

BALUCHISTAN

The State Versus the Nation

Frederic Grare

SOUTH ASIA | APRIL 2013

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT

FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

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Summary

Balochistan, the largest but least populous province of Pakistan, is slowly descending into anarchy. Since 2005, Pakistani security forces have brutally repressed the Baloch nationalist movement, fueling ethnic and sectarian violence in the province. But the Pakistani armed forces have failed to eliminate the insurgency—and the bloodshed continues. Any social structures in Balochistan capable of containing the rise of radicalism have been weakened by repressive tactics. A power vacuum is emerging, creating a potentially explosive situation that abuts the most vulnerable provinces of Afghanistan. Only a political solution is likely to end the current chaos.

Key Themes

- Before the state began repressing Balochistan in an effort to maintain authority, most Baloch nationalist parties were not radicalized or fighting for independence. They were working within the framework of the federal constitution to achieve more political autonomy and socioeconomic rights.
- State institutions such as the Supreme Court have been unable to convince security forces to respect the law, but they have been instrumental in drawing attention to violence and atrocities in Balochistan.
- Many Pakistanis now view the security forces—not the separatists—as the biggest obstacle to national unity and stability.
- A negotiated solution is politically feasible. The nationalist movement is weak and divided, and a majority of Baloch favors more autonomy, not the more extreme position of independence. Islamabad may be willing to seek a political solution now that it has failed to eliminate the nationalists by force of arms.

Finding a Way Out

- The nationalist parties should participate in provincial elections in May. Only their participation in Balochistan's administration can confer sufficient legitimacy on the provincial government. A legitimate and credible Baloch government can reestablish local control over the province, help reduce violence, and advocate for Balochistan on the federal level.

- The Pakistani security establishment should show greater respect for human rights in Balochistan by disbanding death squads, stopping extrajudicial executions, and ending forced disappearances. Serious negotiations and political solutions are impossible as long as these violations persist.
- Security forces should disavow the use of proxy groups and use legitimate state authority to combat sectarian violence.
- The United Nations should send a permanent observation mission to Balochistan to monitor the human rights situation. Such a mission would create greater transparency, promote accountability, and build confidence should the security establishment decide to change its policies in the province.

Introduction

In 2005, a conflict erupted in the province of Balochistan, the largest and least populated of Pakistan's four provinces, straddling three countries—Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan.¹ For months, tension had been rising over the price of natural gas produced in the southwest province, the construction of additional military cantonments, and the development of the port of Gwadar, which the locals felt benefited people from other provinces. The eruption of violence, led by Baloch nationalists, was generally perceived as merely another expression of restiveness in a province traditionally uneasy with Pakistan's central government—after all, the two groups had come into conflict on four occasions in the past.²

The uprising was triggered by the rape of a female doctor, Shazia Khalid, in the small Baloch town of Sui. A military man allegedly perpetrated the rape, but the culprit was never arrested. The military establishment's alleged effort to cover up the incident triggered a series of attacks against the Defense Security Guards and the Frontier Constabulary by members of the Bugti tribe that hails from Balochistan.

The rape of Shazia Khalid provided the spark that started a blaze throughout the territory. Relations between the military government and the province had been tense for months, centered on grievances related to provincial sovereignty, the allocation of resources, interprovincial migrations, and the protection of local language and culture. These claims were not new. The tension was, however, particularly intense in the Bugti area, due to its rich natural gas resources and the determination of Akbar Bugti, a prominent Bugti leader and a former interior minister of state and governor of Balochistan, to get for his tribe a greater share of the royalties generated by their exploitation.

At the time, Pakistani authorities presented the conflict as the creation of greedy sardars,³ local tribal leaders fighting for a greater share of provincial resources and opposing development in order to preserve their own power, the outdated relic of a feudal system. Pakistan's military did not take Baloch nationalist leaders seriously. They also discounted the risk of a long-term war.⁴

But seven years later, the conflict continues. Neither the fall of the Pervez Musharraf regime in 2008 nor the various goodwill statements of its successors has allowed the initiation of a real political solution. As a precondition of any negotiations, the insurgents asked for an end to the Pakistani government's military operations in the province and for assurances that the intelligence agencies would cease their activities in Balochistan. They obtained neither.

Today, Balochistan is slowly but surely descending into anarchy. It is a bubbling “cauldron of ethnic, sectarian, secessionist and militant violence, threatening to boil over at any time.”⁵ Law and order in the province continues to deteriorate at an especially alarming pace. Even the head of the provincial government, Chief Minister Nawab Aslam Raisani, who was supposed to be based in Balochistan, spent most of his time in Islamabad out of fear for his safety until he was finally fired.

The Pakistani military has so far proven unable to eliminate militant organizations and the larger nationalist movement, despite conducting targeted assassination campaigns and kidnappings and making various attempts to discredit the nationalist movement by associating it with organized crime or terrorist groups.

Today, Balochistan is slowly but surely descending into anarchy.

Of course, every state opposes separatist tendencies, and Pakistan is no exception. But a close evaluation of so-called “Baloch nationalism” shows that although real separatist tendencies persisted in the province in the early 2000s, the political groups that actively promoted separatism were a minority. Most (not all) activists had reconciled themselves to the idea that Balochistan’s future was within the Pakistani federation. They were struggling for more autonomy within the federal constitutional framework and for the government to respect the socio-economic rights of the Baloch. It was the state’s repressive response that radicalized most elements of the “nationalist” movement.

Now, a majority of the population wants more autonomy for the province but does not demand independence. The Baloch nationalist movement is divided between various separatists and factions asking for the autonomy of the province within the Pakistani federal framework, and it cannot achieve full separation from Pakistan. The conflict now demonstrates the absurdity of a repression that is reinforcing the very threat it is intended to eliminate.

The Pakistani security establishment proved relatively efficient in destroying Baloch social structures, but it has been unable to impose its writ on the province, much less propose viable alternative structures. Meanwhile, the security establishment has exacerbated ethnic tensions. Insurgents have begun to attack ordinary citizens of non-Baloch ethnic background, not just Pakistan’s federal agencies, and allegedly, the security establishment has lost control of its radical proxy groups.

The attempted Islamization of the province has led to less, not greater, control for the central government, and a hotbed of extremism is developing in a part of the population where it was previously unknown. As a Pakistani journalist recently wrote, “Balochistan has clearly turned into a security and governance black hole where multiple political, financial and criminal interests either converge or play out against one another.”⁶

Sympathy with the Baloch has increased across Pakistan, and for some “sympathizers,” the military poses the most potent obstacle to national unity and

stability, not the separatists. In their minds, the resilience of Baloch nationalism results from the persistent economic and social inequalities among the provinces that have been exacerbated by military repression and massive violations of human rights.

To avert further crisis, the challenge in Balochistan is to transform the widespread rejection of the military's policies into reconciliation with the insurgency and a common political will that ensures the so-called nationalist parties can participate in elections.

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Dimensions of Baloch Nationalism

Historically, Baloch nationalism relates to the broader national question in Pakistan. Politically, it covers everything from aspirations to full independence from Pakistan to demands for autonomy within the Pakistani federation; the positions of the assorted nationalist parties and organizations vary over time. In that sense, the term “Baloch nationalism” is itself misleading. Sociologically, it is an evolving reality reflecting the evolution of the province as well as that of Pakistan itself.

Each of these dimensions is, of course, the object of an intense political struggle. Over the years, Pakistan's central governments have tended to refute the idea of a Baloch nation, and military regimes have systematically assimilated all “nationalist” parties into the most hardline organizations. But reducing Baloch nationalism to a reminiscence of feudalism led by reactionary sardars has been for Pakistani central governments a convenient—but inaccurate—way to deny its popular dimension and its very existence.

The Actors

The organizations that compose the nationalist landscape and its different sensitivities today reflect the historical, political, and sociological evolution of Baloch nationalism as well as the movement's spectrum of motivations and (sometimes conflicting) strategies. Many of the most active parties promote independence, although the leanings of many Baloch have diverged from that stance.

- The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) is a clandestine organization said to be associated with the Marri tribe. The BLA was led by Balach Marri until he was killed in 2007. His brother, Hyrbyair Marri, is generally considered the current leader of the organization, which stands for the independence of a “greater” Balochistan, including Iranian and Afghan Baloch. It is estimated to have about 3,000 fighters, mostly tribal members.⁷

- The Baloch Republican Party is led by Brahamdagh Bugti (currently in exile in Switzerland) since the killing of his grandfather, Akbar Bugti, by the Pakistani army in 2006. It advocates the independence of a “greater” Balochistan and opposes any sort of political dialogue, calling upon the international community to intervene to halt a “genocide.”⁸
- The Baloch Republican Army is presumed to be the militant wing of the Baloch Republican Party. It is usually associated with the Bugti tribe and said to be led by Brahamdagh Bugti.
- The Baloch National Movement calls for the independence of a “greater” Balochistan and refuses to participate in the political process. Its leader, Ghulam Mohammed Baloch, was found dead in 2009 after he helped unite several nationalist groups under a single umbrella. The military is usually considered responsible for his death, which drew condemnation from the United Nations.⁹
- The National Party, led by Abdul Malik Baloch, is a moderate, center-left Baloch nationalist party that claims to represent the middle class. It has usually participated in the electoral process but boycotted the 2008 elections. Several of its leaders have been assassinated by unknown assailants.¹⁰
- The Balochistan National Party, led by Akhtar Mengal, is a major nationalist party that controlled the provincial government before 2002 but boycotted the polls in 2008. Considered a moderate organization, it calls for an increase in Balochistan’s share of revenue from provincial resources, but, until recently, it demanded only wide autonomy for the province, with the authority of the federal government limited to defense, foreign affairs, and the currency. Members have been killed by the authorities,¹¹ and the party now calls for a referendum on self-determination.
- The Baloch Student Organization, created in the late 1960s, has trained and produced many nationalist leaders. It is considered the middle-class entry point into the nationalist movement and is composed of several different factions that support the BLA, the Baloch National Movement, the National Party, and the Balochistan National Party. This has never prevented the organization from acting independently, as evidenced by its campaign for a multinational Pakistan and for the Baloch nationalism renaissance. Today, the BSOP-Azad faction, a hardline movement aligned with the BLA, seems to be the dominant wing of the organization.

The Beginnings of the Movement

According to Baloch nationalists, the broader Baloch nationalist movement that produced these groups has deep and broad roots—a two-thousand-year-long history. Some historians, however, date the emergence of Baloch nationalism to the anticolonial struggle of the late nineteenth century, when the princely state of Khalat encompassed modern-day Balochistan. The rivalry between the British and Russian empires that led to the first British invasion of Afghanistan brought the British forces to Balochistan in their effort to control the supply roads to Kabul.¹² However, the colonial power took care not to interfere in provincial affairs and established its direct control only on a thin piece of land along the Afghan border.

For other historians Baloch nationalism truly emerged nearer in time to the creation of Pakistan. Inspired by the Soviet revolution in Russia and the Indian independence movement led by Gandhi and Nehru, nationalist leaders had campaigned for an independent Balochistan during the last decades of the Raj. On August 15, 1947, one day after the creation of Pakistan, the khan of Khalat declared his state independent—though essentially as a bargaining position—proposing to negotiate a special relationship with Pakistan in the domains of defense and foreign affairs. The Pakistani leadership rejected the declaration of independence, and Khalat was forcibly annexed to Pakistan nine months later.¹³ There followed in 1948, 1958, and 1962 a series of conflicts of various intensities between the Pakistani state and Baloch nationalists.

A Baloch resistance, which crystallized around the objective of protecting the populations and their interests and was inspired by Marxist-Leninist liberation movements, emerged shortly after the brief encounters of 1962. A few hundred ideologically motivated men assembled under the banner of Sher Mohammed Marri and the militant Baloch People's Liberation Front, setting up what was to become the infrastructure of the 1973 insurgency. Although still under the authority of a member of the Marri tribe, this infrastructure extended far beyond Marri territory. By July 1963, 22 nationalist camps had been established, spanning from the Mengal areas of central Balochistan to the Marri territory in the northeast of the province. Some 400 full-time volunteers ran the operations.¹⁴

The demand for independence came later, not as a claim of the Baloch People's Liberation Front, but as a result of the gradual alienation and radicalization of Baloch youth during the 1973–1977 conflict. President and later Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto had given Pakistan a democratic constitution but refused to respect the norms he had helped to establish. In 1973, he dissolved the provincial government formed by the opposition National Awami Party (NAP) and accused its main leaders of attempting to sabotage the foundations of the state. The most radical elements of the nascent Baloch nationalist movement then joined the guerilla effort initiated by the Marris and Mengals.¹⁵ Some 80,000 troops mobilized by the Pakistani army could not eradicate the

insurgency. Only after General Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq launched a military coup did negotiations begin, resulting in the eventual withdrawal of the army from the province and the liberation of the Baloch leadership and several thousand activists.¹⁶ The province remained peaceful until 2005.

The Tribes and the Middle Class

The emergence of Baloch nationalism as it is known today is the product of a long and complex process of emancipation of the Baloch middle class, often educated outside Balochistan. This middle class nationalism emerged in parallel and frequently in dialogue with the growing nationalism of Balochi tribes, until time and military operations eroded tribal identity. Baloch nationalism grew within the tribal structures before gradually spreading to other sectors of society.

The tribal character of Baloch nationalism is as much a question of politics as of sociology or anthropology. Balochistan is divided among eighteen major tribes and a number of lesser tribes and clans. Marris and Bugtis, more histori-

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cally prone to military confrontation, are the most politically important of them. Given the power of tribes, the differences between them, and their at times fraught interactions, the tribal question is still an essential component of any discussion on Baloch nationalism and has long been the main argument of those who refuted the existence of a Baloch nation.

For example, referring to the NAP, Feroz Ahmad wrote in 1999 that “[unlike] the Awami League, which led a Bengali nationalist movement cutting across all the classes, the NAP in Balochistan is a mere assortment of Balochi and Brohi tribal leaders. On the lingual basis Brohis have as much in common with the Balochis as Tamils have with Pashtuns.”¹⁷ As a matter of fact, Balochi speakers are a majority in only four out of 30 districts—Kharan, Makhran, Sibi, and Shagai. Even in the birthplace of Baloch nationalism, the Khanate of Khalat, Brohi is the dominant language. This disunity further contributes to the long-standing doubts that many Pakistani intellectuals hold about the existence of a Baloch nation.¹⁸

More recently, President of Pakistan and Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Musharraf justified using repressive tactics in Balochistan as part of a campaign to end the province’s oppression at the hands of a minority of tribal chiefs, who were supposedly responsible for the underdevelopment of the province. They constituted an easy scapegoat for the military government, which, interestingly, stated at the time that only 7 percent of the province was involved in the insurgency but did not explain why the remaining 93 percent that it did control was similarly underdeveloped.

Among the some 28 major sardars of importance in Balochistan, only three had openly revolted against the federal government. Moreover, according to Baloch journalist Malik Siraj Akbar, the Baloch Liberation Army “is not owned

by any one sardar. No nationalist leader, including Bugti, Marri, and Mengal, accepts responsibility for leading the Baloch Liberation Army, even though all of them admit to backing the outfit's activities.¹⁹ And neither the assassination of Balach Marri nor of Akbar Bugti, the two main leaders of the initial phase of the current insurgency, ended the conflict between Balochistan and the center.

It can be argued that each conflict between Balochistan and Pakistan's federal government marked a new step in the process of "detrribalization." While the tribal factor never totally disappeared, it did lose its centrality.

Today, the Baloch movement is led by the educated middle class. With the exception of the Bugtis and Marris, the most popular leaders belong to this category. This class is underrepresented in the higher echelons of the Pakistani army and the administration, and it provides a substantial part of the educated cadre of the Baloch nationalist movement.²⁰ The middle class is also a strong factor of unity because it is deeply allergic to all separate agreements, individual or collective, between Islamabad and the tribal chiefs and knows how to take advantage of the rivalries among the latter.²¹

As a result, the geography of the resistance has changed, shifting from rural to urban areas and from the northeast of the province to the southwest. Sometimes it spills over to cities like Karachi. The sociological shift within the nationalist movement stems partly from the historical evolution of the movement itself, partly from the destruction of tribal structures in the most restive areas such as Dera Bugti or Kohlu, and partly from the increased involvement of areas where tribal structures are not dominant. All of these factors combine to strengthen Baloch nationalism in these areas while marginalizing the sardars.

Many Baloch nationalist leaders now come from the urbanized districts of Kech, Panjgur, and Gwadar (and to a lesser extent from Quetta, Khuzdar, Turbat, Kharan, and Lasbela). They are well-connected to Karachi and Gulf cities, where tribal structures are nonexistent. In fact, while there is violence all over the province, the insurgency seems to concentrate mainly in these urbanized areas. The Frontier Corps, a paramilitary force that operates in Pakistan's border provinces, has apparently concentrated much of its 50,000-man strength in Balochistan in the southwestern areas of the province, mostly in the Panjgur, Turbat, and Kech districts.²²

Thus, the middle class is today the main target of the Pakistani military and paramilitary in what seems to be an attempt to eradicate all manifestations of Baloch nationalism and to rule out the very possibility of its renaissance.²³ But by doing so, the central government strategy will jeopardize the future of the province itself. Most people involved in the insurgency today are said to be under the age of thirty and to belong to the middle class.

Unsurprisingly, Pakistan's strategy has intensified the opposition and radicalized the most moderate elements of the nationalist movement. All

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organizations have had to radicalize—at least rhetorically—or else lose the support of their constituencies. As early as 2006, former NAP leader and Balochistan National Party elder statesman Ataullah Mengal had to declare that “the days to fight political battles are over.”²⁴

Politics of the Conflict in Balochistan

As long as the Pakistani center accepted nationalist representation, the nationalist leadership remained open to compromise. This possibility disappeared—or at least greatly diminished—as soon as it became clear that the military regime was seeking the elimination of the nationalist leadership.²⁵

Election Rigging and Musharraf’s Devolution Policy

Throughout the 1990s, ethnic tensions had greatly diminished, thanks to robust representative participatory institutions. Nationalist parties emerged as significant forces. In the 1988 election, the combined vote for nationalist parties totaled 47.8 percent. It reached 51.74 percent in the 1990 elections, and Baloch nationalist parties dominated the elections again in 1997 and formed the government.²⁶ Baloch leaders also were represented in the mainstream Pakistan People’s Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N). Balochistan’s relations with the civilian federal government grew tense occasionally during the democratic interlude of the 1990s, but the province remained peaceful.

The equation changed with the 2002 elections, when the military rigged the elections and reinvigorated its long-standing alliance with the region’s mullahs, helping the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) coalition of religious Islamic parties to gain power in Balochistan. The Election Observation Mission of the European Union reported vote tampering before, during, and after the elections. The Election Commission of Pakistan was accused of diluting strongholds of parties opposing the regime and favoring its supporters. The eligibility criteria for candidates were changed to require university degrees, but madrasa diplomas were considered equivalent.²⁷ Some prominent nationalist leaders, even those who had previously held high office in the province, without university degrees (including Akbar Bugti) were prevented from running, giving significant advantage to the MMA.

Islamabad’s electoral manipulation had a larger strategic objective as well.²⁸ With Islamist parties in power in the two provinces adjacent to the Afghan border, it was easier for the military regime to provide the Afghan insurgency the sanctuaries it needed for the pursuit of a low-intensity conflict in Afghanistan while denying any responsibility in the process.

The Baloch and Pashtun nationalist parties found themselves fundamentally affected. A Baloch, Mohammad Jam Yusaf was appointed chief minister, but had little control over even his own cabinet, which was dominated by the

Jamaat-Ulema-u-Islam, a conservative Islamist party. Lacking a voice in their own province, Baloch nationalists rejected the military's electoral, political, and constitutional manipulation.²⁹ The rigging of the 2002 elections thus constituted the first step toward the conflict.³⁰

Determined to eradicate Baloch nationalism, Musharraf accelerated the arrest of its leaders even before the beginning of the hostilities. A parliamentary committee including members of the Baloch opposition convened in September 2004 and wrote recommendations designed to form the basis of a negotiation, but the situation kept deteriorating. Even when a compromise with Akbar Bugti seemed imminent, Musharraf deliberately opted for confrontation.

General Musharraf also attempted to tackle the Baloch issue politically by launching a devolution plan that bypassed the provincial assemblies to create local governments entirely dependent on the central government for their survival. Although presented as a form of decentralization, all provinces except Punjab perceived the scheme to be an imposition of a centralized form of government and a negation of provincial autonomy—clearly an irritant for Baloch nationalists.

The army intervened in Dera Bugti, the epicenter of the rebellion, leading to significant population displacements. Extrajudicial killings, torture, and illegal arrests by security forces and the intelligence agencies became the norm. In 2006, the Pakistani press started reporting a new phenomenon: “forced disappearances.” Akbar Bugti was killed by the Pakistani army, and although Pervez Musharraf presented Bugti's death as a decisive victory, it only intensified the conflict.

The Fiction of Civilian Power

In Balochistan, the post-Musharraf era started before the formal end of the Musharraf presidency in 2008. Rather than substituting a political dynamic for military repression, the new situation was characterized by parallel political processes, whose timid attempts at reconciliation could never compensate for an increasingly vicious and brutal security presence.

At the provincial level, the nationalist parties decided to boycott the 2008 elections because of the killing of Akbar Bugti. That opened the way for a massive rigging of the poll. The corrections of the electoral rolls by the Electoral Commission of Pakistan in September 2011 revealed that 65 percent of Baloch voters were fake in the 2008 election.³¹ Soon, all political parties represented in the assembly and close to the security establishment, despite being in conflict with each other in other parts of the country, suddenly became bedfellows in a government that had no opposition worth the name and therefore no control over the way the provincial government was spending public money. All members of the provincial assembly except one were made ministers,³²

opening the way for corruption on an unprecedented scale in the province and annihilating all federal government efforts to end the crisis.

The federal leadership made further efforts to calm tensions within the region. Shortly after its February 2008 national electoral victory, the PPP apologized for the abuses committed by the Pakistani state in Balochistan. Later that year, newly elected President Asif Ali Zardari insisted on the need to heal the wounds of the past to restore confidence in the federation. Finally, in October 2009, the flagship Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Reconciliatory Committee on Balochistan unveiled its roadmap, calling for reconciliation with Baloch nationalists, the reconstruction of provincial institutions, and a new formula to redistribute resources.³³

In early November 2009, the government promised to confer more autonomy to the province. On November 24, the government presented to parliament a 39-point plan for a more autonomous Balochistan, the so-called “Balochistan Package.” The text included the return of political exiles, the liberation of jailed Baloch political activists, the army’s withdrawal from some key areas, a reform of the federal resources allocation mechanism,³⁴ efforts to create jobs, and greater provincial control of Balochistan’s resources. Parliament adopted the text in December 2009.³⁵

The Balochistan Package addressed all initial Baloch grievances, including provisions related to the most controversial topics—the release of political workers, a political dialogue, the return of exiles, investigations into missing persons, judicial inquiries, and more—as well as provisions related to the economic situation in the province.³⁶ It promised to transfer additional funds and to create some 16,000 jobs in the province.

The nationalist movement, which had expected to be granted more provincial autonomy, immediately objected to the plan.³⁷ Moderate Baloch nationalists also had concerns, fearing that the government’s proposals were no more than a smokescreen behind which it would continue the systematic physical elimination of Baloch nationalists. By the end of December 2009, convinced that self-determination was the only way out of the crisis, all major stakeholders in the Baloch nationalist movement had formally rejected the government’s proposal. The Balochistan Package was never implemented.

In 2010 Islamabad doubled Balochistan’s budget and immediately released an additional \$140 million to the provincial government to settle outstanding natural gas revenue debts.³⁸ According to some journalists, some members of the provincial government pocketed the money or spent it on lavish projects with little or no impact on nationalist sentiments.³⁹

The government has done little to shore up Balochistan’s economy.

In fact, the government has done little to shore up Balochistan’s economy. It has allocated more funds to the province, but the money does not seem to have reached its targets.⁴⁰ Industry has collapsed and no additional irrigation projects exist to compensate for the

drought conditions of the past years. Teachers and professionals have left the province, while infrastructure, health, and sanitation lie neglected.⁴¹

The provincial government has de facto abdicated its basic responsibilities. In its August 2012 report, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan reported that the provincial government is “nowhere to be seen”; the government holds a number of its meetings outside the province. Nongovernmental organizations and development agencies are likewise retreating, fearing for the safety of their staff, while cross-border drug trade and kidnapping for ransom flourish.

The social and institutional fabric of Balochistan is facing systematic destruction, leaving behind only the province’s most radical elements. It took the killing of some 90 Shias in Quetta in January 2013 for the central government to sack the elected chief minister, Nawab Aslam Raisani, under pressure from the Shia community, placing Balochistan under governor’s rule (in fact, under the control of the military, as the governor is allowed to call on the army to help enforce law and order).⁴²

Balochistan is now experiencing yet another political crisis. Political parties are trying to have the governor’s rule lifted and a new government installed. Negotiations are ongoing with the federal government, but it is unclear whether they will lead to the installment of a new government, who would lead it, and, more importantly, if it would be able to stop the violence.

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Repression as Policy

Over the years, the government’s repressive tactics in Balochistan changed.⁴³ Military operations were stopped, but across the province, people have been abducted, killed, and their bodies abandoned, acts widely referred to as “kill-and-dump” operations. These operations are attempts to keep the province under control and reinforce the power of the state.

The exact number of enforced disappearances perpetrated in Balochistan by the Pakistani military is unknown. Baloch nationalists claim “thousands” of cases. In 2008, Interior Minister Rehman Malik mentioned at least 1,100 victims, but in January 2011, Balochistan Home Minister Zafrullah Zehri said that only 55 persons were missing.⁴⁴ An editorial dated September 11, 2012, in the *Express Tribune* indicated that the bodies of 57 missing persons had been found since January 2012. However, other papers mention figures over 100 during the same period. In its August 2012 report, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan indicates that it has verified 198 cases of enforced disappearances in Balochistan between January 2000 and May 12, 2012, and that 57 bodies of missing persons had been found in Balochistan in 2012 alone.⁴⁵

The Pakistani press, as well as international and Pakistani nongovernmental organizations, have documented a number of cases relatively well. According to

Human Rights Watch, which concurs on this point with the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, there seems to be little doubt about the fact that most of these disappearances have been perpetrated by Pakistan's "intelligence agencies and the Frontier Corps, often acting in conjunction with the local police."⁴⁶ In most of the cases documented, the perpetrators acted openly in broad daylight, sometimes in busy public areas, and with apparently little concern for the presence of multiple witnesses.⁴⁷ Relatives are, of course, denied access to the detainees. Torture and ill treatment are the rule, and extrajudicial killings frequent.

One case has been particularly publicized in Pakistan and abroad. On April 3, 2009, three political activists, including Ghulam Mohammed Baloch, president of the Baloch National Movement, were abducted from their lawyer's office in a courthouse in Turbat.⁴⁸ The abduction occurred on the day the Anti-Terrorist Court of Turbat dismissed all cases against them.⁴⁹ Their bodies were found six days later in a mountainous area some 40 kilometers away from the city.

The murder of the three activists marked a more brutal change in policy and the beginning of the kill-and-dump operations. Their number kept increasing thereafter.

In addition to activists and insurgents, other victims of these operations include sympathizers with the militancy, suspected nationalists, students, teachers, lawyers, journalists, and other educated people. As a result, many professionals have fled the province, migrating to other parts of Pakistan, raising further questions about the future of Balochistan.

Although the military and intelligence agencies refute such accusations, the Pakistani press also reports the use of death squads, composed of Baloch guns-for-hire, resembling the Al Shams and Al Badr militias that the Pakistani military employed during the Bangladesh war.⁵⁰ The intelligence agencies allegedly created the death squads operating in Balochistan today to counter the Marris, Mengals, and Bugtis by creating confusion and disrupting their activities. They would possibly even replace tribal leaders with representatives of a Baloch nationalism that would become totally subservient to Islamabad.⁵¹

Some of the tactics employed by the militants are equally abhorrent as they, too, have their share of ethnically targeted killings. In the initial stages of the insurgency, the Baloch Liberation Army exclusively targeted the security forces. The Pakistani state and its agencies, considered instruments of Punjab's domination, were the targets—not ordinary Punjabi citizens.

After the physical or political elimination of the political leadership of the insurgency, however, civilians, too, started to become victims of the militants. Irresponsible statements by political figures such as Nawab Khair Baksh Marri, who declared that "he could coexist with a pig but not with [a] Punjabi,"⁵² only worsened the political climate in Balochistan. Targeted ethnic killing

multiplied across the province. In July 2012, for example, the press reported the massacre of eighteen people, most of them Punjabi, in Turbat.⁵³ Responsibility for the massacre was claimed by the Baloch Liberation Tigers, a Baloch group never heard of before.

The nationalist camp itself has become increasingly polarized and subject to occasional internecine fights. Even non-nationalist Baloch have sometimes been murdered by the hardliners.

Breaking Ethnic Identities: The Islamization of Balochistan

Military regimes in Pakistan have also sought to eradicate ethnic identities by changing provincial demographics and pursuing Islamization, or the substitution of a common Muslim identity for ethnic ones. This is not a new phenomenon in Balochistan. Pakistan first attempted to marginalize the Baloch within their own province in 1971 by incorporating Pashtun areas into Balochistan. At the end of the 1970s, following Zia-ul-Haq's coup, Balochistan also became one of the two focal points of the dictator's Islamization strategy (the other being the North-West Frontier Province, now Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa). Since then, it has been an integral part of all centralization policies. The period between the end of the Bhutto regime and the military coup of Pervez Musharraf witnessed major developments in Pakistan's Balochistan policy, many of which endure in some form to this day. Zia-ul-Haq used Islamization as a weapon against the insurgency. Zia's Pakistan officially sought a "new political system according to Islam."⁵⁴ The military dictator reconstituted the Council of Islamic Ideology, a consultative body set up for the sole purpose of formulating a more Islamic system of government; established the *hudood* laws, a series of punishments for violations of laws ranging from adultery and fornication to rape and theft; and introduced a system of sharia courts entrusted with ensuring that existing laws conformed to Islam.⁵⁵ In 1986, a blasphemy law was introduced. In Balochistan, as in the rest of rural Pakistan, Islamization brought the arrival of Islamic scholars, the establishment of madrassas, and the revision of school curricula in accordance to Islamic law.

There was no particular novelty to these policies. Previous military rulers, Ayub Khan and Yahya Khan, had used religious symbols to help legitimize their rule. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto himself did the same thing under political compulsion. Like the British administration, the Pakistani elite perceived the vast majority of "the indigenous population as a stagnant, backward and politically immature mass governed by religious sentiments" and therefore saw the idea of an Islamic state as naturally representative of the aspirations of a majority of the population.⁵⁶

However, Zia-ul-Haq went further than any of his predecessors—but not for ideological reasons. Whatever his personal religious convictions,⁵⁷ Zia-ul-Haq pushed the logic of religious manipulation to its most extreme because he faced a relatively more difficult political situation than his predecessors.⁵⁸ For him, the very nature of the ordinary Pakistani was religious and therefore an Islamic state was necessarily to his liking. Inheriting the Balochistan conflict only a few years after the partition of Pakistan, which created East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), the new military regime also saw Islam as a powerful unifying force.

The Islamization of the early 1980s, in particular, was also a response to a Bangladesh syndrome, which continues to haunt Pakistani decisionmakers to this day. Zia tried to subsume Baloch and other Pakistani ethnic identities into a larger Islamic one.

Baloch nationalism proved, however, more resilient and Islamization policies failed in the areas where ethnic Balochs were predominant. Yet, they remained an important component of a long-term federal policy in Balochistan.

Zia had accepted the necessary compromises with the nationalist leaders,⁵⁹ half of whom were in exile, and Balochistan was temporarily pacified. These policies marked, however, the beginning of a slow process which, combined with a growing Pashtun demographic presence as well as the Afghan war against the Soviet Union, bolstered the religious parties in the Pashtun areas of Balochistan.

Despite Pervez Musharraf's rhetoric about "enlightened moderation" and his promise to remove provincial grievances by devolving power away from the center,⁶⁰ he followed in Zia's footsteps regarding Islamization (although his provincial policy borrowed heavily from those of Ayub Khan and Zulfikar Ali Bhutto).

The Musharraf regime continued, through the Ministry of Religious Affairs, to encourage the establishment of madrassas in Balochistan in order to penetrate deeper into the ethnic Baloch areas stubbornly opposed to the mullahs. New religious schools came at the expense of secular education. As a consequence, the role of the clergy increased, angering Baloch and Pashtun nationalists alike. Both movements have long demanded that the Ministry of Religious Affairs be dismantled.

Ironically, the growing power of the clergy has allowed the central government to draw the attention of foreign powers to the risk of the spread of fundamentalism in the region and to launch a disinformation campaign equating the Baloch insurgency with Islamic terrorism. Attacks by al-Qaeda, the Taliban, or Baloch nationalists were systematically associated with one another in press reports. The same attempt at disinformation dictated occasional identification of Baloch nationalism with Iran's Islamic revolution at a time when the United States and Europe were actively opposing Tehran's nuclear ambitions.

The Exponential Rise of Sectarianism

The rivalry between nationalist and Islamist parties that emerged during Zia-ul-Haq's regime and continued under his successors was not an ideological struggle. The ideological façade was, first and foremost, an attempt by military regimes to break ethnic identities and centralize power.

Similarly, Baloch nationalists rejected the Islamization process much less for its ideological content than because they rightly perceived it as part of a larger scheme to isolate individuals and make them more amenable to Islamabad's policies. The rejection of Islamization in Balochistan was primarily a rejection of centralization and of central dominance, not of Islamic doctrine per se.

However, Islamization is currently experiencing a qualitative change in Balochistan. Amid the state of anarchy in the province and led by the Deobandi madrassa network, radicalization is on the rise and sectarian groups have stepped up their activities in the region. The number of sectarian killings has increased almost exponentially over the past few years in a province traditionally known for its deeply entrenched secularism.

A strong Taliban presence in Balochistan developed under Musharraf and in connection with the MMA government. The province is also increasingly becoming a nexus of sectarian outfits. Afghan and Pakistani Taliban (Tehrik-e-Taliban Balochistan), al-Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Janghvi, Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, Imamia Student Organization, and Sipah-e-Muhammad are said to have established presences in the province.⁶¹ Their presence is partly the result of Pakistani security agencies pushing them there from Punjab, partly a result of a vast network of Deobandi madrassas, and partly a consequence of the Islamization policies pursued by the federal state since the 1970s. At the same time, some analysts credit the Afghan refugee camps in the province as a key source of recruits for the Taliban.⁶²

Balochistan's sectarian groups continue to multiply, fragment, and collaborate at a dramatic pace. The Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan has a large support base in Balochistan. Although banned twice by the government, it remains intact in the province and provides ground support for Lashkar-e-Janghvi terrorists. The group seems to operate as two different outfits, the Usman Kurd group and the Qari Hayi group. Some factions of the defunct Jaish-e-Mohammad seem to have established an operational relationship with Lashkar-e-Janghvi, while a large number of Harakat-ul-Mujadeen and Harakat Jihad-e-Islami militants are said to have joined the group. The Imamia Student Organization, influential among Shia youth as well as in mainstream Shia politics, seems to play a role in sectarian violence as well.⁶³

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The most worrisome factor is the changing sociology of the Islamic radicalization in Balochistan. Unlike the Pashtun-populated areas of the province, the Baloch territory was until very recently largely secular. Today, the Tablighi Jamaat conducts its activities outside the Pashtun areas. Lashkar-e-Janghvi is now recruiting in the Baloch population, and five of the most prominent leaders of the organization in Balochistan are said to be Baloch.

The post-Musharraf evolution has, in fact, witnessed a change and a worsening of the situation in Balochistan that shifted religious activism from politics to militancy. The Jamaat-Ulema-u-Islam no longer leads the provincial government, but radical religious proxies are now an integral part of the military's strategy in the province.

Sectarian violence continues to thrive in Balochistan, with attacks directed mainly against the Hazara community—a Persian-speaking Shia minority that lives in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The phenomenon is not new in Pakistan; some 700 Hazaras were killed between 1998 and 2009.⁶⁴ But violent attacks occurred relatively rarely in Balochistan until 2002, when Musharraf banned sectarian groups such as the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan and Jaish-e-Mohammad, prompting them to move to the province, where they came in contact with Taliban militants.

Targeted assassinations of Hazaras have grown more common since the killing of the chairman of the Hazara Democratic Party in January 2009. On September 20, 2011, twenty Shia pilgrims travelling to Iran were shot dead in front of their families in Mastung; three days later, three Hazara men were killed outside Quetta; and on October 4, thirteen Hazaras were dragged off a bus and shot dead. The trend continued unabated in 2012.⁶⁵

Shias are not the only victims of sectarian groups. Lashkar-e-Janghvi Balochistan has also killed Baloch nationalist leaders, such as Habib Jalib Baloch. Interestingly, Lashkar-e-Janghvi Balochistan denies killing Shias while claiming to be involved in actions supposedly aimed at protecting the Baloch community. Some of its leaders talk of “carrying out defensive actions against people who are supported by foreign intelligence services.”⁶⁶

Some analysts conclude that the Sipah-e-Sahaba and Lashkar-e-Janghvi enjoy official protection. Supposedly proscribed, they still hold rallies in major cities, openly displaying arms.⁶⁷ Many attacks take place in areas with a strong Frontier Corps presence.⁶⁸ “Sectarian violence has increased because of a clear expansion of operational spaces for violent sectarian groups to function within, and without fear of being caught,”⁶⁹ implying that the “ease of the operations could come from the fact that the police and the courts do not have the capacity to investigate, prosecute, and convict sectarian killers,”⁷⁰ or, more likely, that they are prevented from acting by the intelligence agencies.

Shia leaders blame the intelligence agencies but also accuse prominent members of the provincial Baloch government of protecting sectarian leaders.⁷¹

The groups perpetrating violence seem to rely on the fact that no serious action will be taken against them before the parliamentary elections in May 2013.

Some Baloch leaders also blame the intelligence agencies, which they perceive to be using both religious and Baloch renegade groups to suppress nationalism and kill Hazaras. At the same time, the agencies seem to have been successful in their attempt to build up the perception that the Baloch community is targeting the Hazaras. The government itself has tried to give credit to the idea of a connection between Lashkar-e-Janghvi and the Balochistan Liberation Army; Interior Minister Rehman Malik declared to the senate that the two groups “had been related to each other for five years.”⁷²

If the suspicion of these Baloch leaders were confirmed, it would mean that security agencies in Balochistan no longer rely primarily on a set of well-established and controlled fundamentalist organizations such as the Jamaat-Ulema-u-Islam or others like it. Instead, they are using increasingly radical proxies at a time when they seem to have the utmost difficulties in controlling groups that they sponsored in the past.

A Way Out?

Whether Balochistan can normalize its situation or if the current route to chaos is irreversible is an open question. The unstable status quo will inevitably lead to more anarchy, but reversing the situation would prove difficult and would most likely take several generations. In the search for a way out of the current mess, several factors must be taken into consideration.

First, a majority of the Baloch population wants greater autonomy for the province but does not demand independence. According to a July 2012 survey, only 37 percent of the Baloch favor independence, and a mere 12 percent of Balochistan’s Pashtuns favor that option. However, 67 percent of the total population supports greater provincial autonomy.⁷³

These figures alone do not predetermine the future of Balochistan—the 37 percent of Baloch who favor independence indeed constitute a large plurality that could even grow in the future. But they undoubtedly indicate a trend toward integration with the national mainstream. They also mean that there is space for political negotiation, and that Balochistan is not simply a law-and-order problem. It indicates that the possibility for some compromise exists.

Second, examined through the prism of Pakistan’s English-language press, the situation in Balochistan seems to echo positively in the rest of Pakistan. Unlike the 1970s, when the Baloch insurgency remained essentially a Baloch problem, it now generates debate in broader Pakistani society. Pakistani media outlets, especially electronic media, have proliferated and become more robust. With few exceptions, the mainstream English-language press appreciates that

The Baloch insurgency now generates debate in broader Pakistani society.

“separatist feelings are on the rise in Balochistan, thanks mainly to the action of the military and paramilitary forces, who are systematically accused of picking up, torturing and killing Baloch activists.” Those sentiments do not just appear in obscure Baloch nationalist newspapers (although the Baloch media is systematically banned and its journalists targeted by security forces and their proxies, which seems to indicate that the security establishment may fear their influence outside Balochistan).

The English-language press also recognizes the inability of the civilian politicians to solve the problem,⁷⁴ especially blaming the provincial government for being corrupt and impotent.⁷⁵ The provincial authorities blame the media for presenting a gloomy picture of the law-and-order situation in Balochistan,⁷⁶ but they have little to show to counter the press’s arguments.

It is difficult to assess the exact representativeness of the English-language media in their critique of the management of the Balochistan crisis, but the support they lend to the socioeconomic grievances of the province seem to indicate a real empathy for the Baloch, demonstrating some true unity in Pakistan. It also indicates a growing gap between Pakistan’s civil society and its military.

Third, the Baloch nationalist movement is divided and in no position to achieve independence. Baloch nationalists have occasionally engaged in internecine fights that pit hardline groups and individuals against those more amenable to dialogue and willing to resolve the crisis through a political process. Moreover, while the hardliners seem able to harass the military and its proxies, they do not possess the means to prevail over the Pakistani security forces. Despite the widespread allegations of the Pakistani authorities, the hardliners do not seem to enjoy any significant foreign support likely to change the provincial balance of forces in their favor.⁷⁷

Fourth, the security establishment is unable to eliminate the insurgency, and its approach to the conflict threatens to further exacerbate the situation. And it is largely (though not solely) responsible for the increase in violence. It can objectively be argued that some of the most important leaders have been eliminated, but the insurgency has not disappeared.

And fifth, the Supreme Court has been unable to force the security forces to respect the law but has been instrumental in shedding light on the Balochistan issue. Since the beginning of the conflict, the Supreme Court has held more than 70 hearings on the situation in Balochistan and issued orders for the implementation of law and the constitution in the province,⁷⁸ supposedly as a response to real government inefficiency. None of its orders, however, has produced any tangible results. The court has, in the process, exposed its own inefficiency and further highlighted the total absence of accountability of the security establishment.⁷⁹

The hearings have nevertheless been useful. They have contributed more than any other official body to informing the Pakistani press, public opinion, and the international community about the situation in Balochistan.

Given these conditions, is there really space for a political dialogue? The refusal of the nationalist hardliners to negotiate with Islamabad is well-known, but it remains unclear if more moderate nationalist organizations are ready for a political process and willing to reenter electoral politics. During his brief stay in Islamabad in September 2012, Balochistan National Party President Akhtar Mengal met the leaders of two mainstream parties—the head of the PML-N, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, as well as the leader of the Tehreek-e-Insaf, Imran Khan. This perhaps indicates that Mengal is ready for political dialogue. It is said that the PML-N offered to propose his name for the post of caretaker prime minister, which he declined. For the mainstream political parties as for the nationalists, the priority seems to be the security situation of the province and the end of abuses by the security forces.

Mengal has proposed a “peaceful divorce” with Pakistan—that is, a referendum in Balochistan on self-determination. On the military side, the chief of army staff, General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani, responded to that proposal by stating that the army would extend its support “to a political solution to the Balochistan problem provided that the solution be in accordance with the constitution of Pakistan” adding that “any steps taken in violation of the constitution would be unacceptable.”⁸⁰

Any political solution will have to include the nationalists, and the participation of the nationalist parties in the forthcoming elections could be a key component of a solution to the Balochistan issue. The provincial government will undoubtedly be much more legitimate if the nationalist parties do take part, and that will in turn help pacify the province. Some nationalist parties are debating the possibility of participating in the elections. However, they will do so only if there is a reasonably level playing field. Should the parties decide to boycott the elections once again, the situation is likely to worsen due to the predictable absence of legitimacy of a government in which they will not be represented.

No political agreement will be sustainable, however, without a significant improvement of the human rights situation and guarantees on the security of individual Baloch. But it is unclear whether the security establishment is ready to reverse its kill-and-dump policies, put an end to forced disappearances, and disband death squads as a precondition for peace. Moreover, the international community is unlikely to bring much attention to the issue until the completion of the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan. The constraints imposed by the need to keep open troop supply and exit routes through Pakistan will limit the willingness of individual states to challenge the Pakistani military establishment.

In this context, international monitoring of the human rights situation in Balochistan conducted by the United Nations and its various agencies, could

be a limited, yet effective, means of pressure. But ending the assassination campaign and the enforced disappearances is a precondition for such a process. The recourse to proxies and the willingness of the military to transfer responsibility of the security to the Frontier Corps demonstrate that they are uneasy with their own policies in Balochistan. The monitoring would not only expose the abuses of military proxies, as exposing them would essentially provide an incentive to change them. And monitoring—should the military authorities prove serious about restoring a semblance of normality in the province—would confer credibility to the process and, paradoxically, help restore part of the prestige of the armed forces.

Should there be a real change of mind in Rawalpindi, United Nations monitoring of the situation in Balochistan could become a way of gradually bypassing the mistrust among the various parties. As the United Nations would assess the policy of the Pakistani state in Balochistan in reference to international norms, not out of a particular national political agenda, it could also prove more acceptable for the Pakistani security establishment.

The impact and utility of the mission conducted by the United Nations in September 2012 should be understood in this dual perspective. It spent ten days in Balochistan, meeting with government officials and about 100 private citizens to investigate the fate of disappeared persons in Balochistan.⁸¹ The delegation came at the invitation of the Pakistani government, a tacit admission that there is a problem despite official denials. Unsurprisingly, the leadership of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence and the paramilitary Frontier Corps, which have been blamed for most of the disappearances, refused to meet the delegation, a position consistent with their previous denials.⁸²

The United Nations mission was primarily an attempt to call international attention to the issue of enforced disappearances. Similarly, the United States and the United Kingdom both expressed concerns over the human rights situation in Balochistan during the nineteenth session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.⁸³

The role of the United Nations could evolve. It could become a guarantor of peace, helping to build confidence between the political parties and the security establishment if they could come to an agreement. It could help provide a practical way out of the present crisis.

Conclusion

Anarchy in Balochistan is not simply another unfortunate situation in an already-fragile region. The power vacuum emerging as a result of the systematic weakening or destruction of all social structures capable of containing the rise of radicalism creates a potentially explosive situation that abuts the most vulnerable provinces of Afghanistan: Helmand and Kandahar. It seems likely that no state power will truly be in a position to control these volatile provinces

after 2014, conferring additional latitude to the groups whose reemergence the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan was supposed to prevent.

The Balochistan issue cannot be resolved, or at least mitigated, by addressing the socioeconomic grievances of its people—that time is long gone. Those grievances remain, but the political forces willing to negotiate them within the framework of the Pakistani federation have been marginalized and forced to harden their positions. The Pakistani security establishment seems to have decided to eliminate the very idea of Baloch nationalism, even in its most innocuous forms. Moreover, the Baloch leaders who have neither been bought off by the Pakistani security establishment nor joined the militancy are rejected by both sides. This does not augur well for finding common ground and forging a political agreement that would end the hostilities.

Though the population of Balochistan has lost whatever confidence remained in Islamabad, only a minority (although a sizable one) seems to favor independence. This is an indication that the political space for negotiations, however small it may be, still exists—but it does not guarantee that negotiations will ever start.

That a majority of the population supports Balochistan's future within the Pakistani federation also indicates, at a deeper level, that Pakistan's unity is less factitious than commonly thought. This and the failure of the security forces to end the Balochistan conflict by the sword should suggest to Islamabad that Pakistan's diversity will have to be managed politically, not repressed or suppressed by military means. The choice is ultimately between some form of popular participation or complete fragmentation. If a solution is to be found, it will have to be political.

In Balochistan, the military wanted to eliminate the traditional and local structures to reinforce state power. It has unquestionably managed to destroy traditional social structures, but in the process, it has further weakened the Pakistani state and advanced the hardliners' position. In many ways, then, Balochistan is thus reflective of the fate of Pakistan as a whole.

Notes

- 1 With 347,190 square kilometers, Balochistan constitutes 43 percent of Pakistan's territory but about 5 percent of its population.
- 2 Since independence, the Pakistani federal state and Baloch nationalists had already fought on four occasions—in 1948, 1958, 1962, and 1973–1977.
- 3 Tribal chiefs in Balochistan.
- 4 Pervez Musharraf once said, “they don’t even know what is going to hit them.”
- 5 Naveed Hussain, “Fiddling While Balochistan Burns,” *Express Tribune*, August 15, 2012.
- 6 Imtiaz Gul, “The Dynamics of a Crisis,” *News*, July 13, 2012.
- 7 Michael Brown, Mohammad Dawaod, Arash Iranlatab, and Mahmud Naqi, *Balochistan Case Study*, INAF 5493-S: Ethnic Conflict: Causes, Consequences and Management, June 21, 2012, www4.carleton.ca/cifp/app/serve.php/1398.pdf.
- 8 Ibid.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 The Balochistan National Party blames underground death squads, such as the Baloch Musla Defai Council. The group has regularly accepted responsibility for the killing of BNP activists.
- 12 See Taj Mohammed Breseeg, *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origins and Development* (Karachi: Royal Book Company, 2004), 159–60.
- 13 Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981), 24.
- 14 Ibid., 30.
- 15 The Bugtis had dissociated themselves from the movement.
- 16 Feroz Ahmed, *Ethnicity and Politics in Pakistan* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), 176–77.
- 17 Ibid., 173.
- 18 See Aijaz Ahmed, “The National Question in Balochistan,” in *Regional Imbalances & The National Question in Pakistan*, edited by Akbar Zaidi (Lahore: Vanguard, 1992).
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Mahvish Ahmad, “Balochistan: Middle-Class Rebellion,” *Dawn*, June 5, 2012.

- 21 Before the death of Akbar Bugti in August 2006, it is said to have, through Baloch National Movement, prevented the latter, the leader of the Jamhuri Watan Party, and Mengal, leader of the Baloch National Movement (Mengal faction) and traditionally moderate, to conclude a separate agreement with the government. Both had to adopt a more radical posture and demand independence as opposed to simply autonomy. It became impossible for Islamabad to divide the movement by arresting some and bribing others. Frederic Grare, "Baloutchistan: fin de partie?" *Herodote*, no. 139, 4th trimester (2010): 111–12.
- 22 Ahmad, "Balochistan: Middle-Class Rebellion."
- 23 Sasuie Abbas Leghari, "The Balochistan Crisis," *News International*, August 25, 2012, www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-9-128196-The-Balochistan-crisis.
- 24 Malik Siraj Akbar, "'The Days to Fight Political Battles Are Over,' ... MENGAL," November 22, 2006, <http://gmcmisssing.wordpress.com/2006/11/22/%E2%80%9C-the-days-to-fight-political-battles-ore-over%E2%80%A6%E2%80%9D-mengal>.
- 25 For example, the Army tried to physically eliminate Nawab Bugti at the very first incident, before the negotiations between the latter and the Mushahid Hussain-led delegation started.
- 26 International Crisis Group, *Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan*, Asia Report no. 119, September 2006, 6.
- 27 *Final Report of the EU Election Observation Mission to Pakistan: National and Provincial Assembly Elections*, October 10, 2002, http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/eidhr/pdf/elections-reports-pakistan=-02_en.pdf.
- 28 Although the Jamaat-Ulema-u-Islam came only second in the 2002 provincial election, it was asked to form the government, which it led for the entire legislature.
- 29 International Crisis Group, *Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan*, 8.
- 30 Ibid., 7.
- 31 Balochistan was not the only province with a substantial number of fake voters. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas had 62 percent, Sindh 54 percent, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 43 percent, and Punjab 41 percent. Irfan Ghauri, "Voter Fraud: 65% of Votes in Balochistan Were Bogus," *Express Tribune*, September 22, 2011.
- 32 "The Farce in Balochistan," *Pak Media*, February 8, 2013.
- 33 "Balochistan Matters," *Dawn*, October 28, 2012.
- 34 The National Finance Commission (NFC) Award was so far based exclusively on the population criteria, which gave Punjab a decisive advantage over all other provinces, to the detriment of all others, in particular the least populated of them, Balochistan. The new mechanism took into account backwardness, the population living under the poverty line, and so on, in order to give each province the means of its own development. The revised NFC Award increased the provincial share of the divisible pool from 47 percent to 56 percent for 2010–2011 and to 57 percent for the following four years. The new criteria for the award included a population of 82 percent, poverty of 10.30 percent, revenue generation of 5 percent, and inverse population density of 2.7 percent. The award changed the ration of distribution of resources to provinces: Punjab, 51.74 percent, Sindh, 24.55 percent, NWFP, 14.62 percent, and Balochistan, 9.09 percent. See Mohammed Waseem, *Federalism in Pakistan*, LUMS, August 2010, 13.

- 35 For a detailed analysis of the package, see *The Aghaz-e-Huqooq-e-Balochistan Package: An Analysis*, Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, December 2009.
- 36 See Balochistan Package presented to Parliament on November 24, 2009, www.theresearchers.org/Post&Update/Balochistan%20Package.pdf.
- 37 "Pakistan: Balochistan Leaders Say It's an Ethnic Cleansing Plan," South Asian Media Network, December 6, 2009.
- 38 Human Rights Watch, *"We Can Torture, Kill, or Keep You for Years": Enforced Disappearances by Pakistan Security Forces in Balochistan*, July 2011, 12.
- 39 "The Farce in Balochistan," *Pak Media*, February 8, 2013.
- 40 Rs 250 to 300 million were disbursed annually to 54 out of a total of 65 assembly members for development schemes without any monitoring or accountability system. "Aghaz-e-Huqooq: Did the Package Make a Difference?" *Express Tribune*, February 13, 2013.
- 41 Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, *Hopes, Fears and Alienation in Balochistan: Report of an HRCP Fact-Finding Mission (May 5–19, 2012)*, August 30, 2012, 45–46.
- 42 "Balochistan Officials Fired Over Shia Attacks," Al Jazeera, January 14, 2013.
- 43 See, for example, Mir Mohammed Ali Taipur, "Winning the Battle of Algiers," *Daily Times*, April 25, 2010.
- 44 Human Rights Watch, *"We Can Torture, Kill, or Keep You for Years"*.
- 45 See Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, *Hopes, Fears and Alienation*, 59–71.
- 46 Human Rights Watch, *"We Can Torture, Kill, or Keep You for Years"*, 26.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 32.
- 48 Lala Munir from the same organization, and Sher Mohammed Baloch, an activist of the Balochistan Republican Party.
- 49 Saleem Shahid, "Furore in Balochistan Over Killing of Nationalist Leaders," *Dawn*, April 10, 2009. It should be noted that Ghulam Baloch was involved in the negotiation for the release of John Solecki, director of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' Quetta office.
- 50 Muhammad Akram, "Baloch Leaders Made Their Points Well. Is Anyone Listening?" *Dawn*, September 28, 2012.
- 51 Four main organizations are said to be operating in Balochistan today. The Baloch Musala Defaie Tanzen operates in the Mengal area and has claimed responsibility for the murder of six journalists in Khuzdar. The Saraman Aman Force operates on the outskirts of Quetta as well as Khalat and Mastung. It used to specialize in kidnapping for ransom, but now kills nationalists as well. The other two organizations are the Sepha Shuhda e Balochistan and the Graib Bawaw Thereek.
- 52 Malik Siraj Akbar, *The Redefined Dimensions of the Baloch Nationalist Movement*, (Bloomington, Ind.: Xlibris Corporation, 2011), 313.
- 53 Mir Mohammed Ali Taipur, "A Mere Ritual," *Daily Times*, July 8, 2012. See also *Dawn*, *News*, *Daily Times*, *Nation*, and *Express Tribune* from the same day.

- 54 John L. Esposito, "Islam: Ideology and Politics in Pakistan," in *The State, Religions and Ethnic Politics: Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan*, edited by Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner (Lahore: Vanguard, 1987), 344.
- 55 Soon, however, the martial law decrees were exempted from any examination of conformity with sharia.
- 56 Markus Daechsel, "Military Islamization in Pakistan and the Spectre of Colonial Perceptions," *Contemporary South Asia* 6, no. 2 (July 1997): 141.
- 57 As rightly explained by Daechsel, "manipulation is always more than just a supposedly rational game for, in order to manipulate somebody, a political actor has to know who that somebody is and which particular chord he has to strike to have maximum effect. Knowledge of the other entails knowledge of the self." Ibid., 121.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 Zia-ul-Haq had withdrawn the Hyderabad conspiracy case against the Baloch leaders and granted them and the Baloch People's Liberation Front militants general amnesty.
- 60 See International Crisis Group, *Pakistan: The Worsening Conflict in Balochistan*, 7.
- 61 Muhammed Amir Rana, "The Growing Nexus: Ethnic/Sectarian Violence Is Expected to Continue to Be a Long Term Challenge," *News*, July 29, 2012.
- 62 Safdar Sial and Abdul Basit, *Conflict and Insecurity in Balochistan: Assessing Strategic Policy Options for Peace and Security*, Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, October–December 2010, 3.
- 63 "The Growing Nexus," *Friday Times*, August 3, 2012.
- 64 "Pakistan Hazaras Targeted Campaign of Ethnic Communal Killings," *World Socialist*, May 22, 2012.
- 65 Huma Yusuf, "Sectarian Violence: Pakistan's Greatest Security Threat?" NOREF Report, July 2012.
- 66 Syed Shaoaib Hasan, "Sectarian Militancy Thriving in Balochistan," *Dawn*, April 11, 2012.
- 67 Ibid. See also "Gunmen Kill 7 Shi'a in Balochistan," Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, November 7, 2012.
- 68 It is also said that the provincial chief of the Lashkar-e-Janghvi in Balochistan, Osman Shaifullah Kurd, was on death row, detained in a cantonment from where he was simply allowed to go.
- 69 Katja Riikonen, "Sect in Stone," *Herald*, October 16, 2012.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 Hasan, "Sectarian Militancy Thriving in Balochistan."
- 72 Ijaz Kakhakel, "BLA and LeJ Main Culprits of Violence in Balochistan," *Daily Times*, August 3, 2012.
- 73 Ansar Abbassi, "37pc Baloch Favor Independence: UK Survey," *News*, August 13, 2012.
- 74 "No Conspiracies, Please," *Express Tribune*, June 6, 2012.
- 75 "Balochistan Bleeds," *News*, June 25, 2012.

- 76 “CM Unhappy With Media Portrayal of Balochistan,” *Dawn*, July 18, 2012.
- 77 Denouncing international conspiracies, a recurrent theme of Pakistan’s authorities, seems more common whenever they feel they no longer really control the situation. On June 3, 2012, for example, the inspector general of the Frontier Corps, Major General Ubaidullah Khan Khattak, told the press that some 121 training camps run by Baloch dissidents were active in Balochistan and supported by “foreign agencies,” 20 of which were directly operating in the province. Such allegations are echoed in some sections of the press; the most suspicion falls on India, but accusations are also directed at Afghanistan and the United States and its allies, which supposedly conspire in Balochistan to coerce Islamabad into accepting Washington’s strategy for Afghanistan. Interior Minister Malik, who in April 2009 had “made a presentation of what he called evidence of the involvement of India, Afghanistan, and Russia in Balochistan and other parts of the country,” reiterated his accusations in August 2012 before the senate, blaming foreigners for using “banned outfits” and accusing the Afghan and Indian intelligence service of active involvement in “the destabilization of the province and patronizing of separatists, including Brahmdagh Bugti.” Apart from a very limited number of commentators, nobody seems to be buying the argument, although the serious analyst Ayesha Siddiqi does not refute the possibility of the involvement of foreign agencies (adding, however, that their help may be limited). The assertions of foreign conspiracies are actively refuted by the vast majority of the mainstream Pakistani press.
- 78 Mahammad Zafar, “Balochistan Conundrum: Hearings Spotlight ‘Crumbling’ Khuzdar Situation,” *Pakistan Tribune*, October 11, 2012.
- 79 On September 27, Akhtar Mengal, leader of the Balochistan National Party, left his London exile where he chose to live after a period of imprisonment in 2008 and 2009, to appear before the apex judiciary of the country to present a “six-points plan” for Balochistan. In his statement before the court, the Baloch leader said “he had turned to the Supreme court to end 65 years of hopelessness” adding that “expecting anything from the incumbent government was a sin.” He reiterated the traditional grievances of the Baloch, insisting on their political marginalization and exploitation, but focused mainly on the human rights situation in the province. He denounced the “ongoing military operations against the moderate Baloch nationalists in Balochistan, the indiscriminate use of force against civilians, target killings, displacement, and disappearances, and accused the security forces and the intelligence agencies of having committed hundreds of unlawful killings in Balochistan, insisting that “Baloch nationalists [were] being eliminated and instead of giving representation to true representatives, manufactured leaders were being installed.” He ended by presenting a six-point charter enumerating the corresponding demands for correction by the government. The court immediately ordered the issues to be brought to the notice of the concerned authorities, including the prime minister and the heads of Inter-Services Intelligence, Military Intelligence, and the Intelligence Bureau, and gave them three days to provide their responses to the court. Unsurprisingly, the military and intelligence authorities denied all accusations. There were no covert or overt operations going on in Balochistan, no death squads operating under the aegis of the Inter-Services Intelligence and Military Intelligence, and no missing persons in the custody of the secret agencies.
- 80 “Army to Support Any ‘Constitutional’ Solution to Balochistan Unrest: Kayani,” *Dawn*, October 3, 2012.
- 81 Declan Walsh, “UN Presses Pakistan Over the Fate of Hundreds of Missing People,” *New York Times*, October 21, 2012.

- 82 *Baluch Sarmachar*, September 19, 2012. Members of the Voice for Baloch Missing Persons, an organization fighting for the release of the missing people, later sent a letter to the UN and the Supreme Court stating that they had received death threats after they appeared before the delegation. The threats were emanating from the Tehrik Nefaz Aman (TNA), one of the death squads allegedly supported by the intelligence agencies.
- 83 “Balochs Welcome U.S. Human Rights Intervention at UNHCR,” *Tamil Guardian*, March 28, 2012.

About the Author

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