

SECURITY FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS: EVIDENCE FROM BADRA AND SANGAN VILLAGES IN BALOCHISTAN

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Abstract

This paper aims to draw a comparative analysis of two villages in Balochistan: Sangan and Badra, which remained the epicentre of terrorist activities in the Sibi and Harnai districts. An effort was carried out by Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA) to establish the writ of government by setting up permanent check posts in the area and gaining the confidence of the local populace. The effort has borne some fruit slowly and steadily, but terrorists remain a constant threat in the region. With the presence of LEA in these villages, the local population satisfaction ratio regarding their well-being, safety and security fluctuate. This study based on exploratory research brings a novel investigation of Sangan and Badra villages due to the sensitive nature of their locations. After the deployment of LEA from 2018 to 2021, researchers surveyed both villages to gauge the local populace's confidence in government institutions and security agencies' presence and its impact on their well-being. The results show that there has been some connection between the presence of security forces in these villages and the general confidence, well-being and satisfaction ratio of the public sentiments.

Keywords: Security, Terrorism, Trust, Well-being, Law Enforcement.

Introduction

Sangan and Badra are two remote villages in the Sibi district of Balochistan that have remained the centre of terrorist activities and recruitment.¹ In 2017, Law Enforcement Agencies (LEA) were stationed in the area to provide security to the local people and took steps for area development and improvement. Before the deployment of LEA in the area, there was a serious security situation due to the mere presence of the government in the region. Sangan, the more remote of the two communities, had faced numerous access and transportation issues. Consequently, due to its remoteness, more effort was directed towards Sangan. Small initiatives were undertaken by LEA in coordination with civil administration to carry out improvements in the area; however, efforts in Badra were restricted. Though peace efforts brought confidence, well-being and satisfaction to the masses in Sangan to an extent, the people of Badra could not achieve the same level of trust and satisfaction. The researchers tried to analyse the overall satisfaction ratio of the local populace of both villages from a security point of view.

In the case of Balochistan, Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) is a major terrorist outfit in the area, which operates from its safe havens in Afghanistan.² The tug-of-war

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between BLA terrorists and security forces in the region directly impacts the local population's satisfaction and overall well-being. BLA is behind several terrorist attacks on LEA and local people, including the attack on Quaid-e-Azam's residence in Ziarat.³ Although the area is not connected to the Afghan border, the vast terrain and porous border allow terrorists to move freely.⁴ That becomes a serious security concern for LEA and the general public. The mid and lower-tier terrorist elements remain in the area and operate from their hideouts in the proximity. They are well conversant with the area and can travel and operate at long distances, keeping their base at various hideouts.⁵ Several roadside bombings, kidnappings and attacks on check posts in the region are attributable to these terrorists.⁶ In 2022, these terrorists planned and executed a military officer's kidnapping and subsequent killing.⁷ But this is not the only planning of its type; many more such activities prevail in the region. Terrorists are provided funding and support by top-tier leadership which is in Afghanistan. Local support for these terrorists is a major issue that needs to be addressed. Currently, no civil administration is present in the remote areas, enhancing the sense of deprivation and anti-state sentiments. However, in Badra, LEA has established its headquarters and trying its best to maintain safety and security. In Sangan, LEA presence is controlled due to a lack of communication, transportation access, etc.

The overall security situation in Badra is tense as compared to Sangan. The research findings suggest that people in Sangan are satisfied with LEA arrangements, while the people of Badra are comparatively dissatisfied. This paper uses quantitative research-based surveys to answer how the security arrangement is linked to Sangan and Badra villages. It provides an in-depth analysis of the rising security concerns in Badra by highlighting that when a state increases its security, it causes insecurity for other parties concerned and issues for the local people. Such as by, stationing LEA in Badra has caused dissatisfaction among the local people regarding their overall well-being, economic and social condition, trust levels in the government and local arrangements, and their security dimension. However, in Sangan, the mere presence of security forces in the district led to the satisfaction of the local populace. This research investigates the core factors behind Badra's local population dissatisfaction ratio compared to Sangan.

Since there is no prior research on the region, this paper is entirely based on empirical evidence. Researchers used a primary data collection process for drawing analysis from the field. They had informal conversations with security officials deployed in the region and local people available. Due to the challenging security environment, researchers' mobility was restricted, and they were only allowed to seek help from local people to engage participants for this study. Hence researchers prepared a survey questionnaire and recruited local teachers to record participants' responses. In this regard, around 100 people from each village (Sangan and Badra) were surveyed. Unfortunately, only males responded to the set questionnaire, as females in the region were not allowed to participate in any such study due to cultural limitations. The researchers found that the study could come up with different findings if females were also allowed access. A standard questionnaire was used for both villages. Some answers were based on yes or no, while other questions asked for their comments. All questions were put on the Likert scale

from 1-5, with a slight variation in the scale for different questions. Analysis was drawn based on the responses received.

Analysis of Sangan and Badra

Sangan and Badra villages are located 30 km from each other with no road access. There was rail access to one town in Badra, which was discontinued in 2006 after terrorists blew up bridges on the rail track. In 2017, after the deployment of LEA, there have been various measures taken by LEA in the area for its uplift and bringing it into the mainstream. Due to a shortage of funds, no major funding/ project was undertaken in the area. However, there were small steps taken to facilitate the local population. The main thrust of the effort was carried towards Sangan being a more remote area. Moreover, its Pushtun population was constantly threatened by terrorists and was coerced to support them.

Sangan is a small village with fewer than 1000 individuals in Sibi district, Balochistan. It is located 43 km northwest Sibi and 37 km southeast of Harnai. The population is predominantly Pashtuns, with some settlements of Baloch Marri tribes. The area is in the remote region of the Sibi district with no road infrastructure. The means of communication are poor, and the only connectivity available to the village is through the riverbed of the Sangan River. The area is interspersed with numerous seasonal and yearly flowing nullahs, which frequently have flash floods. During flash floods, the area cuts off from the main population centres for 3-4 weeks. Due to the area's remoteness and non-availability of road infrastructure, it takes around 7-8 hours to travel to Sibi.

In terms of education, the village faces serious challenges. Only one boys' middle school is available in the area, which was made functional by LEA. Presently, around 200 boys and around 50 girls are studying in the village. There is no mobile or internet connectivity in the area. While in terms of health facilities, there is a dispensary available in the area, which was closed after the killing of its nursing staff by terrorists. With the help of LEA, the dispensary has now been made operational. In the absence of industrial and services sectors, most of the population of Sangan village is engaged in agricultural and agro-based trade activities.⁸ Besides growing crops, the primary source of livelihood is through raising livestock. It was odd to find that despite abundant water and fertile land for agriculture, the minimal area was under cultivation before 2017.

With the help of LEA and civil administration, agricultural inputs, including pesticides and fertiliser, were distributed among local farmers to jump-start the agriculture economy.⁹ Consequently, the farmland under cultivation increased from 750 to 2000 acres (over a 150% increase in irrigable land). With the rise in agricultural output, especially wheat, the number of tractors in the area has also increased from 20 to 37. An effort was also made to diversify the crop output by introducing new crops like cowpea, oats and garlic. That can potentially bring economic empowerment to the village. However, the locals were not having NADRA-issued national identification cards, which hindered their participation in the electoral process and national discourse. The visits of NADRA teams were coordinated to the area under the civil-military coordination

arrangement, which allowed the residents of Sangan to get their CNICs. This single step has not only given a sense of identity and belonging to the locals but has also allowed them to move freely in the country to pursue higher education, job search, commerce and trade activities.

Before 2016, the area was under terrorist activities and influence. They carried out target killings in the area using Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and rocket attacks. In 2017, terrorists attacked the village with rockets in which women and children were injured. After area clearance, LEA was deployed in the area, thus, providing security to the village by establishing check posts.

Badra is a small village in the Sibi district with a population of around 2000. It is located near the Sibi-Harnai railway track 35 km north of Sibi. The rail track was developed by the British in 1876 and used till 2006 by locals for travelling between Sibi and Harnai. However, various bridges on the track were destroyed by terrorists in 2006, leaving the rail track disbanded. Due to the non-availability of a rail track, residents must follow a cross-country track along the Nari River to reach the village. The track is frequently closed during rainy seasons due to flash floods in the River Nari. The population consists of the Baloch Marri tribe. Due to the scorching heat from April to August, people migrate 40 km north to Harnai. The area has been quite restive due to many terrorist elements. It has traditionally been the epicentre of terrorist activities, with terrorists from this area disturbing the peace of adjoining Sibi and Harnai districts.

After clearing the area, LEA held the area by developing various check posts along the route/ village. The village has one high school for boys and one middle school for girls. The present strength of students in boys' high school is 150 and in girls' school is 40-50. There are three small primary schools in Babar Kuch, Matwark and Kansher (small population centres that lie on the fringes of Badra village). However, these schools have minimal students and are mostly closed due to the non-availability of building and teaching staff. There is a middle school for children that an NGO is running in Kansher village. There are no health facilities available in the area. The only dispensary in the area has been destroyed due to flash floods. The locals are treated by a free dispensary established by LEA at Babar Kuch. The principal occupation of the local population is shepherding and agriculture. The water for irrigation is drawn by developing water dikes on water channels to divert water. Two bunds were supposed to be built in the area to protect the village in case of flash floods, which have not been completed. An approved road was to be constructed from Babar Kuch to Badra village, which has also not been met. Being a tribal society, waderas play an essential role in the area, and most problems are resolved through local *jirgas*. There is no gas, electricity, or mobile phone/ internet facility.

BLA Presence and Threat Dimension

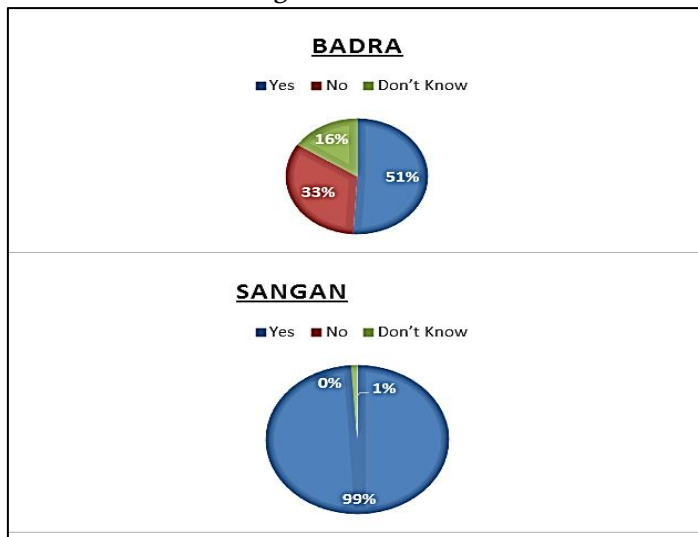
BLA is an anti-state terrorist organisation in various parts of Balochistan. It is a Marri-dominated organisation, and the Badra area, populated by the Marri tribe, has been the main recruiting ground for BLA. Being a hotspot with terrorists operating with

impunity, the area has always faced perpetual unrest. However, a new threat dimension is emerging where leadership is transiting from Baloch sardars to local leaders. BLA is divided into two major groups, BLA-A (Aslam Acchu Group) and BLA-H (Harbiyar Marri). BLA-A has been the perpetrator of major attacks in the area. Aslam Acchu, the prominent terrorist leader, shifted to Afghanistan after being injured in operation. Reportedly, he was airlifted to India from Afghanistan and was recruited by hostile agencies.

The main threat in the area is IED attacks on LEA convoys and administrative echelons. Moreover, terrorists resort to snipping and engaging troops from a standoff distance. The recent funding by HIA has further emboldened terrorists and commenced physical raids and attacks on troops. Suicidal attacks are not common in the area; however, recruits from the area have been involved in suicidal attacks in urban areas of Pakistan. For example, one of the recruits involved in a suicidal attack on the Chinese embassy in Karachi belonged to Badra Area.

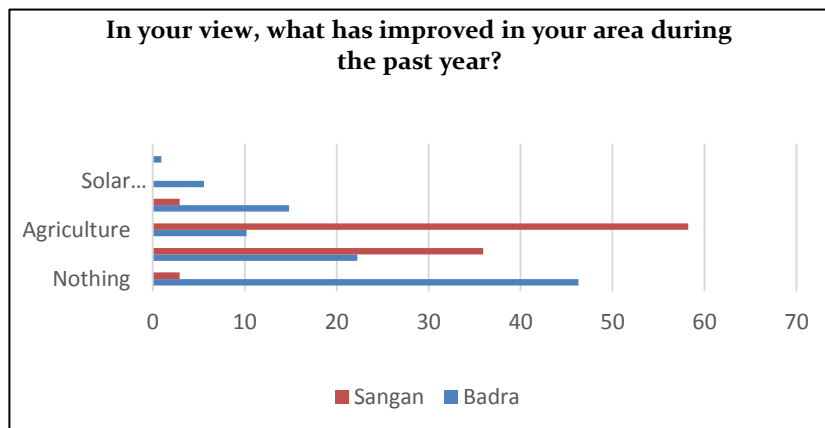
Badra and Sangan are not connected to any border area. The area lies on the famous Bolan Pass, which opens in Quetta valley and connects with Afghanistan through Khojak Pass. Due to open spaces, rugged terrain and weak border monitoring, it is easy to infiltrate into and from Afghanistan. The terrorist safe havens exist in the Kandahar area of Afghanistan (near the Chaman border) and provide active support (financial and economic) to terrorists in Sangan and Sibi. The foremost terrorist leaders operate from Kandahar and have tacit support from the erstwhile Afghan government. Aslam Acchu was reportedly killed in an IED attack in the Kandahar area. The safe havens still exist after the change of government in Afghanistan as the Taliban have not been able to exercise complete control of their country, allowing these elements to exist in remote/ border areas. Terrorists move to Afghanistan for rest/ relief and return to the Sangan area later during the campaigning season.

After carefully investigating both villages, the survey findings come up with the following results. The local people were asked, "Do you think things in your area/ village are improving?" Their responses are given in Figure 1. The people of Sangan are 99% satisfied with their area's overall security measures improvement, while Badra people seem to be divided on the subject. The survey numbers in Figure 1 suggest that 51% are satisfied while 33 % are still dissatisfied, while 16 % are not sure.

Figure 1: Local Mood

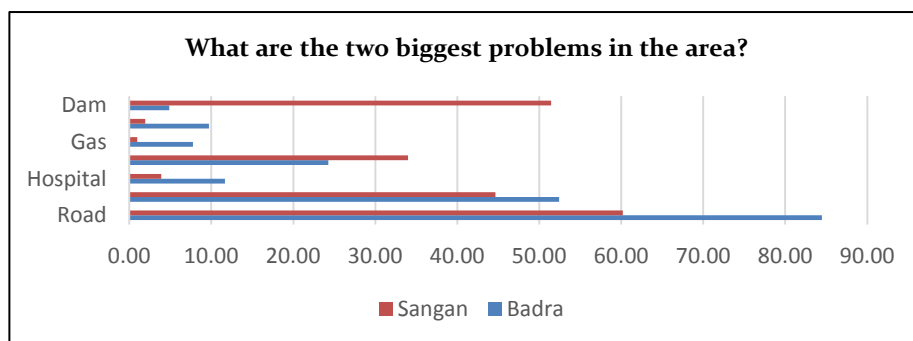
(Source: Compiled by Authors)

The villagers were asked, "What has improved in your area during the past year?" Figure 2 suggests their responses, as in Badra majority believe nothing has changed, while in Sangan, people believe that agriculture has changed their area in the past year.

Figure 2: Improvement in the Past One Year

(Source: Compiled by Authors)

Both in Badra and Sangan, people are dissatisfied with infrastructure development projects, such as roads and dam construction. The power outage is a major concern for these people, who have serious reservations regarding mobile connectivity and services. Figure 3 shows their responses.

Figure - 3: Biggest Problem in the Area

(Source: Compiled by Authors)

Table 1 highlights that in Badra, their financial capacity has improved by 30.56%, while in Sangan, 78.64%. In Badra, the physical condition is improved by 18.52%, while in Sangan, 44.66%. In Badra, health condition has improved by 63.89%, while in Sangan, 89.32%. In Badra, social dynamics improved by 84.26%, while in Sangan, by 97.09%. In Badra, relations with government authorities were enhanced by 75.93%, while in Sangam, 98.06%. In Badra, their access to power supplies improved by 4.63%, while in Sangan, it increased by 0.97%.

Table 1: Badra and Sangan Mood

	Badra			Sangan		
	Improved	Same	Worse	Improved	Same	Worse
Financial Situation	30.56	46.3	23.15	78.64	19.42	1.94
Physical condition of your house	18.52	62.96	18.52	44.66	54.37	0.97
Condition of your family members' health	63.89	16.67	19.44	89.32	13.27	0.97
Relations of your household with other groups in the community	84.26	3.7	12.06	97.09	0.97	1.94
Relations of your household with the government and authorities	75.93	6.48	17.59	98.06	0.97	0.97
Access to electricity	4.63	91.67	3.7	0.97	57.28	41.75
Access to drinking water	39.81	48.15	12.04	1.94	93.2	4.85
Overall security situation in your area	68.52	10.19	21.3	95.15	2.91	1.94

Conclusion

The above discussion highlights that with the presence of LEA, the security situation and area development can be improved or controlled. In the case of Badra and Sangan, constant patrolling and monitoring are in place. However, Badra people are not satisfied as per the survey compared to Sangan. There could be a variety of reasons for that. The presence of LEA in Sangan helps improve the overall lifestyle and well-being of the people. They are satisfied with LEA's peace and stability efforts; their demands are not too many as they are remote territory with minimalist expectations compared to Badra. Sangan, once they received clearance, people managed their affairs smoothly, satisfying the local population. On the other hand, Badra faces multiple challenges, such as BLA still being active and people facing security challenges. They expect more from LEA, whereas political manoeuvring and manipulation need to be checked. It is hard to satisfy the Badra people with minimal resources as they compare themselves to the rest of the country.

Endnotes

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- ⁴ Informal conversation with Government of Pakistan Official Sources.
- ⁵ Informal conversation with Government of Pakistan Official Sources.
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- ⁷ Informal conversation with Government of Pakistan Official Sources.
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