



The Politics of Resources



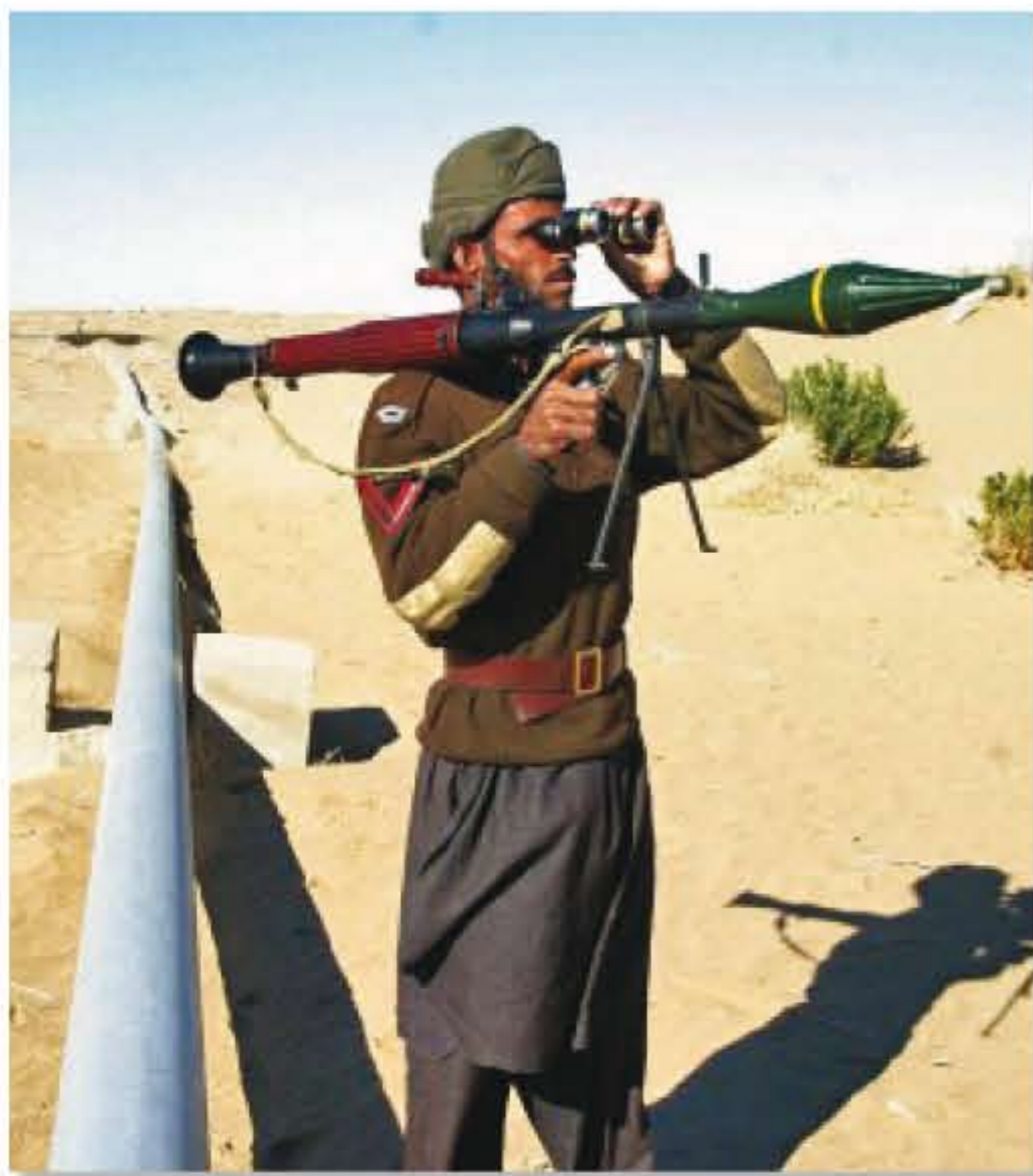
Landscape in Duhok Governorate (Kurdistan Region of Iraq). Photo: Katharina Lange, 2013

Revaluations of Land in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

Dr Katharina Lange

This project aims at an ethnographic exploration of shifting valuations of land in the Kurdistan region of Northern Iraq, using biographical and family history interviews as well as participant observation. Due to the region's violent recent history, agricultural production has declined significantly over the last four decades. Today, the rural sector is still marginal compared to the booming urban conglomerations and the fast-paced development of the petroleum industry. Further reasons for the decline of rural life are intergenerational changes in symbolic valuations and lifestyle aspirations and lack of agricultural knowledge, but also structural political decisions that pursue an urban development model, neglecting the countryside.

Nevertheless, land prices are rising in rural as well as urban settings. What are the reasons for this development? For which purposes is agricultural land being used? How are property rights to land (re-)distributed in a given rural location? To which extent can, or must, the material or economic value accorded to land be contextualised with crosscutting other (symbolic, political, or social) valuations? And finally, how can the answers to these questions enrich our ways of thinking about the (re-)valuation of material resources?



Pakistani para-military soldier guards a natural oil pipeline near Sui in Balochistan. Photo: Asim Tanveer/Reuters, 2014

Ideology and the Politics of Ecology in Pakistan's Peripheries

Dr Ali Nobil Ahmad

Ideological conflict and political violence in Muslim societies are often seen as processes of cultural clash between different strands of religious belief and political conviction – battles over religion, secularism and democracy, in which "Islamists" and "liberals" decide the fate of women's education, human rights and the treatment of minorities. But even where mobilisation and political violence is outwardly religious, it is invariably the case that resource struggles underpin, mediate and structure the way political processes in Muslim societies such as Pakistan are generated and played out.

This project explores the ecological dimension of political violence and conflict in Pakistan and its peripheries. The question of how material struggles over natural resources relate to social histories and discourses to generate violence will be explored through the study of local battles over land and other forms of resource conflict. Special attention will be paid to peripheral regions and urban areas across Pakistan. It is hoped that the project will contribute to the development of a multi-layered political ecology of Pakistan.