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# Insurgency in Balochistan

JASON HEEG



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### **Biography**

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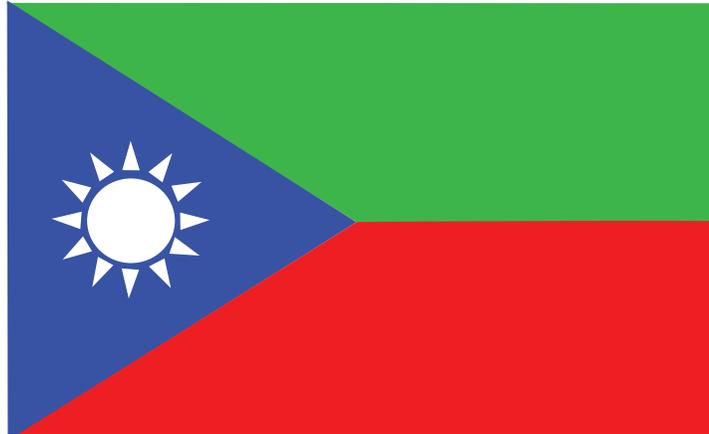
## **Abstract**

*The emphasis placed on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly known as the North-West Frontier Province) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has left the issues in the western Balochistan province under-appreciated. While there has been some focus on the Taliban's government-in-exile, the Quetta Shura, which operates from the Baloch capital, there has been little attention applied to Baloch nationalism. Counter-intuitive to the common American point of view, Baloch separatism is a much greater issue to the Pakistan military than the situation in the FATA. Since the partition of British India in 1947, there have been five periods of insurgency in Balochistan. The primary grievances of the Baloch population are economic internal colonialism, ethnic disparity, the desire for political autonomy, the cycle of the Pakistani government granting and later withdrawing or violating amnesty, creating bad blood and lack of trust. In order to address the current separatist insurgency in Balochistan, as well as the Islamic totalitarian influence, Pakistan has developed an extensive security architecture in the province. This paper will provide a historical overview and review contributing factors to the Baloch separatist insurgencies, analyze the current situation and argue that the insurgency will not end until the underlying issues are resolved in the eyes of the Baloch people. Balochistan offers many challenges and opportunities to United States foreign policy in the region. This paper provides an enhanced understanding of the current insurgent situation and counterinsurgency efforts for policy makers and military planners working in the Central Command and Pacific Command Area's of Responsibility.*

# Insurgency in Balochistan

By *Jason Heeg*

The emphasis placed on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly known as the North-West Frontier Province) and Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan has left the issues in the western Balochistan province under appreciated. While there has been some focus on the Taliban's government-in-exile, the Quetta Shura, which operates from the Baloch capital, there has been little attention applied to Baloch nationalism. Balochistan offers many challenges and opportunities to United States foreign policy in the region. An understanding of the current insurgent situation and counterinsurgency efforts is vital for policy makers and military planners working in the Central Command and Pacific Command Area's of Responsibility.



Flag of the Balochistan Liberation Army, one of the organizations that strives to establish an independent state of Balochistan. Image by Pahari Sahib [CC-BY-SA-3.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Counter-intuitive to the common American point of view, Baloch separatism is a much greater issue to the Pakistan military than the situation in the FATA. Since the partition of British India in 1947, there have been five periods of insurgency in Balochistan. The primary grievances of the Baloch population are economic internal colonialism, ethnic disparity, the desire for political autonomy, the cycle of the Pakistani government granting and later withdrawing or violating amnesty, creating bad blood and lack of trust. In order to address the current separatist insurgency in Balochistan, as well as the Islamic totalitarian influence, Pakistan has developed extensive security architecture<sup>1</sup> in the province. This paper will provide a historical overview and review contributing factors to the Baloch separatist insurgencies, analyze the current situation and argue that the insurgency will not end until the underlying issues are resolved in the eyes of the Baloch people.

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1 Tom Wilhelm, "Security Architecture: A Case Study of Pakistan's Tribal Belt," in *Toward a Grand Strategy Against Terrorism*, edited by Christopher Harmon, (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 377.



Map of Pakistan based on country map from Planiglobe.com. [CC-BY-SA 2.5(creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5)]

## Background

Balochistan is the southwestern most province of Pakistan and is divided into 23 districts and encompasses 134,050 square miles of territory which is 44 % of Pakistan territory.<sup>2</sup> The northern border is shared with Afghanistan. To the northeast is the Federally Administered Tribal Area of South Waziristan. To the east are the Pakistan provinces of Punjab and Sindh. The southern border is formed by 470 miles of the Arabian Sea. The western border is shared with Iran. Historic Baloch tribal lands extend into eastern Iran and southern Afghanistan. Quetta is the provincial capital of Balochistan and is located in the north along the border with Afghanistan. Other large urban areas are Nok Kundi located in the northwest corner of the province and Gwadar which is a port city located in the southwest on the Indian Ocean.<sup>3</sup>

2 Government of Balochistan, "Welcome to Balochistan," Government of Baluchistan, <http://www.balochistan.gov.pk/index.php> (accessed December 3, 2011).

3 Library of Congress, Pakistan: a Country Study (Washington, DC: U.S Government Printing Office, 1995), 108.

The Bolan Pass located in the northeast of the province which is dominated by the Sulaiman mountains offers passage from Quetta north to Kandahar in Afghanistan. The southern section of the province is rugged arid desert with pockets of cultivable land along stream and river networks. The winters (October to March) are cold averaging 10 degrees Fahrenheit, while the summers (May to August) are hot averaging 110. The province is rich with natural resources which include some petroleum, significant deposits of coal, chromite, barytes, sulphur, marble, iron ore, quartzite, uranium, and limestone along with 95% of the asbestos in the world.<sup>4</sup> Pakistan is ranked number 25 in the world with 29.671 trillion cubic feet (TCF) of proven natural gas reserves the majority of which are located in Balochistan.<sup>5</sup>

The Baloch ethnic group<sup>6</sup> consists of 3.57% of the Pakistani population, which is significant considering Balochistan is 40% of Pakistan's total land area. Only 70% of the Baloch people live in Pakistan while the other 25% live in the eastern province of Sistan in Iran and the southern Afghanistan provinces of Nimruz, Helmand and Kandahar. There are also small pockets of the Diaspora living and working throughout the world.<sup>7</sup> The majority of the Baloch are moderate Sunni Muslims and practice the ways of the Hanafi School of Jurisprudence.<sup>8</sup> However, they are considered secular and stray from traditional Islam and believe in other deities and mysticism as well as maintain their own tribal shrines.<sup>9</sup> While less moderate Muslims may consider the Baloch polytheist they would consider themselves as part of the Sufi tradition of

4 Alok Bansal, "Factors leading to insurgency in Balochistan," *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 19:2, (2008): 186.

5 United States Energy Administration, "Pakistan Country Brief," United States Department of Energy, <http://www.eia.gov/countries/country-data.cfm?fips=PK#ng> (accessed December 3, 2011).

6 Selig S. Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baloch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981), 1. For the purposes of this paper "Baloch" will refer to the ethnic group, the people, while "Balochi" will refer to the language.

7 Harrison, 1. A 1981 estimate assesses that 3.65 million Baloch live in Pakistan, one million in Iran, and 900,000 in Afghanistan. "Another 335,000 Baloch have migrated to the Arab sheikdoms of the Persian Gulf. The Soviet census lists 13,000 Baloch in Turkmenistan, and some 5,000 live in East Africa." While extremely outdated this assessment is the most recent survey of the Baluch population that can be considered accurate.

8 United States Army Human Terrain System, *Afghanistan Tribal Hierarchy & Dictionary: The Baloch Ethnic Group* (Ft Leavenworth, KS: Courage Services, Inc, 2010), 7.

9 Sylvia A. Matheson, *The Tigers of Baluchistan* (London, Cox and Wyman, Ltd., 1967), 55-85.

***“They [the Baloch people] often coalesce under a national identity when threatened, but reserve the right to war amongst themselves when not fighting outsiders.”***

venerating saints. Moreover, they identify more with their tribal code than with Islam. They speak Balochi which is a variant of Persian Farsi and accounts for 3% of the language in Pakistan.<sup>10</sup> The patrilineal group traces its roots back 2000 years. The Baloch are historically a nomadic people but in the last few hundred years have settled in the more hospitable areas of the Baluchistan plateau and the Suleiman Mountains. They often coalesce under a national identity when threatened but reserve the right to war amongst themselves when not fighting outsiders.<sup>11</sup>

Balochistan and its people have been invaded many times throughout the centuries; however, most conquerors have been astute enough to allow the region semi-autonomous status and mainly used force to secure the trade routes through northern Balochistan to the lush Indus valley to the east.<sup>12</sup> It has not been until the recent discovery of oil and natural gas that outsiders have attempted to dominate the region. The first recorded uprising by the Baloch people was in 1698-1699 against the Safavid Empire (1502-1736). Sultan Husayn (1666-1694) commissioned Gurgin Khan to put down the rebellion which had almost reached west as far as Bandar Abbas on the straits of Hormuz in present day Iran. Additionally, there was a limited Baloch insurgency in Kandahar in 1704 which was suppressed by the more powerful Ghilzai Pashtuns of present day Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup> The Baloch should not be considered victims as they have conducted predatory territorial expansion of their own. For example they conquered southern Sind in the late 1700s

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10 United States Central Intelligence Agency, “CIA World Factbook: Pakistan,” United States Government, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/pk.html> (accessed December 3, 2011).

11 Philip Carl Salzman, *Black Tents of Baluchistan* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000) and *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2008). This short paragraph on the Baloch ethnic group does little justice to this complicated passionate people. For an in-depth look at the Baloch people see Salzman’s *Black Tents*, for a general look at tribal nomadism in the Middle East see *Culture and Conflict*.

12 Douglas E. Streusand, *Islamic Gunpowder Empires: Ottomans, Safavids, and Mughals* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2011), 221.

13 *Ibid.*, 157.

***“Sandeman’s successful method of dealing with tribals through a policy of “peace and goodwill” was highly admired by his contemporaries and offers perhaps the best method of how to successfully work the the Baloch people.”***

and ruled for fifty years until the British defeated them at the 1843 Battle of Meanee and pushed them back across the Indus and into their traditional territory.<sup>14</sup> Following this battle the British East India Company and later the British Raj administered the Baloch region through the Khan of Kalat.

The one exception where the British did maintain direct control, from a cantonment in Quetta, was along the trade route from Sind to the Bolan Pass, which became known as British Balochistan.<sup>15</sup> The efforts in this area, under Sir Colonel Robert Sandeman, around 1866, were much more successful than efforts at the Kyber pass, arguably because the Baloch are not as violent as the Pashtun.<sup>16</sup> Sandeman’s successful method of dealing with tribals through a policy of “peace and goodwill” was highly admired by his contemporaries and offers perhaps the best method of how to successfully work with the Baloch people.<sup>17</sup>

The first instance of Baloch nationalism surfaced in the early 1900’s with some rulers calling for an independent Balochistan that would extend from the Straits of Hurmoz in the west to the Indus River in the east. As the British exodus became imminent, the Baloch tribes postured for an autonomous region. Immediately following the 1947 partition of British India, Mir Ahmed Yar Khan, the Khan of Kalat and leader of the Baloch ethnic group, claimed independence and refused to join Jinnah’s Pakistan.<sup>18</sup> Jinnah did not accept the Baloch claim

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14 Johnny Torrens-Spence, *Historic Battlefields of Pakistan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 37.

15 Matheson, 143, 192.

16 Jules Stewart, *The Savage Border: The Story of the North-West Frontier* (Sparkford, UK: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2007), 81, 137.

17 T. Hungerford Holdich, *The Indian Borderland: 1890-1900* (London, UK: Methuen and Company, 1996), 186.

18 Priyashree Andley, *Special Report 32, Balochistan: A Backgrounder* (New Delhi, India: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2006), 3.

***“The government broke their amnesty agreement and captured and imprisoned Karim and his men... This event which will develop into a trend as the level of Baloch resistance ebbs and flows, is very significant and still permeates in the psyche of the Baloch people, and prevents them from fully trusting the government.”***

for independence because he along with the Urdu speaking elite were threatened by the various ethnic groups of the new country. They attempted to unite the newly formed nation under the banner of religious identity. The majority of the Baloch were Sunni Muslim, but identified stronger with their ethnic group than their religion.<sup>19</sup> The new government of Pakistan did not adopt the former British policy of tribal autonomy and chose to use a more direct method of administering the Baloch territory.

The federal government used coercion and intimidation to compel the Baloch to participate in the idea of Pakistan. After many attempts to negotiate a diplomatic solution the Pakistan Army marched on Kalat, on 1 April 1948, and forced Yar Khan to agree to accession.<sup>20</sup> His younger brother, Prince Abdul Karim, took up arms and fled to the mountains across the border in Afghanistan with 700 men. He formed the Baloch National Liberation Committee and published a manifesto demanding the independence of Balochistan. After a few months of guerrilla warfare conducted from the Afghan side of the border, Karim came to the table at the behest of his brother the Khan.

The Pakistan Army, which was trained and equipped for conventional combat, relied on brute force and punitive measures against the population as a method to force Karim and his men to lay down their arms. Arguably, all Baloch did not support this short resistance; however, the actions by the Pakistan government provided primordial fodder to the nationalist. The government broke their amnesty agreement and captured and imprisoned Karim and his men on their return to Kalat.<sup>21</sup> This was the first of many broken agreements between the government of Pakistan and the Baloch people. This event which will develop into a trend as the level of Baloch

19 Bansal, 184.

20 Owen Bennett Jones, *Pakistan: Eye of the Storm* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 133.

21 Harrison, 27.

resistance ebbs and flows, is very significant and still permeates in the psyche of the Baloch people, and prevents them from fully trusting the government.

The second outbreak of violence in Balochistan occurred in response to the 1955 “One Unit” plan implemented by the federal government.<sup>22</sup> The plan attempted to unify the entire country into one single entity. The Baloch saw this as an affront to their little remaining power at the provincial level and revolted. Prince Karim, who had recently been release from jail, formed the People’s Party and brought the ethnic group together to demonstrate against the changes. In reaction to this threat, on 6 October 1958, the Pakistan Army once again marched on Kalat and arrested the Khan. After some initial success, the Pakistan Army put down the insurrection with force but touched off another round of violence when they demanded that the tribesmen turn in their weapons.<sup>23</sup>

Nauroz Khan, the Sardar of the Zehri tribe, led the guerrilla war in response to the actions of the Army; however, in contrast to the events of 1948-1950 the insurgents enjoyed wider support from the population. This is likely because of the primordial message of the separatist leadership in response to the government’s use of power. The Pakistan Army once again employed heavy handed tactics against the insurgency out of frustration. The war grinded on for over a year with no clear victor emerging, both sides agreed to meet in the spring of 1960 to discuss a cease fire. Nauroz Khan and his band agreed to lay down their weapons in exchange for amnesty.<sup>24</sup> Again the government reneged and arrested then hanged Nauroz Khan along with his son and five of his commanders for treason in 1960. This trend began to develop and like the first episode in 1950, provided the Baloch nationalist movement with a significant event to anchor the separatist sentiment.

Following the death of Nauroz Khan the insurgency tapered off but continued to simmer. In 1960, the Pakistan Army began to increase its presence in Balochistan, and the number of

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22 Andley, 4.

23 Harrison, 28.

24 Jones, 133.

***“Another trend that emerges is the cycle of the use of heavy handed tactics, offering concessions, and then negotiating.”***

cantonment areas, which triggered the insurgency to flare up again.<sup>25</sup> Sher Mohammad Marri, an influential member of the Marri tribe, led this phase of the insurgency and raised a guerrilla army which consisted of Marri, Mengal, and Bugti tribals who controlled 45,000 square miles of land in their respective tribal areas. Sher Mohammad studied other guerrilla wars and applied the lessons to the situation in Balochistan. They attacked weak points along the Pakistan Army’s lines of communication and typically avoided large scale engagements. The Army responded with heavy handed tactics against the guerrillas when they could find them; and their families, communities, and property when they could not.<sup>26</sup>

In 1969, General Yahya Khan rescinded the “One Unit” policy and as a result the fighting died down because the Baloch believed that this provided them with increased autonomy. Sher Mohammad agreed to a ceasefire in 1970 and the status of “province” was given to Balochistan and provincial elections were held. However, the guerrilla element did not totally disband; they went underground and retained the preponderance of their structure.<sup>27</sup> Another trend that emerges is the cycle of the use of heavy handed tactics, offering concessions, and then negotiating. The government never adequately addresses the underlying grievances of the Baloch and the concessions seem to be just functionalist pandering to control the situation. The Baloch, upon reaching the extent of their ability to fight, negotiate from a position of weakness and seem to set aside their ultimate goal of an independent state. This nuance is important because, although they want an independent state, they do not have the requisite military force to reach this goal and always settle for whatever concessions the government gives them.

The bloodiest of the four historical insurgent uprisings in Balochistan occurred from 1973 until 1978. The impetus was the thinly veiled attempt by Prime Minister Bhutto to marginalize

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25 Andley, 4.

26 Harrison, 33.

27 Jones, 133.

***“It is noteworthy that the Pakistan Army was trained and equipped for a conventional war with India, not counterinsurgency.”***

regional power brokers who posed a political threat to his government. Bhutto lifted Yayha Khan’s ban on the National Awami Party (NAP) and they won the 1972 elections in Balochistan and the North-West Frontier Province in coalition with the Jamiat Ulema Islam (JUI).<sup>28</sup> As his autocratic tendencies grew, Bhutto dismissed the NAP provincial government in Balochistan and replaced it with leadership more amendable to his political views.<sup>29</sup> He used charges of collusion with the Soviet Union as a basis for the dismissal and publicized the capture of Soviet bloc weapons and ammunition at the residence of an Iraqi military attaché in Islamabad as evidence.

The actions of the Bhutto government infuriated the Baloch people and insulted their sense of personal and tribal honor which they were required to defend.<sup>30</sup> Unlike the past uprisings this period saw widespread support from the majority of the Baloch population as the blunders of the federal government provided the separatist leadership with a strong justification for their primordial message. The leaders reminded the population of the past actions of the government in breaking agreements as a method to foment unrest. The 1971 breakaway of eastern Pakistan, now Bangladesh, provided the Baloch population with the hope of independence. The Sadar of the Marri tribe, Khair Baksh Marri, organized the Baloch resistance under the banner of the Baloch People’s Liberation Front (BPLF).<sup>31</sup>

Approximately 80,000 troops from the Pakistan Army served in Balochistan during the peak of the war. The elite commando unit Special Services Group also participated and

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28 Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005), 102

29 Rajshree Jetley, “Baluch Ethnicity and Nationalism (1971-1981): An Assessment,” *Asian Ethnicity*, 5:1 (February 2004): 15; Morrice James, *Pakistan Chronicle* (London, UK: Hurst and Company, 1993), 195.

30 Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001* (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2004), 248.

31 Hassan Abbas, *Pakistan’s Drift into Extremism: Allah, the Army, and America’s War on Terror* (New Delhi, India: Pentagon Press, 2005), 79.

experienced their first combat.<sup>32</sup> Again, they used heavy handed tactics to find and destroy the insurgents which resulted in significant collateral damage. It is noteworthy that the Pakistan Army was trained and equipped for a conventional war with India not counterinsurgency operations against elusive insurgents.<sup>33</sup> However, considering the recent loss of Bangladesh, the Army was determined to defeat the insurgency and prevent the Baloch from breaking away from Pakistan.<sup>34</sup> By 1974, the insurgents had control of most of the ground lines of communication entering the province from the east and had cut off the railway which supplied the Punjab with Baloch coal.

In the summer of 1974, Iran provided Pakistan with thirty AH-1 Cobra attack helicopters. The Pakistan Army used the gunships effectively to mitigate the major advantage that the guerrilla fighters had which was their superior knowledge of the terrain which facilitated their hit and run guerrilla tactics against soft targets. The decisive battle of the war was fought in the Marri territory on the plains of Chamalang in the northeast of the province. The families, along with the males of non-fighting age, moved to the plains to graze their livestock in the spring of 1974 which was congruent with their migratory pattern. The Pakistan Army harassed the families in order to coax the fighters down from the hills to engage them in a conventional battle. The ploy worked and 1500 Baloch guerrilla fighters consolidated around the tent villages on the plains. On 3 September 1974, the Pakistan military attacked with ground forces supported by air assets including Mirage jets and the Cobra gunships. The Baloch fought valiantly but were forced to retreat to the mountains when they ran out of ammunition. The exact figures of the battle are conflicting but it is clear the Insurgency suffered a major setback.<sup>35</sup>

Following the battle at Chamalang, the insurgency continued to conduct guerrilla warfare but moved to bases across the border in Afghanistan. The Afghan government under President Mohammad Daud characterized the bases as refugee camps and provided support in the form of

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32 Stephen P. Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2004), 220.

33 Seth G. Jones and C. Christine Fair, *Counterinsurgency in Pakistan* (Washington, DC: Rand Publications, 2010), 44.

34 Cohen, 9.

35 Harrison, 38

***“In 1978, Zia released 6,000 Baloch prisoners and offered amnesty for the guerrilla fighters but failed to address or resolve the underlying causes of the Baloch separatist movement, repeating the cycle which was established during the earlier uprisings.”***

food, ammunition, and funding.<sup>36</sup> Following the coup d'état of General Zia al-Haq in July 1977, which was legitimized by the Supreme Court under the doctrine of necessity, tensions became to decline.<sup>37</sup> In 1978, Zia released 6,000 Baloch prisoners and offered amnesty for the guerrilla fighters but failed to address or resolve the underlying causes of the Baloch separatist movement, repeating the cycle which was established during the earlier uprisings. While political unrest in the province continued, the armed insurrection and guerrilla actions against the Pakistan security forces essentially ended in 1978.<sup>38</sup> Zia received large economic and military aid packages from the United States, totaling \$4.2 billion between 1978 and 1988, but the Baloch province did not benefit from this influx of money and felt excluded which added to the tension between the Baloch population and the federal government.<sup>39</sup>

## **Security Architecture**

There are three distinct political-legal systems in Balochistan which are the provincial government, the tribal council, and the Taliban parallel hierarchy. A nuanced understanding of these structures is required to develop counterinsurgency strategy in this complex operational environment. The Balochistan provincial government located in Quetta represents the official government of Pakistan. The Governor of Balochistan, is elected by the people of the province, and oversees all administration of the provincial government. The current governor is Nawab Zulfiqar Ali Magsi. The Chief Minister who is currently Nawab Mohammad Aslam Khan Raisani controls the 35 ministries of the province. Unlike the Federally Administered Tribal

36 Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia* (New York, NY: Penguin Group, 2008), 9.

37 Shuja Nawaz, *Crossed Swords: Pakistan, Its Army, and the Wars Within* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2008), 363.

38 Harrison, 40.

39 Haqqani, 153.

***“Unlike the Federally Administered Tribal Area’s which fall under the Frontier Crimes Regulation of 1901, Balochistan, and the other provinces, are beholden to the Pakistan Penal Code of 1860 .”***

Area’s (FATA) which fall under the Frontier Crimes Regulation (FCR) of 1901, Balochistan, and the other provinces, are beholden to the Pakistan Penal Code of 1860. The code is administered by the federal court system as outlined in the 1898 Code of Criminal Procedures. Smaller but similar versions of the official government exist at the district and municipal levels.

The second form of government is the tribal council. Each tribal entity of the Baloch ethnic group maintains its own hierarchy which is presided over by a Sardar or Nawab. The tribal code of the Baloch is not as well defined and formal as Pashtunwali, the pre-Islamic tribal code of the Pashtun ethnic group. However, there are distinct mechanisms of behavior and punishment if the one deviates from the standard of behavior.<sup>40</sup> For example, adultery is punishable by death and the sentence is applied by the Sardar or his representative and is not questioned. Transgressions of honor can also lead to justifiable killings but there is a mechanism for resolving, through paying a tax or fee, to resolve lower level issues. In the tribal areas, away from the population centers, the tribal code is the law of the land and is administered exclusively by the tribal leaders.<sup>41</sup> Government encroachments on this way of life have caused and will continue to cause friction between the tribals and the official government.

The final apparatus of political administration is the Taliban’s parallel hierarchy, or shadow government.<sup>42</sup> The Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan maintains an extensive network of

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40 Matheson, 3.

41 Mary Anne Weaver, *Pakistan: In the Shadow of Jihad and Afghanistan* (New York, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 91.

42 Bard E. O’Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse*, 2nd Edition (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2005), 116. The Parallel Hierarchy can take on a variety of forms depending on the insurgent group: “Insurgents who subscribe to conspiratorial and urban-warfare strategies stress small, close knit and secretive organizations. By contrast, those who adopt military-focus or protracted-popular-war strategies require more sophisticated organizational structures because they normally anticipate a long struggle that will involve support for substantial military activity.”

safe-sites, recruitment systems, logistics support centers, and training locations in Balochistan.<sup>43</sup>

Quetta is home to the Quetta Shura which is the primary governing body of the Taliban and Mullah Muhammad Omar likely directs the insurgency from this location.<sup>44</sup> One suburb of Quetta, known as Pashtunabad, has for all intents been ceded to the Taliban who rule the area under their interpretation of Sharia law. The Taliban influence has also spread to Kharotabad and Toba Kakar.<sup>45</sup> In these areas, the Taliban provides services and administers law in the complete absence of the official federal or provincial government. These areas, usually referred to as “non-governed territories” along the lines of the FATA, are actually more strictly controlled than most areas in Balochistan.

In stark contrast to the security architecture of the FATA, the Pakistan military including the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard all maintain a presence in Balochistan, while the most significant branch is the Army. The Pakistan Army XII Corps, commanded by a three star general who serves concurrently as the commander of the southern command, is based in Quetta and responsible for the province. The Army has a series of cantonment areas throughout the province from which it seeks to provide security for the population. The Army has a major training center located near Quetta which is home to its Infantry training center and the prestigious Command and Staff College. Recently the Army has been conducting many educational and infrastructural development projects with local communities to mitigate their heavy handed reputation that has been earned in combat against the Baloch nationalists. The Army has also significantly increased the recruitment of Baloch youths in an attempt to bring the ethnic group towards national integration which includes “achieving national cohesion, stability,



Army recruitment in Balochistan, Photo by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) department of Armed Forces of Pakistan, via [www.spr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-real\\_tory&id=28](http://www.spr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-real_tory&id=28)

43 Rashid, 250, 366.

44 Rashid, 223; David Montero, “Pakistan faces a less-friendly US Congress” The Christian Science Monitor. January 29, 2007, <http://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0129/p04s01-wosc.html> (accessed December 7, 2011).

45 M. Ilyas Khan, “On the trail of the Taliban in Quetta,” BBC News. January 25, 2010. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8472740.stm> (accessed December 8, 2011).

prosperity, strength, and feelings of being united as a nation.”<sup>46</sup> In April 2011, the Army began a limited withdrawal from the cantonments and turned much of the security responsibility to the Frontier Corps.

The Pakistan Air Force operates four bases in Balochistan. The primary base is Samungli in Quetta and is home to the 31st Fighter Wing. The other three smaller bases include Shahbaz, Pasni, and Faisal.<sup>47</sup> Shamsi Airfield, located in central Balochistan, is commonly characterized as a Pakistan Air Force base, but is actually a government facility. Since 2001, the airfield has been leased to the United States Air Force and the Central Intelligence Agency for logistics and surveillance missions. In response to recent events in the FATA, the Pakistan government has requested that the United States remove its intelligence assets from the airfield.<sup>48</sup>

The Pakistan Navy operates four naval bases on the Arabian Sea in Balochistan. The primary base is the deep water port of Gwadar in western Balochistan which is the second largest port in Pakistan after Karachi. The port is also home to the 3rd Battalion of the Pakistan Coast Guard. The three smaller naval bases are located in Jiwani, Ormara, and Pasni.<sup>49</sup>

The Pakistan Intelligence community also maintains a significant presence in Balochistan. The Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate (ISI) is responsible for strategic intelligence as well as conducting operations has a large element in Quetta. The ISI’s Joint Signals Intelligence Bureau (JISB) operates signal intelligence collection stations in Saindak which covers the western border and in Gwadar which cover the shipping lanes of the Gulf of

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46 Mohammad Khan, “Balochistan: One More Step Towards National Integration,” Pakistan Army, 2011. <http://www.pakistanarmy.gov.pk/awpreview/pDetails.aspx?pType=PressRelease&pID=72> (accessed December 8, 2011).

47 Federation of American Scientists. “Pakistan Air Force Bases.” Federation of American Scientists. <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/pakistan/facility/airbase/index.html> (accessed December 9, 2011).

48 Eric Schmitt, “Tensions Flare Between U.S. and Pakistan After Strike,” *The New York Times*. November 26, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/11/27/world/asia/pakistan-says-nato-helicopters-kill-dozens-of-soldiers.html?pagewanted=all> (accessed December 8, 2011).

49 Government of Pakistan, “Pakistan Navy” Government of Pakistan, <http://www.defence.pk/pakistan-navy/> (accessed December 9, 2011).



Map of Balochistan, Pakistan military locations based on country map from Planiglobe.com. [CC-BY-SA 2.5(creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.5)]

Oman.<sup>50</sup> In addition to the ISI each service has military intelligence assets, collectively know as MI, which support tactical requirements. The Intelligence Bureau (IB) is the oldest intelligence entity in Pakistan which traces its heritage back to British India. The IB conducts federal investigations in Balochistan along the lines of the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation and also supports the military establishment.<sup>51</sup> Finally, there are the special branches of the provincial and local law enforcement that conduct criminal intelligence.<sup>52</sup>

The Pakistan Ministry of Interior (MOI) controls the Balochistan Police, the Political Agents, and the Frontier Corps in the province. The Balochistan Police have jurisdiction across the province and are responsible for fighting crime and providing “dynamic and effective

50 Desmond Ball, “Signals Intelligence in Pakistan,” *Strategic Analysis*, XVIII, 2, May 1995, 197.

51 Nawaz, xli.

52 Bidanda M. Chengappa, *Pakistan’s Fifth Estate: Inter-Service Intelligence Directorate* (New Delhi, India: Shri Avtar Printing Press, 2000), 2.

law enforcement.” Their headquarters is in Quetta and they operate six regional offices and 104 stations with an end strength of approximately 26,000 officers. Additionally, they have specialized units for anti-terrorism, criminal investigation, highway patrol, as well as a 165 strong “ladies police staff.”<sup>53</sup>

The Political Agents (PA) are another remnant of British colonial times that are still in place to extend control of the government into the rural areas.<sup>54</sup> The Governor appoints the PAs who have a network of subordinates, or teshildars, to assist them in the execution of their duties which are conducted using the traditional jirga process. The Balochistan Constabulary has a total strength of approximately 9400 constables, sometimes referred to as levies, who provide an adjunct to the police in the remote areas of the province and provide security for the PAs and teshildars.<sup>55</sup> The teshildars and levies commonly work in their homeland and provide the PAs with situation understanding and language services.<sup>56</sup> The PAs, teshildars, and levies, are an integral part of the security architecture because they bridge the gap between the predominantly Punjabi federal government personnel and the rural populations.

The Frontier Corps – Balochistan (FCB) is a paramilitary organization under the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and is a critical link in the security architecture of the province. The FCB has a total strength of approximately 25,000 personnel distributed among eleven Scout, Rifle, and Militia units. In 1947 the Frontier Corps split into two elements including the FCB and FC NWFP.<sup>57</sup> Unlike the FC units in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) (formerly known as the North-West Frontier Province), indigenous personnel who provide a vital cultural and situational understanding, in addition to local language skills, are not assigned to the FCB. For example, the Kalat Scouts do not have one person from Kalat in

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53 Government of Pakistan, “Balochistan Police Structure” Government of Pakistan, <http://www.balochistanpolice.gov.pk/pstructure.php> (accessed December 9, 2011).

54 Matheson, 72.

55 Ibid., 51, 64, 106.

56 Ibid., 142.

57 Hassan Abbas, “Transforming Pakistan’s Frontier Corps,” *Terrorism Monitor*, Volume 5 Issue 6, March 30, 2007, [http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no\\_cache=1&tx\\_ttnews%5Btt\\_news%5D=1056](http://www.jamestown.org/single/?no_cache=1&tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=1056) (accessed December 9, 2011).

**“It is understandable that the Pakistan Army is not well suited for counterinsurgency operations as their primary reason for existence is to fight a land war with India and defend the eastern border of Pakistan.”**

their ranks.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, urban Punjabi military officers on assignment from the Army command and lead the FCB. This is the primary reason that the FCB is not an effective counterinsurgency force. These shortcomings provide a significant friction point between the units and the local population which they are required to work and live among in order to accomplish their mission. However, this arrangement causes more issues than it addresses and will likely not be remedied until local Baloch people are recruited into the FCB especially in key leadership positions.

The second reason that the FCB are not an effective counterinsurgency element to the overall security architecture in Balochistan is because they are not properly trained and equipped. It is understandable that the Pakistan Army is not well suited for counterinsurgency operations as their primary reason for existence is to fight a land war with India and defend the eastern border of Pakistan.<sup>59</sup> However, the FCB should be the linchpin in counterinsurgency operations in Baluchistan. The FCB should be trained in counterinsurgency techniques that will allow them to draw the population in and gain their trust so that they will begin to support the legitimacy of the federal government. The FCB personnel need to understand that they require a genuine and deep understanding of the underlying grievances of the Baluch people which will go along way to addressing the long standing distrust of the federal government by the Baluch people.<sup>60</sup> This understanding will allow the FCB personnel to build trust with the population and slowly begin to influence them to support the government in Islamabad.<sup>61</sup>

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58 Bansal, 185.

59 Nawaz, 580.

60 Weaver, 94.

61 Namrata Goswami, “India’s counter-insurgency experience: the ‘trust and nurture’ strategy.” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 20:1, (2009): 69.

## Current Situation

Al-Qaeda's 11 September 2001 attack on America once again brought Pakistan to the forefront of United States foreign policy. The ensuing war in Afghanistan has involved the United States in the Balochistan separatist movement because of the reliance on Baloch territory for ground lines of communication between Karachi and Kandahar and basing at the Shansi Base. An additional reason is that the Taliban use Quetta as a cross border safe haven to support their insurgency in Afghanistan by providing a sanctuary and training areas.<sup>62</sup>

In 2003, ethnic conflict once again spiked in the province with the goal of Baloch autonomy or ultimately, possible independence. The grievances are the same as in the 1970s with the addition of resistance to federally and externally funded mega development projects. Ethnic disparity and lack of representation in the government and military are the primary driving factors behind the resurgence of violence.<sup>63</sup> Moreover, economic exploitation and the perceived internal colonization of the province by the federal government have mobilized the Baloch population to support the insurgency.

Among other natural resources, Balochistan contains 68% of the 29.671 trillion cubic feet of proven natural gas reserves in the country.<sup>64</sup> Pakistan has an annual consumption of 1 trillion cubic feet of which Balochistan provides 80% but they only receive a 1/5 proportion of royalty from the state owned Sui Southern Gas Company.<sup>65</sup> This profit (12.5%) is one of the lowest in the world.<sup>66</sup> The emerging trend of mega infrastructural development projects is interpreted by the Baloch as an attempt for outsiders to move in and gain control of their natural resources of the province in order to exploit them. These projects include the development of the deep water port

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62 Rashid, 250.

63 Bansal, 186; Haqqani, 19.

64 United States Energy Administration Administration, "Pakistan Country Brief," United States Department of Energy, <http://www.eia.gov/countries/country-data.cfm?fips=PK#ng> (accessed December 3, 2011).

65 Robert G. Wirsing, *Baloch Nationalism and the Geopolitics of Energy Resources: The Changing Context of Separatism in Pakistan* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute Press, 2008), 7.

66 Bansal, 187.

in Gwadar, the coastal highway between Gwadar and Karachi, and the Saindak copper mine. The Baloch complain that the projects do not employ local labor and provide a mechanism for outsiders to settle in the province which further degrades their percentage of the population and marginalizes their political standing.

These factors led to the renewed violence in 2003 which has remained steady to this day. The insurgents have attacked soft government and military targets, and used other methods to slow or stop development projects. Significantly they killed three Chinese engineers at the port of Gwadar in an effort to delay the ongoing development of the port. In response the Pakistan Army employed its common heavy handed tactics to put down the rebellion and have added the technique of decapitation of the insurgent leadership to their strategy. The Army targeted and killed Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti the leader of the Bugti tribe on 27 August 2006. They also killed Nawabzada Ballach Marri, the commander of the Baloch Liberation Army, in November 2007. However, these actions did not have a significant impact on the separatist movement.<sup>67</sup> As with the situation in the 1970s, it is clear that the Pakistan Army does not have the training, experience, or ability to conduct successful counterinsurgency operations.<sup>68</sup>

Recently Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gillani has taken a softer approach in dealing with the Baloch. He invited them to the negotiation table and is attempting to be more inclusive by providing them with additional economic and employment opportunities.<sup>69</sup> He redeployed some forces from the region and closed down some check points while replacing Pakistan Army forces with the Frontier Corps units.<sup>70</sup> This softer approach seems to parallel recommendations made by

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67 Andley, 8; Bansal, 182.

68 LTG Michael D. Maples, *Annual Threat Assessment: Statement Before the Committee on Armed Services United States Senate* (Washington, D.C.: DIA, February 2008), 22; LTG Michael D. Maples, *Annual Threat Assessment: Statement Before the Committee on Armed Services, United States Senate* (Washington, D.C.: DIA, March 2009), 12.

69 Kalbe Ali, "Gilani asks Naval chief to recruit Baloch youths," Dawn, October 18, 2011 <http://www.dawn.com/2011/10/18/gilani-asks-naval-chief-to-recruit-baloch-youths.html> (accessed December 4, 2011).

70 Saleem Shahid, "Gilani reiterates talks offer to exiled Baloch leaders" Dawn, July 13, 2011 <http://www.dawn.com/2011/07/13/gilani-reiterates-talks-offer-to-exiled-baloch-leaders.html> (accessed December 4, 2011).

Dr. Wirsing, of the Strategic Studies Institute at the United States Army War College,<sup>71</sup> however, the Baloch will continue to remain cautious of any concessions given by the federal government considering the long history of going back on their commitments.<sup>72</sup> Another significant factor, as with the insurgency in the 1970s, is that the Baloch insurgents have not found outside support, which is critical for an insurgency to obtain a goal such as secession to become a nation state.

## **Conclusion**

This paper provided a background on Balochistan and an overview of the five periods of insurgency conducted by the Baloch separatists in western Pakistan. The four periods of historical violence: 1948, 1958, 1963 and the 1970s were analyzed and compared to the current insurgency. The analysis exposed two significant trends: first, the propensity of the federal government to renege on their commitments to the Baloch population; second, the cycle of heavy handed tactics followed by a negotiation of unstable peace which appeases the population until the next flare up. Moreover the attempted functionalist concessions by the federal government to appease the Baloch population are not sufficient to override the primordial cause of the violence.

Balochistan offers many challenges and opportunities to United States foreign policy in the region. This paper provided an enhanced understanding of the current insurgent situation and counterinsurgency efforts for policy makers and military planners working in the Central Command and Pacific Command Area's of Responsibility. The current situation appears to be entering the negotiation phase of the cycle as Gillani is taking a softer approach, along the lines of Zia in the late 1970s. These actions will not be successful because they do not address the true underlying grievances of the Baloch people which are ethnic parity and political autonomy.

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71 Wirsing, 43.

72 Weaver, 94.

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