Sabah Aslam*

Balochistan's transformation from a neglected colonial frontier to a province seeking meaningful inclusion within Pakistan is a story shaped by both struggle and vision. Once marginalised under British rule, the region found its political voice and future in the new state, guided in no small part by Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah's commitment to fairness and representation. Balochistan exemplifies the enduring impact of colonial legacies, highlighting efforts in leadership, diplomacy, and constitutional assurances to reconcile divisions. This opinion piece explores the historical context of colonial neglect, the national struggles for recognition, and the inclusive vision that continues to define Balochistan's place in Pakistan's federation, offering insights into both the challenges and the possibilities of nation-building.

Colonial Neglect and a Fragmented Balochistan

Under British colonial rule, Balochistan was politically fragmented and largely overlooked in reforms that benefited other parts of India. The region comprised a Chief Commissioner's Province (British Balochistan, directly administered by the British), several princely states (notably the Khanate of Kalat along with Kharan, Las Bela, and Makran), and the coastal enclave of Gwadar (which was under Omani rule until late 1958). Unlike the major provinces of British India, Balochistan's British-ruled areas had neither an elected assembly nor full provincial status.



Map: [Balochistan Under British Rule \(1800s - 1947\)](#)

Even the landmark Government of India Act 1935, which introduced provincial autonomy elsewhere, pointedly excluded Balochistan from meaningful self-governance. The [1935 Act](#) left British Balochistan under the direct ‘discretion’ of the Governor-General, with only a nominal advisory Shahi Jirga (council of tribal leaders) instead of a legislature. This meant that, unlike Indians in, say, Punjab or Bengal, the people of Balochistan had no representation in the elected councils, and reforms and resources bypassed them entirely. British authorities largely saw Balochistan as a strategic buffer and neglected its development, deeming it a vast, barren land with a sparse population and thus unworthy of investment. Security concerns like guarding against Russian expansion only reinforced this ‘forward policy’ of keeping Balochistan undeveloped as a frontier, rather than integrating it into modern governance. Local tribal rulers, too, often preferred to maintain the status quo, resisting mass education and the political empowerment of their people in order to preserve their own feudal control. By the 1940s, the consequence was a Balochistan lagging far behind in socio-political progress, excluded from the constitutional advances that other Indian regions enjoyed.

Amid this neglect, Balochistan’s structure on the eve of Partition was uniquely fractured. British Balochistan (including Quetta and surrounding Pashtun areas) was administered directly by colonial officials, whereas the Balochistan Agency’s princely states like Kalat were semi-autonomous under treaty arrangements. The princely state of Kalat, led by the Khan, historically claimed suzerainty over the smaller states Kharan, Las Bela, and Makran. Meanwhile, Gwadar was held by the Sultanate of Oman, reflecting the arbitrary colonial-era divisions. This patchwork left the region without a unified political identity or voice. Legislative reforms such as the [Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms](#) and the [Government of India Act 1935](#) extended no voting rights or provincial assemblies to Balochistan, entrenching its second-class status. Jinnah himself would later recall these injustices ([Sibi Darbar on February 14, 1948](#)), noting that the people of Balochistan experienced many colonial inequities. Therefore, as the movement for Pakistan gained momentum during the 1940s, Balochistan remained marginalised, impoverished, disenfranchised, and fractured, awaiting a leader to advocate for its integration.

Jinnah Champions Balochistan’s Rights

Muhammad Ali Jinnah emerged as that champion. Long before Partition, Jinnah was outspoken against the colonial discrimination towards provinces like Balochistan. As early as 1927, in the [Delhi Proposals](#), and again in his famous [Fourteen Points \(1929\)](#), Jinnah demanded constitutional reforms in Balochistan on par with other provinces. Point 11 of Jinnah’s Fourteen Points explicitly insisted that:

Reforms should be introduced in the North-West Frontier Province and Balochistan on the same footing as in the other provinces. *Jinnah’s Fourteen Points (1929)*

This was a direct rebuttal to British policies that had kept Balochistan under bureaucratic rule. Jinnah's consistent stance was that the Baloch and Pashtun inhabitants of this region deserved the same political status and rights as any citizens of India, a refrain he would later echo as Pakistan's leader.

In the 1930s, Jinnah's efforts took organisational form. Recognising that Balochistan lacked a platform in the All-India Muslim League, he encouraged the formation of the Balochistan Provincial Muslim League to mobilise public sentiment and leadership from the region. A young barrister from Pishin, [*Qazi Muhammad Isa*](#), became one of Jinnah's trusted lieutenants in Balochistan. After meeting Jinnah in 1938 and being inspired by his vision, Qazi Isa returned to Balochistan in early 1939 to establish the province's first branch of the Muslim League. As its president, he expanded the League's reach and began mobilising a population that had long been excluded from political life. It was a daunting task; Balochistan had few modern political institutions, but Jinnah and Isa persisted in building a support base. Jinnah maintained close personal ties with local leaders: he liaised with progressive sardars and notables, forged a friendship with Qazi Isa, and reached out to tribal chiefs. Notably, Jinnah developed a cordial rapport with *Mir Ahmad Yar Khan*, the Khan of Kalat, the most prominent ruler in Balochistan. The Khan respected Jinnah deeply, so much so that he would fondly refer to Jinnah as his 'father'. This mutual respect was pivotal when the question of Kalat's future arose. Jinnah also cultivated links with the Nawabs of Kharan, Las Bela, and Makran (smaller Baloch states), as well as influential Pashtun leaders in British Balochistan such as [*Nawab Muhammad Khan Jogezai and Sardar Jaffar Khan Jamali*](#), who lent support to the Pakistan movement. Through the 1940s, these relationships solidified Balochistan's alignment with Jinnah's vision.

Jinnah's advocacy was not just rhetorical. He took concrete steps to secure political representation for Balochistan in the final years of British rule. In 1946, when a Constituent Assembly of India was being formed, British Balochistan, for the first time, was allotted a seat. Backed by Jinnah's Muslim League, an election in Quetta saw League-aligned candidate Nawab Jogezai defeat a Congress-affiliated rival (Khan Abdul Samad Achakzai), ensuring Balochistan's voice in the constitutional talks would support the Pakistan cause. This was a symbolic victory: a province with no legislature had now sent a representative to help shape its destiny. Meanwhile, Jinnah ceaselessly highlighted Balochistan's grievances on the national stage. At League sessions and in meetings with British officials, he pressed for ending Balochistan's isolation. Indeed, when the British Cabinet Mission came to India in 1946 to plan independence, Jinnah did something extraordinary; he presented the Khan of Kalat's case for independence directly to the Mission, arguing that Kalat was a distinct entity under prior treaties and should be free from any Indian constitutional scheme. By supporting Kalat's claim of independence from British India, Jinnah was effectively ensuring that this Baloch state would not be coerced into joining India. It was a diplomatic move that later eased Kalat's path to joining Pakistan. All these efforts reflect how deeply Jinnah opposed Balochistan's colonial-era exclusion: he fought to give Balochistan a stake in the Pakistan Movement and to assure its leaders that their rights would be respected in the new nation.

Equally important were Jinnah's visits and personal engagement with the province. He made multiple trips to Balochistan during the 1940s to rally support. In late June 1943, Jinnah spent two months in Balochistan, meeting local delegations and even visiting the Khan of Kalat at his invitation. He toured Quetta and the countryside, energising the Muslim League's campaign and assuring the people that Pakistan's creation would uplift Balochistan's status. Again in 1945, Jinnah visited and was greeted by enthusiastic crowds inspired by his message of hope and equality for Balochistan. Such visits helped forge an emotional connection; Balochistan was no longer a remote frontier for the League, but a core part of Jinnah's Pakistan mission. By 1947, thanks to Jinnah and his allies, the idea of Pakistan had taken firm root in Balochistan's political class. A province long kept voiceless was now ready to speak with a loud, united voice when the moment of decision arrived.

The Voluntary Accession of Balochistan

That moment came as the British prepared to quit India. In June 1947, as part of the partition plan, Balochistan's future had to be decided. Because British Balochistan was not a fully self-governing province, the Governor-General of India set up a special process: he convened an extraordinary joint session of the [Shahi Jirga \(tribal council\) and the Quetta Municipality](#) to determine the will of the people. On [29 June 1947](#), this joint assembly comprising tribal leaders and the elected members of Quetta's local council voted unanimously in favour of Balochistan joining Pakistan. This was a landmark decision: it demonstrated that the representatives of British Balochistan's tribes and towns *themselves* opted to accede to the new Dominion of Pakistan. Their verdict was voluntary and peaceful, carried out through a vote rather than any coercion. As a result, when Pakistan emerged on 14 August 1947, British Balochistan (including Quetta and adjoining areas) became part of Pakistan from day one. Contemporary accounts and historians confirm that *'the province's Shahi Jirga and the non-official members of the Quetta Municipality opted for Pakistan unanimously on 29 June 1947'*. This local mandate refutes later mischaracterisations; it is clear that Pakistan's founders did not *'grab'* Balochistan, rather, the Balochs themselves, through their traditional jirga system, chose Pakistan.

The princely states in Balochistan followed a similarly peaceful path. Initially, as the British left, all princely rulers in India were given the options of joining India, joining Pakistan, or remaining independent. In Balochistan, the Khan of Kalat, Mir Ahmad Yar Khan, hoped for a brief independence for his state of Kalat based on historic treaties. Jinnah, as noted, had even acknowledged Kalat's special status prior to Partition. However, the surrounding reality soon set in. Three smaller Baloch states, including Makran, Las Bela, and Kharan, decided to accede to Pakistan by the fall of 1947. These states, culturally and geographically contiguous to Kalat, determined that their future lay with Pakistan. In fact, by March 1948, the rulers of Makran, Las Bela and Kharan *publicly announced* their accession to Pakistan, cementing their choice to join the federation. This left the Khan of Kalat in an isolated position. After a series of negotiations with the Government of Pakistan (in which Jinnah and Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan took a personal role), the Khan of Kalat reached a decision.

INSTRUMENT OF ACCESSION OF KALAT STATE

WHEREAS the Indian Independence Act, 1947, provides that as from the fifteenth day of August, 1947, there shall be set up an independent Dominion known as PAKISTAN, and that the Government of India Act, 1935, shall, with such omissions, additions, adaptations and modifications as the Governor-General may by order specify, be applicable to the Dominion of Pakistan;

AND WHEREAS the Government of India Act, 1935, as so adapted by the Governor-General provides that an Indian State may accede to the Dominion of Pakistan by an Instrument of Accession executed by the Ruler thereof:

NOW THEREFORE

I, His Highness Begla Begi Khan of Kalat
Ruler of Kalat in the exercise of my sovereignty
in and over my said State DO hereby execute this my Instrument
of Accession and

1. I hereby declare that I accede to the Dominion of Pakistan with the intent that the Governor-General of Pakistan, the Dominion Legislature, the Supreme Court and any other Dominion authority established for the purposes of the Dominion shall, by virtue of this my Instrument of Accession, but subject always to the terms thereof, and for the purposes only of the Dominion, exercise in relation to the State of Kalat (hereinafter referred to as "this State") such functions as may be vested in them by or under the Government of India Act, 1935, as in force in the Dominion of Pakistan on the 15th day of August 1947 (which Act as so in force is hereinafter referred to as "the Act").

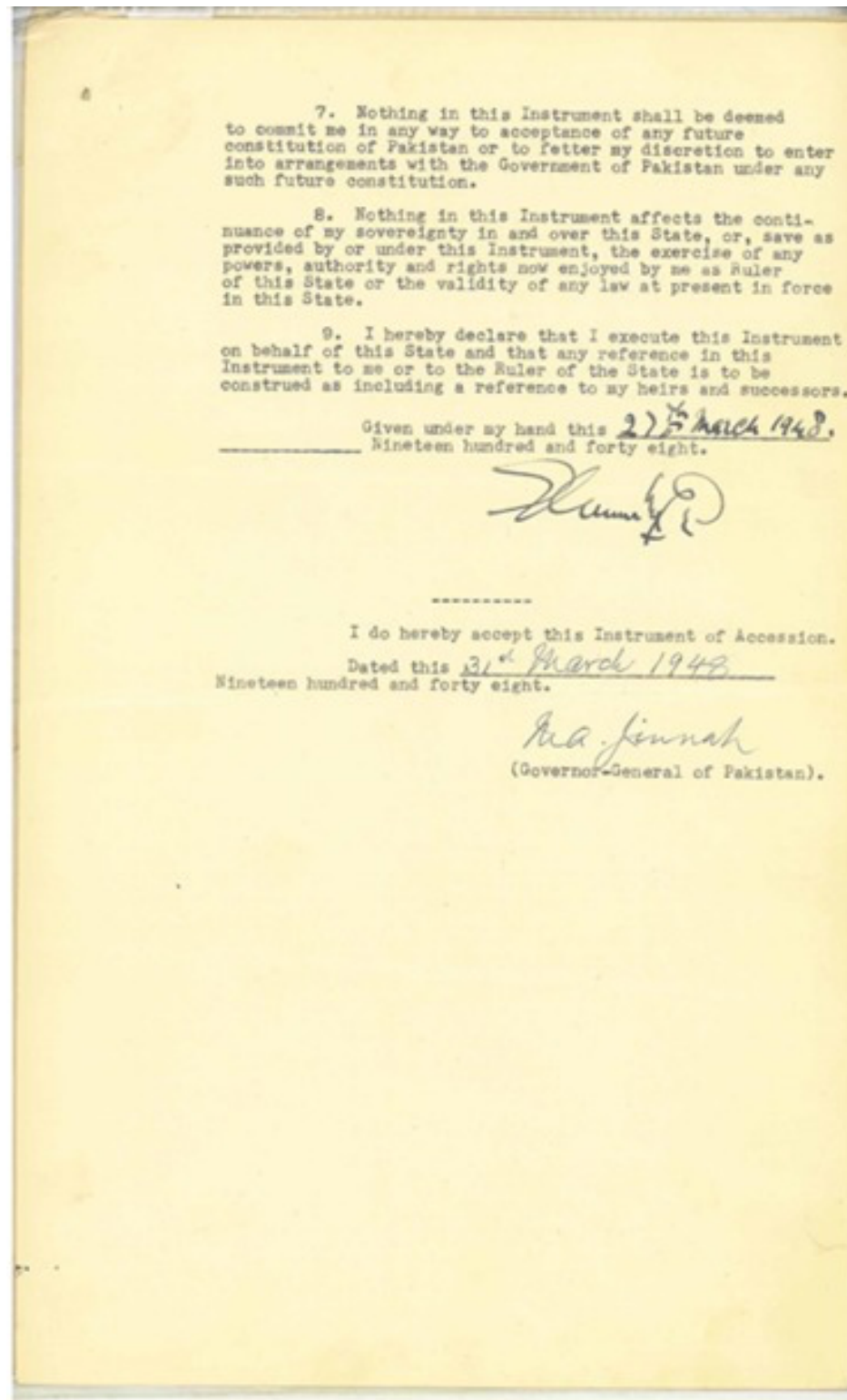
2. I hereby assume the obligation of ensuring that due effect is given to the provisions of the Act within this State so far as they are applicable therein by virtue of this my Instrument of Accession.

3. I accept the matters specified in the Schedule hereto as the matters with respect to which the Dominion Legislature may make laws for this State.

4. I hereby declare that I accede to the Dominion of Pakistan on the assurance that if an agreement is made between the Governor-General and the Ruler of this State whereby any functions in relation to the administration in this State of any law of the Dominion Legislature shall be exercised by the Ruler of this State, then any such agreement shall be deemed to form part of this Instrument and shall be construed and have effect accordingly.

5. Nothing in this Instrument shall empower the Dominion Legislature to make any law for this State authorising the compulsory acquisition of land for any purpose, but I hereby undertake that should the Dominion for the purposes of a Dominion law which applies in this State deem it necessary to acquire any land, I will at their request acquire the land at their expense or if the land belongs to me transfer it to them on such terms as may be agreed, or, in default of agreement, determined by an arbitrator to be appointed by the Chief Justice of Pakistan.

6. The terms of this my Instrument of Accession shall not be varied by any amendment of the Act or of the Indian Independence Act, 1947, unless such amendment is accepted by me by an Instrument supplementary to this Instrument.



The Instrument of Accession to Pakistan, March 27, 1948

On 27 March 1948, Kalat's ruler signed the Instrument of Accession to Pakistan, formally and willingly acceding his state to Jinnah's government. Thus, within seven months of independence, the entirety of Balochistan, British Balochistan and all four princely states had peacefully joined Pakistan. There was no large-scale conflict; the accessions were achieved

through dialogue, legal instruments, and the understanding that Pakistan would respect the rights of Balochistan's people. Indeed, Jinnah's role was pivotal: he leveraged his warm relationship with the Khan of Kalat to reassure him about joining Pakistan on just terms. (The Khan's affection for Jinnah, whom he called 'a father,' suggests the level of trust involved). While a small uprising led by a dissatisfied prince flared up briefly in 1948, it garnered little support and was subdued by 1950. The larger reality is that Balochistan's union with Pakistan came by mutual agreement, a fact often overshadowed by later conflicts but crucial to the historical record.

One piece of the puzzle remained: Gwadar, the coastal town that had been under Omani control since the 18th century. Gwadar was ethnically Baloch, and its absence left Pakistan without Balochistan's Arabian Sea coastline (aside from a small enclave). Jinnah did not live to see its return, but his successors fulfilled the mission. In 1958, Pakistan's government, under Prime Minister Feroze Khan Noon, negotiated the [purchase of Gwadar from the Sultanate of Oman](#). The deal, completed in September 1958 for approximately £3 million (funded in part by Pakistan's friends such as the Aga Khan), transferred Gwadar peacefully to Pakistan's sovereignty. Pakistani naval ships sailed to Gwadar to take control of the territory on 8 December 1958 amid national celebrations. With Gwadar's acquisition, the historical reunification of Balochistan was complete from the Khanate of Kalat's highlands to the Mekran coast; all of Balochistan was now part of Pakistan. This final act underscored Pakistan's continued commitment to integrating Baloch lands not by force but by diplomacy and consent. Over a decade, then, Balochistan went from a '*neglected appendix*' of British India to a consolidated province of Pakistan, thanks to Jinnah's inclusive vision and the willing participation of Balochistan's own leaders.

Jinnah's Enduring Bond with Balochistan

If Balochistan occupies a special place in Pakistan today, it is in no small measure because it always occupied a special place in Jinnah's heart. The Quaid-e-Azam's connection with Balochistan was not merely political; it was deeply symbolic and personal. As Governor-General of Pakistan, Jinnah made Balochistan a focus of early reforms. He visited Sibi in February 1948, presiding over the traditional Darbar (gathering of tribal chiefs) shortly after independence. There, in what would be one of his last public addresses, Jinnah spoke with unusual candour about his feelings for the province. '*Let me assure you that I have not for one moment allowed the affairs of Balochistan to slip out of my mind,*' he told the assembled Baloch and Pashtun chieftains at Sibi on [14 February 1948](#). Jinnah promised that he had 'thought and pondered' over how to improve the lives of Balochistan's people and to enable them to secure 'the same position and the same political status... which are open to their brethren in other provinces'. Coming from the head of state, these words were a powerful acknowledgement of Balochistan's past injustices and a pledge to bring Balochistan fully on par within the Pakistani federation. Indeed, Jinnah announced immediate administrative reforms to begin that process and hinted at a broader development 'package' for the province's future. Such measures, partial local self-government and development projects, were initiated under his guidance (though Jinnah's premature death impeded their completion). Nonetheless, the sincerity of Jinnah's

commitment resonated deeply. Locals remember that at Sibi Darbar, [Jinnah spoke](#) not as a distant ruler but almost as a well-wisher who understood Balochistan's pain and potential. This empathetic approach helped cement Balochistan's emotional integration into Pakistan in those critical early days.

Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah spent the final weeks of his life at his retreat in Ziarat, Balochistan. [The Ziarat Residency](#) (pictured) is now preserved as a national monument, symbolizing Jinnah's enduring bond with the province.

Jinnah's affection for Balochistan was further evident in his personal choices. Owing to frail health, in July 1948 the Quaid retreated from the stresses of Karachi to the cool hills of Ziarat in Balochistan, a lush juniper valley he was known to admire. There he took up residence in the quaint two-story wooden bungalow that had been a British-era summer retreat (now famously called the '[Quaid-e-Azam Residency](#)'). For over two months, Jinnah made Ziarat his home, attempting to recuperate from tuberculosis in the serene Balochistan climate. It was a measure of his comfort and attachment that he chose to spend his final days in Balochistan's embrace rather than anywhere else. His sister, Fatima Jinnah, accompanied him, as did top doctors sent by the government. Locals in Ziarat still recount how this quiet hill station became the unlikely centre of Pakistan's attention, with the nation's founding father living among them. Although Jinnah grew weaker by early September 1948 and had to be moved back to Karachi (he passed away on 11 September 1948), the image of the dying Quaid in Balochistan left a lasting emotional imprint. It humanised the bond between Balochistan and Pakistan: the founder literally spent his last breaths on Baloch soil. Today, the Ziarat Residency stands restored (after surviving a terrorist attack in 2013) and is one of Pakistan's most cherished heritage sites, a shrine of sorts to Jinnah's memory. Each year, visitors from across Pakistan travel to Ziarat to see the room where Jinnah stayed, the chair and bed he used, and to feel the aura of the place where the country's founding father spent some of the last days of his life. For many, this beautiful lodge in Balochistan is a poignant symbol that Jinnah's vision for Pakistan always included Balochistan at its heart, geographically and sentimentally.

Conclusion: Jinnah's Vision and Balochistan's Promise

The story of Balochistan's accession to Pakistan is more than a tale of historical events; it is a testament to [Quaid-e-Azam Jinnah's inclusive and farsighted vision](#). He dreamed of a Pakistan where even the most marginalised regions would stand equal to other provinces, a dream he voiced unequivocally in the context of Balochistan. Through patient political work and sincere friendship, Jinnah turned that vision into reality: he gave Balochistan a voice, ensured its leaders a dignified partnership, and secured its willing entry into Pakistan's union. From the colonial neglect that left Balochistan voiceless, Jinnah led the region to a future where it could proudly say it was a part of Pakistan by choice. This voluntary and peaceful integration stands out in South Asian history, achieved not by conquest but by consensus. It reflects the trust

Jinnah earned among the people of Balochistan and the Sardars, as well as his ability to reconcile regional autonomy with national unity.

Seventy-eight years on, Balochistan remains an indispensable pillar of Pakistan. It is Pakistan's largest province, rich in natural resources and strategic significance, from its minerals and energy reserves to its Gwadar port that opens Pakistan to the seas. If Pakistan today pins great hopes on initiatives like the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and other developments in Balochistan, it is worth remembering that these rest on the foundation Jinnah laid: the foundation of unity, mutual respect, and integration. Yes, challenges in Balochistan have arisen in subsequent decades; issues of underdevelopment and unrest periodically cloud the landscape. Yet the solution, as Jinnah believed, lies in recommitting to an inclusive national ethos addressing grievances, delivering governance, and never letting Balochistan feel excluded again. The province's enduring importance to Pakistan's unity and prosperity is undeniable. It is the linchpin connecting Pakistan to the Persian Gulf and Central Asia, a reservoir of talent and resources, and home to resilient communities that have stood by Pakistan through thick and thin. In affirming Balochistan's centrality, we affirm Jinnah's ethos that Pakistan is incomplete without any of its parts.

Balochistan's journey from neglected outpost to proud Pakistani province thus embodies the spirit of Jinnah's Pakistan, a federation held together not by force or coercion, but by the free allegiance of its people, forged through justice and common endeavour. As Pakistan moves forward, rekindling Jinnah's inclusive vision is the surest path to strengthening the national bond. In Balochistan's context, that means recalling how and why the province joined Pakistan in the first place: as a '*willing part of Pakistan*', led by a Quaid who saw the Baloch not as subjects in need of rule, but as brothers in need of rights. It is a legacy of which all Pakistanis can be proud. Jinnah's work in Balochistan remains a shining example of statesmanship, one that turned a troubled page of history into a narrative of hope, dignity, and unity. Today, as we cherish a peaceful and thriving Balochistan within Pakistan, we honour Quaid-e-Azam's memory and the promise he held out: that in Pakistan, '*the people of Balochistan [shall] secure the same position... as their brethren in other provinces*'. This is the pledge we must continually strive to fulfil, so that Balochistan's transformation stands complete and Jinnah's dream endures, stronger than ever.

* **Ms. Sabah Aslam** is a distinguished scholar and practitioner in Political Science and International Relations, specialising in post-colonialism, state security, and sovereignty. With a career that bridges academia, policy advisory, and strategic consulting, she has developed a reputation for delivering nuanced insights into complex geopolitical and security challenges. Her work spans counter-terrorism, conflict mapping, peacebuilding, and regional security, with a particular focus on South Asia and post-colonial state dynamics.



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