

# Balochistan



# Overview

- Semi-autonomous status during colonial period. Forcibly annexed following Pakistan's independence.
- History of violent conflict – recent uptick in violence following killing of Baloch leader in 2006.
- Approximately 13 million inhabitants - 55% Baloch, 30% Pashto, 2.5% Punjabi.
  - Largest province, and sparsely populated.
- Most Baloch practice a mix of nomadic pastoralist and settled agriculture.
  - Only 23% of population is urban.

# Economics

- 40% of Pakistan's land area. Has gas, oil, mineral, and fishery resources that have not been exploited.
- Poor infrastructure and public services, particularly in Baloch majority areas (outside of Quetta).
  - Militant activities discourage large scale investments or infrastructure improvements.
- Lack of investment by the private sector.
  - Those businesses that do operate are usually owned by non-ethnic Baloch.

# Politics - Baloch

- Largely organized along tribal lines:
  - Some tribal leaders have supported the Pakistani government, others are opposed.
  - Not all are demanding full independence – some simply demand greater autonomy.
- At times various Baloch political parties have been banned.
  - Many are losing faith in the political process and now see armed resistance as the only viable option.
- Balochistan armed independence groups are highly decentralized, and most prevalent in rural areas.

# Politics – Pakistan

- Nominally a “federal” state - central government has a large amount of control (E.g. it controls 90% of tax revenues).

## Pakistani Military

- Military is 90% ethnic Punjabi – It favours strong central control.
- Military has favored violent suppression of any separatist tendencies.
  - Recently Baloch nationalists have been arrested, or “disappeared.” by the police and military
- Military has failed or refused to carry out reforms demanded by civilian government.
  - E.g. Pakistani reforms in 2010 intended to increase local autonomy in Balochistan were ignored in many cases.

# International Dynamics

## Afghanistan:

- Large numbers of Afghan refugees provides easy access to small arms.
- Quetta is home to Taliban leaders. Taliban fighters cross the border and use Balochistan as a safe haven.
- A major transit route for Afghan heroin (source of funding for Baloch groups).
- Balochistan is Nato's second largest Pakistani supply route to troops in Afghanistan (more than 3,000 trucks per month).

## China:

- Increased Chinese interest in the region - Built Gwadar port and are working on a major copper mine.

# Trends

# Trends - Negative

- Inequality and marginalization:
  - Highest unemployment rate in the country (33%) and lowest literacy rate (25%).
  - Baloch underrepresented in bureaucracy, military, government.
  - Only 2% of the proceeds of Chinese built Gwadar port will go to the Balochistan .
- Demographics:
  - 400,000 Afghan refugees, mostly Pashtun, in Balochistan – Baloch fear they may be given voting rights.
  - Gwadar port will be staffed by non-ethnic Baloch.
  - Movement of Punjabi settlers into Balochistan.
- Baloch nationalist rejecting mild reforms offered by Islamabad:
  - Pakistani government be hesitant to offer significant concessions that may raise the specter of separatism amongst other minorities.



# Trends - Negative

- 621 conflict related deaths in 2011 - Most in a single year since 2006.
- Increasing government repression of Baloch:
  - 300 corpses of disappeared individuals found in 2011.
- Violence by Baloch separatists towards Punjabi other non-ethnic Baloch civilians increasing:
  - 22 Punjabi teachers killed from 2008-2010, many others fleeing the province.

# Trends - Positive

- 2009 “*Beginning of Right in Balochistan*” package of reforms:
  - Increased delegation of authority to the Balochistan government – including over law and order.
  - Doubles provincial budget.
  - Aims to increase Baloch employment in civil service.
  - Increased funding for infrastructure projects.
- Pakistani Supreme Court has taken action announced judicial inquiries into the killing of Baloch leaders.
- Balochistan issue has received international attention.
- Baloch nationalist have in the past have reduced level of violence following Pakistani concessions.
- Pakistan has repatriated over 2.3 million Afghan refugees.

# Theoretical Explanations

## “Greed, Creed & Grievance” (Aslam)

- Conflict driven by a combination of ethnic conflict, grievance and greed
- Rent seeking behavior by Balochi elite is coupled with attempts to bolster their group

### Policy Implications:

- Improve governance and social service delivery
- Additional resource sharing may increase conflict

# Ethnic Conflict & Praetorianism (Haleem, Wright)

- Ethnic conflicts have driven civil-military alliances between a variety of different actors
- There have been different ethnic coalitions holding power over the centre
- Reinforces itself as the military supports ethnic parties & as some ethnic parties align with the military against civilian governments

## Policy Implications

- Control over the centre is fluid and reflects inter-ethnic bargaining

## Weakness of ethno-federalism

(Deiwiks, Cederman & Geditsch; Tranchent; Bakke & Wibbels; Adeney)

- Higher inter-regional disparity and ethnic concentration increases likelihood of ethnic conflict
- Presence of a 'core' ethnic region is dangerous, a single ethnic federal region that enjoys superiority in population
- Punjab in Pakistan has both the majority of the population, political power and economic which is destabilizing in a federal system

### Policy Implications

- Higher levels of fiscal decentralization will actually increase the chance of conflict if the institutions are not sufficiently developed
- Limit to how much can be expected in terms of progress given the existing federal structure
- Neither democratic nor authoritarian governments have been able to effectively manage ethnic conflict in Pakistan

# Policy Recommendations

# Protecting Baloch Identity

- Protection and promotion of baloch language and culture within the province
- Integration of baloch language within the provincial educational system
- Use of Baloch teachers at schools
- Funding for cultural programs
- Combat illiteracy rate in the province



# Power Sharing and Confidence Building Measures

- Autonomy should be granted based on the Pakistan 1973 Constitution
- Improved federalism- division of Punjab?
- Mutual security agreements
- Release of all political prisoners
- Free access for journalists

# Confidence Building Measures

- Inclusion in the Army
- Establishment of all Baloch provincial security force under direct supervision of Pakistan Army in conflict areas.
- Securing borders with Afghanistan and Iran to combat drugs and arms trafficking
- Put forward a plan for demilitarization of province
- Army cease stoking inter-sectarian and inter-tribal feuds and arming militias

# Economic Inclusion

- Training and inclusion of local population in major provincial projects
- Equal distribution of tax revenues
- Fair distribution of resources
- Multinational corporations to sign contracts with provincial government
- Development projects to target unemployment
- Infrastructure projects

# Policy Implication for Canada

- Opportunities for the Canadian mining sector
- Added security will benefit Canadian forces and NATO mission in Afghanistan
  - Taliban Quetta Shura
  - Supply route to Afghanistan