
GWADAR ON THE CHESS BOARD OF HISTORY: AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Until recently, Gwadar has always been mentioned as a small insignificant fishing town. Very little was known about its history and potential to the outside world. However, at the turn of the 21st century Gwadar became the focus of attention globally. The development of a deep seaport with China's assistance and prospects of connecting China and Central Asia through Pakistan to the North Arabian Sea has brought this small, insignificant fishing town to international recognition. But history reveals that this region has always played a vital role since primeval times due to its geostrategic and geographical location. From Alexander's retreat to Pakistan's reclaiming Gwadar, it has always reminded its significance at different times in diverse manners. This paper aims to bring into light the historical journey of Gwadar, which usually remained unknown or were either considered trivial by historians. Gwadar became an important chapter in the Belt and Road initiative proposed by the Chinese president. It will link China, South Asia, Middle East, Central Asia, Africa and Europe through a network of land and sea routes and ports will contribute significantly to the progress and prosperity of Gwadar in Pakistan, China and the entire region.

Keywords: Gwadar, Sea Port, Oman, Historical Overview

INTRODUCTION AND TOPOGRAPHY OF GWADAR

“No political history of our times will be complete without a mention of Gwadar (Khan, 1969)”. These were the words of Feroz Khan Noon who served as the Foreign Minister (1956-57) and later Prime Minister (1957-58) of Pakistan and played an instrumental role in bringing Gwadar into Pakistan's domain. After about 60 years this very statement of Feroz Khan Noon is still very relevant as without

Gwadar's mention as a potential game-changer in regional socio-economic and political dynamics is incomplete.

The word Gwadar is a combination of two Baluchi words *Guad* and *Dar* meaning the Gate of Wind. Situated between the Makran Ports of Pasni and Jiwani, the territory has no defined boundaries. The southern part of Gwadar is a T-shaped strip of land about 5 miles long and a half to one mile wide projecting from the main coast in the north side extended into Arabian Sea and ending in the south with a six to seven hundred feet high reef called Koh-Batail. The reef which is about nine miles in length and a half to one mile in width, is responsible for forming the coast and west bays. The other minor ports of Gwadar territory are small fishing coastal towns of Sur and Pishukan having a population of about 1500 and 2500, respectively. Sur is situated on the mouth of the east bay about 15 miles from the town of Gwadar territory, while Pishukan is in the west bay at a distance of approximately 25 miles by land. The rest of the area called Nagore consists of small scattered villages and towns. During its last phase of Omani rule in the early 1950s the total population of Gwadar was approximately 14,000 (Cordesman & Toukan, 2014).

Gwadar is located on the mouth of the Persian Gulf, where it joins and amalgamates into the Arabian Sea. The Strait of Hormuz which is considered as one of the busiest freight and shipping corridors of the world where almost 12,000 million tons of freight of 11,000 ships and 33 million tons of 2,500 oil tankers of various countries are carrying crude oil annually is just 400 km away (Nawaz, 2004). Gwadar is a convergence of three economically dynamic and active regions; South Asia which is thickly populated, Central Asia which in the recent decades have emerged economically and is rich in natural resources and the Middle Eastern oil-rich region.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF COASTAL REGION OF BALUCHISTAN

Gwadar has a long historical background (Mir, 2010), and it always held a significant place in the ancient accounts of the Makran Coastal Region. An ephemeral look at the history of the Makran region is thus important to know about the significance of the region in general and precisely that of Gwadar. Since the primeval period, Oman had social and economic relations with Baluchistan, which was possible because of its natural proximity and closeness to the Makran

coastal strip that runs along the Gulf of Oman. Around the 4th millennium BC, Oman and Makran were part of a maritime trade range that included the coast of the Arabian Peninsula, Mesopotamia and Indus Valley Civilization. Archeological remains in the region verify and authenticate such a relationship between the Markan coastal region and Oman. Remains such as ceramic dishes carved with Harrapan writing were found in Ras Al-Hadd and Ras Al-Jinz in Oman in 1981 (Frenez, Esposti, Méry, & Kenoyer, 2016). Despite the existence of maritime trade between Makran and Oman, there was no political association between Oman and Baluchistan until Yaruba and Al Bu-Said tribes came to power in Oman. The Yaruba tribe ruled Oman from 1624 AD to 1744 AD while the Al Bu-Said tribe or dynasty's rule started in 1744 AD (Gensheimer, 1984).

Makran, owing to its geographical position, always served as the main channel of communication vis-à-vis the Middle Eastern region and the Indian subcontinent. No other part of Baluchistan except coastal Makran has been discussed so largely and precisely in ancient annals of history as well as local folklore and oral traditions. Famous Persian poet Firdousi also refers and states about this area, in his work *Shahnama*, as a legendary battlefield where Iranian and Turanian kings fought numerous battles. Makran was once ruled by Persian King Kai-Kavus, who is believed to have visited and toured across Makran from where he took a boat to other areas of his territory. The Makran region also came under Turanian Ruler Afrasiab for some time until it was reclaimed and recuperated by Kai-Khusrau the successor of Kai-Kavus. Kai Khusrau after regaining Makran stayed there for about a year. Upon leaving, he appointed one *Ashkash* as governor of the region (*The Gazetteer of Balochistan (Makran)*, 1906).

According to Firdousi's *Shahnama* Makran paid adherence and fidelity to Persian kings i.e., Kai-Kavus, Kai-Khusrau, Lehrasp, Gushtasp, Bahman, Huma and Darab, until their rule was apparently and temporarily interrupted by the invasion of the Macedonian king, Alexander in 325 BC (Ahmad, 2016a). Alexander's journey and that of his fleet alongside Makran coast, as documented and narrated by Arrian¹, is conceivably considered the oldest and most well-recognized account of this region. This whole coastal region was then called

¹ Arrian is a Greek historian, his treatise *Anabasis Alexandri* is considered the best account on the campaigns of Alexander.

Gadrosia. Arrian labelled the coastal region as the country of ‘*Ichthyophagoi*’ which means ‘fish eaters.’ According to some historians, the present-day term Makran appears to have been derived from the Persian language word “*Mahi Khoran*” meaning “fish-eaters” (Ahmad, 2016b).



Route of Alexander, on his way back to Macedonia in 325 BC, it can be seen that he crossed through Gerdosia (Makran Coast)

Sir Thomas Holdich in his work outlined Alexander’s route who crossed the coast to the north of Hingol river, when he moved northwards and crossed over the highlands at the back of Taloi ridge of the Makran coastal area and then developing on the coast between Kalamat and Pasni, and continued to Gwadar (see map above) (Tahir Mehdi et.al., December, 2009).

Most historians are of the opinion that the hardships which Alexander’s army suffered during his campaign in Asia are less in if we compare their sufferings on this route. They owing to the harsh weather were also forced to march most of the way during the night.

However, Nearchos² had highlighted the extreme inhospitability of the terrain when he along with Alexander marched through this region. According to the historians its harsh topography is one of the major reasons that throughout history none of the invaders and conquerors desired to stay in this region permanently. Hence, this region was time and again conquered by great rulers, but no permanent rule was ever established. Mostly Makran region has always been controlled by local *sardars* and tribal-chiefs holding influence over small territories and areas. According to another historian Vincent Smith, after Alexander's death, his two generals Antigonos and Seleukos contested for power in Asia. In 312 BC, Seleukos, who subsequently became known as Nikator or the conqueror, took control of Babylon, and within six years he successfully expanded his influence on Central as well as Western Asia (Smith, 1924). The eastern most region of his kingdom stretched to the borders of India and Makran was included in his possessions (Bevan, 1902). India at that time was ruled by Gupta Dynasty, Seleukos crossed Makran and reached the Indus where he was encountered and defeated by Chandragupta the Raja of Magadha in 303 BC. After his defeat Seleukis was forced to surrender the Makran region along with various eastern provinces of his kingdom. Vincint Smith writes that:

Seleukos crossed the Indis in 305 BC, and attempted to imitate the victorious march of Alexander...when the shock of battle came, the hosts of Chandragupta were too strong for the invader, and Seleukos was obliged to retire and concluded a humiliating peace. Not only was he compelled to abandon all thought of conquest in India, but he was constrained to surrender a large part of Ariana to the west of India. In exchange for the comparatively trifling equivalent of the 500 elephants, Chandragupta received the satrapies of the Paropanisadai, Aria and Arachosa, the capitals of which were respectively the cities now known as Kabul, Herat and Kandahar. Thr satrapy of Gardosia, or at least the eastern portion of it, seems also to have been included in the session, and the high contracting power ratified the peace by "a matrimonial alliance", which phrase probably means that Seleukos gave a daughter to his Indian rival (Smith, 1999).

² Nearchos or Nearchus was one of the officers in the army of Alexander. He is known for his celebrated expeditionary voyage starting from the Indus River, through the Persian Gulf and ending at the mouth of the Tigris River following the Indian campaign of Alexander in 326-324 BC.

For about eight subsequent centuries, history appears to be quiet about Makran as we find no significant account of the region. Later, In the 5th century AD, according to some accounts Shermah, the king of Hind gave his daughter in marriage to Bahrami-i-Gor (r. 420-438), the ruler of Persia, he gave the territory of Makran as a portion of her dowry (Buzdar, 1988). Thus, for the next two centuries Makran remained part of the Sassanian Empire until it was conquered by the Chach-Bahram rulers of Sindh (Buzdar, 1988). As recorded in *Chachnama*, in the year 631 AD, Rai Chach along with his army marched through Makran and invaded Kirman. He successfully subdued the local chieftains and marked his frontier between Kirman and Makran.

7th century marked the rise of Islam in the Arabian Peninsula and after the death of Prophet Muhammad, during Caliph Umar's period Arabs invaded India in 643 AD and after stiff resistance by Raja Rasil of Rai Kingdom at the battle of Rasil³, Makran fell into the hands of the Arabs. Caliph Umar after learning about the conquest instructed that Makran should be the easternmost frontier of the Islamic empire and no more attempt should be made to expand the conquest. According to Ibn-ul-Haikal's accounts the Arabs continued to rule this region until the 10th century. It was this period that the Arabs started to settle in the Makran coastal region and there is no denying the fact that Arab blood has left its imprints on the existing populace of the region.

Arab Geographers like Abdallah ibn Khordadbeh (820-912 AD), Al Idrisi (1100-1165 AD) and Al-Istakhir (d. 957 AD) also made frequent references to the Makran region in their works and interestingly all of them agree in describing the country as "for the most part desert" (*The Gazetteer of Balochistan (Makran)*, 1906).

³ The Battle of Rasil was fought between the Rashidun Caliphate and the Rai kingdom ruled by Raja Rasil in early 644. It was the first encounter of the Rashidun Caliphate in the Indian subcontinent. The exact location of the battle is not known, but historians suggest it was fought on the western bank of the River Indus. Suhail ibn Adi was given command of this expedition by Caliph Umar. Suhail marched from Busra in 643. He eventually reached Makran. Raja Rasil, a local Hindu ruler of the Kingdom of Sindh, concentrated huge armies in Makran to halt the advance of the Muslims. Suhail was reinforced by Uthman ibn Abi al-'As from Persepolis and Hakam ibn Amr from Busra. The combined forces defeated Raja Rasil at the Battle of Rasil, who at the end retreated to the eastern bank of River Indus.

During the centuries that followed, Iranians, Ghaznavids, Ghorids, Seljuk Turks and others temporarily occupied Makran but in reality the internal authority was exercised by local chiefs (Buzdar, 1988). The local leaders rose to influence and power in the region in subsequent order: Hots, Rinds, Maliks, Buledais and finally Gichkis. After that, it went over to the Omani sultans the detail of which will be discussed below.

In the early 16th century, the Portuguese naval fleet disembarked and seized several places along Makran coastal region. A famous Portuguese historian Manual De Souza has in detail narrated a detailed account of the Portuguese attack on India and its coastal region of Makran in his book *The history of Portuguese days in East ("Gwadar Historical Background")*. The Kalmatis Baluch resisted bravely, but eventually the Portuguese succeeded in temporarily conquering the coastal towns of Makran. Portuguese later on burnt the cities of Gwadar and Pasni in 1581 (Tahir Mehdi et.al., December, 2009).

According to Baluchi oral tradition when the Portuguese invaded to conquer the coastal areas of Makran, the brave Baluch organized themselves to defend their land. They fought bravely and challenged their enemies in an organized way resulting in heavy damage to their fleet and a high number of casualties. Many Portuguese ships were also captured during the encounters, while some of their ships were also wrecked by the bad weather at Makran coast. Various tales are associated with Baluch courageous encounters with Portuguese marine forces under the commandership of Mir Hammal Jiand Baluch.

According to various Baluchi oral literature, when the Portuguese invaded and ransacked Makran coastal towns, Hammal Jiand started mobilizing the native people for armed defense. He equipped his warriors with locally prepared weapons and also organized a fleet of ships. On many occasions, he trounced the Portuguese and compelled them to retreat into the open sea (As & Britt, 2000)⁴. Once he was in the open sea, he confronted a big fleet of Portuguese ships unexpectedly, although he fought bravely but was eventually wounded and captured. Since then he became a national hero of the Baluch and various poems and couplets about his gallantry, heroism and bravery were written. Some Baluch women still in

⁴ Sabar Badalkhan, "Portuguese Encounters with Coastal Makran Baluch during the Sixteenth Century."

mourning for Mir Hammal do not wash or comb their hair on Saturdays. After the capture of Mir Hammal, the Portuguese started ransacking the coastal towns of Makran and three of the most prominent fishing towns i.e. Pasni, Gwadar and Tes were burnt down in the year 1581 AD (Badal, 2000).

After the Portuguese, the Buledais continued to hold Makran for over a century; however, their rule came to an end when Taki Khan who was Nader Shah's general (1736-1747), conquered it. After this, in 1758 AD, Khan of Kalat Mir Naseer Khan Noori of the Brahui Ahmadzai clan took over the area of Makran from the Gichki ruler but restored the local Gichki chief as administrator and governor of this area in return for paying half of the collected revenues to the Khanate of Kalat (Tahir Mehdi et.al., December, 2009). Makran coastal area remained under the domination of the rulers of Kalat till the creation of Pakistan but the tale of Gwadar took a different turn which is discussed as under.

GWADAR AS AN OMANI ENCLAVE

The part played by Oman's ruling dynasties in global trade links in the western Indian Ocean and on Baluchistan's southern coast during this period is of immense importance. From the 18th century onwards, Muscat became one of the major transshipment and trade center between the Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman, western India and the Red Sea. Its significance increases even greater and better under the rule of Al Bu-Said dynasty, whose political dominance of the shores, coasts, littorals and primary seafronts of the western Indian Ocean continued and prevailed for about two centuries (Nicolini, 2002).

During the 16th and 17th centuries, Baluch people employed and recruited themselves in the royal service during Yaruba's period in Oman as special troops. These Baluch warriors constituted their military power; they proved themselves as an indispensable and essential instrument in the conquest and even for remaining in power and maintaining peace (Peterson, 2007). After Al-Yaruba's downfall, under Al Bu-Said dynasty, the Baluch men and their coastal region of Makran became institutional for Omani forces and mercantile power systems, respectively. Since the end of the 18th and throughout the 19th century, it was these Baluch men of fearless, faithful, daring warriors who sheltered, protected, supported and shielded the rise of the Al Bu-Said dynasty of Oman. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the Baluch

men were commonly known as British agents “ferocious freebooters” who were mostly employed on the dhows of the Omani royals or were sent on military excursions in the Omani deserts (Hourani, 1995).

From various accounts of European travelers in the Arabian Peninsula, at that point of time in Arabia, the most impressive were the Baluch warriors, “naked to the waist and armed with a knife and a double-handed sword, with fierce glares and of threatening presence” (Beatrice Nicolini). In 1825, the Omani sovereign's bodyguard force, Saiyid Said bin Sultan Al Bu-Said, consisted of 300 Baluch men (Geary, 1878). Around 2,000 Baluch lived within the vicinity outside the Muscat walls, and their strength was even rapidly increasing. Omani Arabs considered these Baluch warriors to be the most reliable and best military forces for their protection and defense who fought several battles against their opponents at home and overseas. As far as the matter of their personal involvement, the Baluch warriors generally ignored and disregarded local disputes, “preferring to steer clear of the different political factions that contended for power in Oman and, instead, simply obey the orders of whichever Arab prince offered the highest pay” (Geary, 1878).

In the latter half of the 18th century, Al Bu-Said family defeated the Yaruba tribe and started to encompass their political and commercial authority and monopoly throughout the 19th century. The founder of this new Omani dynastic rule was Ahmad bin Said Al Bu-Said who was a son of a “coffee merchant” from Sohar. He laid the foundation of this new mercantile dynasty and ruled Muscat from 1749 until he died in 1783. In 1784 Sultan bin Ahmad Al Bu-Said (r. 1792–1804), claimant to Oman's throne, due to an internal succession brawl with his brother Said bin Ahmad Al Bu-Said after the death of his father, sought asylum in Makran. Sultan bin Ahmed travelled to Tiz which was a fortified village, and from there he went to Kharan where Mir Jahangir was the head of the Nawshirvani tribe and exercised immense influence in the region, backed and supported him in his cause. Together they went to Kalat to discuss the issue with Khan of Kalat Mir Naseer Khan. Though Khan of Kalat refused Sultan bin Ahmad Al Bu-Said's demand for military support and aid in conquering Oman, he still agreed to give him asylum for the period of his brief exile. The Gwadar port which was then an insignificant village of fishermen was given to Sultan bin Ahmad as a short-term concession that would conclude when his effort for power to the Omani throne would conclude. It is therefore, believed that Mir Naseer

Khan granted the port of Gwadar as a temporary endowment of land relieved from taxation on a trust basis to Sultan bin Ahmad Al Bu-Said.

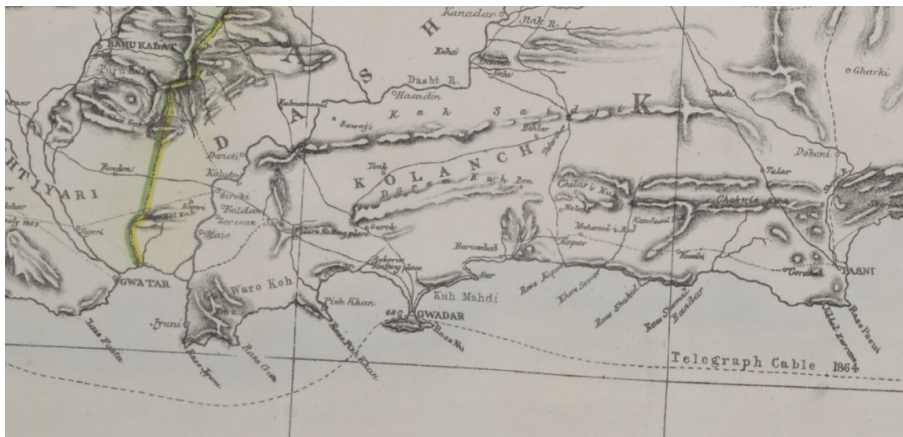
The later claims on Gwadar made by the Khan of Kalat were grounded and based on the fact that the jagir's endowment was never meant to be taken as permanent but was associated with the conditional need of Sultan bin Ahmad Al Bu-Said as a refuge in his Khanate. On the contrary, for Sultan bin Ahmad Al Bu-Said the grant meant "naval protection of the coasts of Makran," which would be assured by him once he became the ruler of Muscat. Contemporaneous British official reports (Lorimer, 1915) suggest that Omani occupation for Gwadar port was based on a *de-facto* presence, as there was no clear or coherent evidence, proof, or testimony which would indicate as to how this occupation has begun or of the events which led to Oman's control of this significant strategic port on the Makran coaststrip.

Sultan bin Ahmad Al Bu-Said during his asylum in Gwadar utilized his base in South Asia to raise naval excursions in Arabia and to capture supreme power in Oman. When he came back to Muscat in 1792 and seizing power, he upheld Gwadar's possession by appointing his son-in-law Saif bin Ali bin Muhammad Al Bu-Said as *wali* (governor) of Gwadar and ordered him to build a fort here. Sultan bin Ahmad also ordered his *wali* to attack and invade the neighboring Persian port of Chahbahar (Jones, 2013).

Throughout Oman's rule three main forts were built in Gwadar: Top Right-until 2002 this fort was used as Thana Ward but since 2007 it has been restored as Gwadar Museum with the collaboration of Oman's government Top Left - This was the second fort built under Sultan's Order; Bottom - this fort is situated next to Gwadar Jamat Khana and is the oldest fort built under Oman's sultan

At the beginning of the 19th century Sultan bin Ahmed's possessions comprised the island of Bahrain, the Makran coast with its chief strategic-commercial port of Gwadar. Some areas and ports along the Persian coastline such as Chahbahar, the island of Socotra, the Curia Muria isles, Zanzibar and other ports on the Sub-Saharan African coastline also came into his possession which marked the highest extent of his expansion (Vine & Casey-Vine, 1995). With the death of Sultan Bin Ahmad Al Bu Sa'id, Oman lost Chahbahar in 1804, but then retook it after a short interval. In 1809 its revenue

amounted to 5000 rupees a year and went in its entirety to the Sultans of Oman.



Source: India Office Record (IOR-X-3095-1-2-001). The Territories of His Highness the Khan of Kalat, Baluchistan with the Adjacent Portions of Sind, the Punjab, Afghansitan and Persia 1876.
Anglo-Persian Border and Telegraph Cable Line can be seen in this map

In 1839, Kalat was annexed by the British East India Company and became its colonial power (Khan, 1966). In 1861, Khan of Kalat demanded Gwadar's return and asked the British to intervene and meditate on this issue. The British did intercede between Kalat and Muscat but did not attempt to force any decision on any of the parties (Khan, 1966). In the latter half of the 19th century, when the British started installing the telegraph line in northwest India, investigations were completed under the Makran, Sistan and Persia Boundary Commission regarding legal-territorial claims (Simpson, 1928). A British official Sir Frederick John Goldsmid⁵ (1818-1908) in 1861 arranged a visit to see the coastal area and after realizing the administrative constraints of the area, assigned an assistant political agent there and from 1863 to 1879, Gwadar was the headquarters of an Assistant Political Agent (Ahmad, 2016b).

⁵ From 1865 to 1870 he held the post of Government director of the Indo-European Telegraph Company, and during those six years he personally superintended the erection of the poles and the carrying of the wires across the whole extent of the Shah's kingdom.

In January 1862, Mir Faqir Mohammad Bizenjo, as chief of the Bizenjo tribe of Makran and supporter of the Khan of Kalat, signed an agreement with Frederick Goldsmid for the protection of the transitory of the telegraph line through the Makran region. In 1863, Reverend George Percy Badger was made Incharge of the Boundary Commission to examine and inspect the complex border issues in this area. He after examining this intricate and difficult issue of coastal areas suggested to his overlords i.e. the British that Gwadar should remain in Oman's suzerainty, with a well-equipped navy strong enough to protect it and rejected the claims of returning Gwadar to the Khan of Kalat, who according to British was incapable of protecting this essential strategic port against Persian assertions. The same year, Ibrahim Khan, the Persian military governor of Bampur, wrote to the ruler of Oman Said Towayni Al Bu-Said (r. 1856-66), and to Oman's *wali* of Gwadar telling them to deny any consent to the installation of the telegraph line to British before Persian approval (Harris, 1969).

Many Persian raids followed afterwards which ultimately forced the British to intervene to protect and guard their political agents residing in Gwadar. Finally, in 1868, after British political intervention into the region the Persian government accepted to give up its dominion claims on Kech and Gwadar as part of the Persian province of Kerman (Khazeni, 2007). In September 1872, British Boundary Commission along with Persian Commissioner Mirza Maşum Khan, officially demarcated the frontier between Persia and British India, from the east of Gwadar to the west of Gwadar, between Persia, Makran and Sistan (see map above).⁶

Gwadar was the ideal place for Omani princes, where they came for hawking and hunting. Said Turki Al Bu-Said (r. 1871-1888), Sultan of Oman and the grandson of Sultan Ahmad al Bu-Said had a special fondness for Gwadar, where he spent long periods of retrieval and solitude. From August to December 1875, Said Turki Al Bu-Said stayed in Gwadar and while his stay he ordered the establishment and construction of another small Omani fort at Pishukan (Nicolini). In 1877, Sir Charles Macgregor⁷ reached Gwadar to complete his task of

⁶ <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP08C01297R000500130001-4.pdf>, 4-5. (Accessed: 14-10-2020).

⁷ Major General Sir Charles Metcalfe MacGregor (1840–1887) was a British explorer, geographer and officer of the British Indian Army. He was the

the geographical and topographical survey. In his accounts, he portrays Gwadar in these words:

“Gwadur is the principal town on the Mekran coast, and stands on a sandy isthmus to the north of the Gwadur Head, a rocky promontory similar to but not so high as that of Ras Ormarah. It contains about five thousand inhabitants, and is built in a great part of mat huts, but it has a square fort-let in the middle. The population is a very mongrel lot, chiefly Baloch, who live by fishing. Many boats belong to this place, probably not less than two thousand five hundred, of which some thirty are large sea-going boats, which trade with Kurrachi, Maskat, Bandar Abbass, Bombay, and the Malabar coast. The traffic with the interior by caravans is, for this part, considerable, and is chiefly with Kej and Panjgur. The principal imports are piece goods, sugar, rice, timber, etc.; the exports, cotton, wool, ghee, salt fish, and shark fins, and, lastly, the only really fine product of all Mekran,—splendid dates from Panjgur” (MacGregor, 1882).

OMANI ADMINISTRATION IN GWADAR

As far as Gwadar’s administration under the sultan of Oman is concerned, it was represented by the governor or *wali* who resided in Gwadar town. In his duties, he was assisted by a Deputy Governor at Peshkan and by two *Khodas* or headmen of the Baluch living in Gwadar town (*India Office Record and Private Papers*, 31st July 1939 – 9th October 1940a). A. *Qazi* used to hear civil cases and whose decisions were subject to the governor’s confirmation. The governor’s salary was rupees 250 per month (*India Office Record and Private Papers*, 31st July 1939 – 9th October 1940b). The Deputy director’s pay was rupees 60 and two *Khodas* rupees 10 each month. The *wali* had a force of 30 Arab *askaries* to help him maintain order. The majority of the force resided in Gwadar town but a square stone fort built within a quarter of a mile of the Political Bungalow which

Quartermaster General for the British Army in India, the head of the Intelligence Department for the British Indian Army. In 1870, MacGregor founded the United Service Institution of India for the "furtherance of interest and knowledge in the art, science and literature of the Defense Services." The Institution awards the MacGregor Medal. The MacGregor Medal is awarded to Indian Armed Forces personnel for valuable military reconnaissance. The medal was originally instituted in 1888 to honour the memory of United Service Institution of India founder, Maj Gen Sir Charles MacGregor.

commands all the approaches to the town had a garrison of 10 *askari* men (*India Office Record and Private Papers*, 31st July 1939 – 9th October 1940b).

There was also an *Amin* of customs who was assisted by a clerical establishment of four persons and subordinate to the Director of Customs at Muscat. *Amin* was responsible for the collection of all import duties and octroi (*India Office Record and Private Papers*, 31st July 1939 – 9th October 1940b).

A resident British Agent subordinate to the Political Agent and H. B. M's Consul at Muscat was often a Magistrate of the 3rd Class and dealt with minor criminal cases. Civil cases and major criminal cases were dealt with by the Political Agent who occasionally visited Gwadar (*India Office Record and Private Papers*, 31st July 1939 – 9th October 1940b). The British Political Agent generally looked after the British Indian community interest and made representations in their interests that were necessary to the governor. (*India Office Record and Private Papers*, 31st July 1939 – 9th October 1940b). The local Agha-Khani Khojas⁸ have a council and *Mukhi* or head man and the Hindus⁹ in Gwadar also had a recognized leader of their community who represented them in social issues forums (*India Office Record & Private Papers*, 31st July 1939 – 9th October 1940b).

Despite all these administrative setups, Gwadar lacked an effective administrative hold of authorities and during the latter half of the 19th century, in the absence of any effective administrative mechanism, Gwadar became smugglers' paradise. Between the end of the 19th and the early 20th century, a large number of weapons were smuggled from Europe through the sea and from Muscat to Afghanistan. For a long time, the warrior and tribes beyond the North-West Frontier of India successfully obtained rifles from the Arabian and Makran coast. Arab used to smuggle them across the Persian Gulf to the Makran ports. After that, caravans of camels carried and transported these weapons to their designated destinations across the mountain passes of Baluchistan (Harding, 1934).

⁸ According to the British official reports the population of Agha Khani Khojas in Gwadar during 1939-40 was about 400.

⁹ The population of Hindu community in Gwadar in 1939-40 was around 120 according to British official source.

RECLAIMING GWADAR

When Pakistan gained independence in 1947, Chief Commissioner's Province of British Baluchistan on 15 August 1947 (under Section 2(2)(b) of the Indian Independence Act, 1947) became part of Pakistan's dominion. Within few months all Baluch states acceded to Pakistan. The States of Kharan, Makran and Lasbela on 17 March 1948 announced their accession to Pakistan while the State of Kalat announced it on 27 March 1948.

Gwadar at that point of time was still under Omani rule. At that time, this area was neglected and not only underdeveloped but also badly governed. At that point of time Gwadar lacked all modern amenities such as sanitation and medical aid. Educational facilities were non-existent. The negligence can be seen from the fact that the first primary school housed in a single room mud building was established in 1950. As mentioned before, the absence of any regulated and controlled market led to a terrible amount of black marketing and smuggling in Gwadar.

After independence, the Pakistan government took up Gwadar's issue and some indecisive negotiations and dialogs took place in 1949 but after some time, the case went dormant. In 1954, Pakistan hired the United States Geological Survey (USGS) to survey its coastline. The USGS assigned Worth Condricke the duty to conduct this survey, who acknowledged and identified Gwadar's hammerhead-shaped peninsula as a natural and suitable site for a new deep-sea port. Feroz Khan Noon immediately after becoming Foreign Minister of Pakistan in 1956, asked for papers and studied the case and then started negotiations with the British government. Feroz Khan Noon writes in his autobiography that;

They (The British Government) had a difficult task in bringing about a settlement of the opposing interests of a commonwealth country (Pakistan) and a friendly sultan, in close relationship with them for over a century and a half (Khan, 1969).

The Shah of Iran also tried to obtain this land via American influence in Britain, but in 1956, Feroze Khan Noon decided that this land had to be obtained at all costs. This role was assigned to Lady Viqar-un-Nisa Noon, who played a pivotal and very crucial role in convincing the British government to hand over Gwadar to Pakistan. For the first time, Pakistan raised the legal appeal that Gwadar was

indeed a *jagir*¹⁰ and such kind of grant never involves any question regarding the transfer of permanent or sovereign power. As all *jagirs* were canceled in Pakistan either received by the British overlords for services rendered, or for any other political reason. In that case, Gwadar was also a *jagir* so in that manner its grant too, could be canceled and its territory could be occupied. Feroz Khan Noon never mentioned this to any of the British officials as a threat, but this was the main point if Pakistan ever went to court regarding Gwadar's issue (Khan, 1969). The British government was in a very awkward position because, in case if Pakistan Army were to occupy this territory, It would have been very difficult for them to take any military action against a commonwealth country of which Queen Elizabeth was a symbolic head. Feroz Khan Noon states that "I must recognize the fair manner in which Mr. Macmillan and Mr. Selwyn Lloyd and Lord Home, the Commonwealth Secretary, handled this case. They exercised no pressure on either side (Khan, 1969)." Negotiations continued for about two years and finally the Sultan of Oman agreed to give away his sovereign rights over the Gwadar enclave to Pakistan for 3 million pounds as compensation. Aga Khan III mostly paid the compensation amount. Feroz Khan Noon recalls that;

You can well imagine my joy when the signed transfer deed was handed to me by our High Commissioner Mr. Ikramullah, in London, in the Summer of 1958. With Gwadar in foreign hands, I had felt we were living in a house in which the back room with another door, was occupied by a stranger who could, at any time, sell us out to a power inimical to Pakistan and who would also be willing to pay any price for the sale (Khan, 1969).

Thus, after about 174 years of Omani occupation on 8th September 1958, two thousand four hundred square miles officially came back to Pakistan and hardly any celebrations or publicity was given to this important event because Prime Minister Feroz Khan Noon had promised the British and the President of Pakistan, Iskandar Mirza, that no jubilations or any kind of official celebrations would be organized in order not to offend the sensibility of the Sultan of Muscat. Feroz Khan Noon as Prime Minister addressed the nation on Radio

¹⁰ *Jagir* is usually referred to an area of a 'State' given to a person so that he may collect State taxes from that area, and use them for his maintenance or remuneration.

Pakistan on 7th September 1958 to break the news of Gwadar's accession to Pakistan;

The Government of Pakistan has issued a communiqué stating that the administration of the Port of Gwadar and its hinterland, which had been in possession of His Highness the Sultan of Muscat and Oman since 1784, was today taken over by Pakistan with full sovereign rights. The people of Gwadar have joined the people of Pakistan and the whole of Gwadar now forms part of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. I know that the people all over Pakistan, including those residing in Gwadar, have received this announcement with feelings of great joy. I welcome the residents of Gwadar into the Republic of Pakistan and I would like to assure them that they will enjoy equal rights and privileges along with all other Pakistan nationals irrespective of considerations of religion, caste or creed. They will have their full share in the glory and prosperity of the Republic to which they now belong. The residents of Gwadar, most of whom are members of the brave Baloch community, have close racial and cultural links with the people of Pakistan and joining the Republic of Pakistan represents the natural culmination of their political aspirations. I should like to take this opportunity to thank, on behalf of the people and Government of Pakistan, Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for their assistance and help in bringing to a successful conclusion our negotiations with His Highness the Sultan of Muscat and Oman for the transfer of his rights in Gwadar. The negotiations were pursued with great vigour during the last six months and at every stage we received valuable advice from Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. I should like to congratulate and thank his Highness the Sultan of Muscat and Oman on his wise and statesmanlike decision, which has endeared him to the people of Pakistan. The success of these negotiations and the return of Gwadar to Pakistan should help to illustrate that international disputes can be resolved in a peaceful and satisfactory manner provided that the parties to a dispute are prepared to approach the problem in a spirit of fairness and justice without allowing their emotions or prejudices to get the better of their judgment. I've been advocating this course during the last six months and I'm happy that the present government has been able to establish the validity and effectiveness of this policy. Gwadar is the first fruit of this policy of goodwill and cooperation. I fervently

hope and pray that it will be possible for us to resolve our other international disputes in an equally peaceful and reasonable manner. Pakistan Zindabad!.

Gwadar was a small insignificant and underdeveloped fishing town with the estimated population of about few thousand. After it acceded to Pakistan, the Government of Pakistan made Gwadar a *tehsil* under Makran. In 1970, when One Unit was dissolved, West Pakistan Province was divided into four separate provinces. After that Makran was declared a district of the newly created Baluchistan Province. Later, in July 1977, Makran was declared a division and Gwadar was finally declared as one of its districts.

For decades, the coastal town of Gwadar remained a victim of sheer negligence at the hands of the government, and hardly any development work was seen there. However, in 1971 during the Pakistan-India war when the Karachi port complex came under an Indian missile attack, the need for an alternate port became apparent. A proposal was put up to the government for an additional port along the Makran coast (Gwadar being a preferred option) (Hassan, 2005). According to Taj Muhammad Khattak, Pakistan's President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, in 1974 offered the USA to build a port at Gwadar and use it as a naval base. (*The News*, April 3rd 2013) However, the US declined because they already had access to the Chahbahar port of Iran which was ruled by friendly Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi at that time.

A Belgium company was awarded a contract in 1988 to build a small 'fish-cum-mini port' at Gwadar, which was completed in December 1992. The idea of a deep-water port at Gwadar was formally conceived by the Government of Pakistan before its completion in 1991. The project was eventually approved in June 1994 by the National Economic Council Executive Committee (Ahmad, 2016b). In December 1995, the government of Pakistan directed Karachi Port Trust to fund Rs.1 billion for the construction of Gwadar. The government released Rs.2 billion in February 1996 for the construction of a deep-sea port in Gwadar. Forty three major companies submitted an Expression of Interest (EOI) in December 1996 to build Phase I of the Gwadar Project (Kazmi, 2009).

The China-Pakistan Agreement was signed in March 2002 under which China Harbour Engineering Company was to build Phase I of

the Port at a cost of US\$248 million dollars. The contribution from Pakistan was just US\$ 50 million dollars out of US\$ 248 million dollars, while the remaining was to be compensated by the Chinese government. The Development Authority of Gwadar (GDA) was established in October 2003 (Gul, 2007). Another US\$ 200 million was also invested by China in the development of the Makran Coastal Highway connecting the port of Gwadar with Karachi. Phase-II was valued at US\$ 932 million dollars after the completion of Phase I and was planned to be developed on a Build-Transfer-Operate (BOT) and Build-Own-Operate (BOO) basis (Zaheer, 2007).

The goal was to provide a port capable of handling the new commercial shipping. In 2006, in order to operate the Port of Gwadar, the Government of Pakistan invited offers from established port operators. Six firms, including Dubai World Ports, Hutchinson of Hong Kong, PSA International, two Saudi companies and a Pakistani firm, have submitted tenders. PSA International was eventually awarded the deal. The agreement was signed between Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) and PSA Gwadar Pvt. Ltd. on February 5, 2007. (a subsidiary of PSA International). However as envisaged and suggested, the company failed to build the port. So it was decided to hand over the activities to a Chinese firm. An MOU for the transfer of concessional rights to a Chinese state-run company, China Overseas Port Holding Company, which subsequently took over responsibility for the port, was signed on February 18, 2013. Under the CPEC, a comprehensive package was developed that included the construction and expansion of the port of Gwadar, energy projects throughout Pakistan, road and rail infrastructure and communication projects to connect Gwadar to the hinterland and China through the Karakorum Highway, industrial development and infrastructure in and around the city of Gwadar.

The CPEC was officially launched during Chinese President Xi Jinping's landmark visit to Islamabad on 20-21 April 2015, with the signing of 51 MOUs relating to various aspects of bilateral relations, including the CPEC (Haider, 2015). A total of US\$ 45,649 billion dollars projects that are planned to be completed by 2030 have been recognized so far. Since then in the overall "One Belt One Road" initiative launched by President Xi Jinping, CPEC has assumed

prominence as a 'flagship project' aimed at linking the countries of Eurasia and Africa via land and sea trade routes.

CONCLUSION

Very little was known about the history and potential of Gwadar to the outside world. From Alexander retreat to Sassanian conquest and Portuguese fight for domination to Oman's detention, Gwadar duly proved itself a chessboard of empires throughout history. Despite all its eventful and action-packed history very little was written about its historical significance, prospects and potentials. After the turn of the 21st century, the world started to recognize its geostrategic importance and its role in global trade and commerce. Gwadar is positioned at the crossroads of natural resources of the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia, a huge consumer market of Asia with over one-third of world population, and the shortest route to the western provinces of China. Gwadar now became an important chapter in the "Belt and Road" initiative proposed by the Chinese president. It will link China, Central Asia, South Asia, Middle East, Africa and Europe through a network of land and sea routes and ports will contribute significantly to the progress and prosperity of Gwadar and Pakistan, China and the entire region.

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