PAKISTAN: THE WORSENING CONFLICT IN BALOCHISTAN

Asia Report N°119 – 14 September 2006

International Crisis Group
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

President Pervez Musharraf and the military are responsible for the worsening of the conflict in Balochistan. Tensions between the government and its Baloch opposition have grown because of Islamabad's heavy-handed armed response to Baloch militancy and its refusal to negotiate demands for political and economic autonomy. The killing of Baloch leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti in August 2006 sparked riots and will likely lead to more confrontation. The conflict could escalate if the government insists on seeking a military solution to what is a political problem and the international community, especially the U.S., fails to recognise the price that is involved for security in neighbouring Afghanistan.

Tensions with the central government are not new to Balochistan, given the uneven distribution of power, which favors the federation at the cost of the federal units. The Baloch have long demanded a restructured relationship that would transfer powers from what is seen as an exploitative central government to the provinces. But Musharraf's authoritarian rule has deprived them of participatory, representative avenues to articulate demands and to voice grievances. Politically and economically marginalised, many Baloch see the insurgency as a defensive response to the perceived colonisation of their province by the Punjabi-dominated military.

Although regional parties still seek provincial autonomy within a federal parliamentary democratic framework, and there is, as yet, little support for secession, militant sentiments could grow if Islamabad does not reverse ill-advised policies that include:

- exploitation of Balochistan's natural resources without giving the province its due share;
- construction of further military garrisons to strengthen an already extensive network of military bases; and
- centrally driven and controlled economic projects, such as the Gwadar deep sea port, that do not benefit locals but raise fears that the resulting influx of economic migrants could make the Baloch a minority in their homeland.

While Baloch alienation is widespread, crossing tribal, regional and class lines, the military government insists that a few sardars (tribal leaders) are challenging the centre's writ, concerned that their power base would be eroded by Islamabad's plans to develop Balochistan; the state therefore has little option but to meet the challenge head on. This failure to accept the legitimacy of grievances lies at the heart of an increasingly intractable conflict, as does Islamabad's reliance on coercion and indiscriminate force to silence dissent.

The military government should recognise that it faces conflict not with a handful of sardars but with a broad-based movement for political, economic and social empowerment. The only one way out is to end all military action, release political prisoners and respect constitutionally guaranteed political freedoms.

As a preliminary confidence-building measure, Islamabad should implement recommendations of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan, which have local support. But a sustainable solution requires implementation, in spirit and substance, of constitutional provisions for political, administrative and economic autonomy. The federation would also be strengthened if the national parliament were to amend the constitution, to shift powers from an overbearing centre to the provinces. However, centralised rule is the hallmark of authoritarianism. Like its predecessors, this military government is averse to democratic engagement and powersharing, preferring to retain and consolidate power through patron-client relations and divide-and-rule strategies.

Reliance on the Pashtun religious parties to counter its Baloch opposition has strengthened Pashtun Islamist forces at the cost of the moderate Baloch. With their chief Pakistani patron, Fazlur Rehman's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam running the Balochistan government in alliance with Musharraf's Muslim League (Quaid-i-Azam), a reinvigorated Afghan and Pakistani Taliban are attacking international forces and the Kabul government across Balochistan's border with Afghanistan. But the international community, particularly the U.S. and its Western allies, seem to ignore the domestic and regional implications of the Balochistan conflict, instead placing their faith in

a military government that is targeting the anti-Taliban Baloch and Pashtuns and rewarding pro-Taliban Pashtun parties.

With the federal government refusing to compromise with its Baloch opponents, intent on a military solution to a political problem and ignoring local stakeholders in framing political and economic policies, the directions of the conflict are clear. The military can retain control over Balochistan's territory through sheer force, but it cannot defeat an insurgency that has local support.

Still, the conflict could be resolved easily. Free and fair elections in 2007 would restore participatory representative institutions, reducing tensions between the centre and the province, empowering moderate forces and marginalising extremists in Balochistan. In the absence of a democratic transition, however, the militancy is unlikely to subside. The longer the conflict continues, the higher the costs – political, social and economic for a fragile polity.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To the Government of Pakistan:

1. End reliance on a military solution in Balochistan and quickly take the following steps to deescalate:
   (a) cease military action, send the armed forces back to the barracks and restrict their role to guarding the province's land and nautical borders;
   (b) withdraw the Frontier Corps, replacing it with provincial security forces that are firmly under provincial control;
   (c) dismantle all check posts manned by paramilitary and other federal security agencies; and
   (d) halt construction of military bases (cantonments) and end plans to construct additional military or paramilitary facilities.
2. Respect democratic freedoms by:
   (a) producing immediately all detainees before the courts and releasing political prisoners;
   (b) ending the political role of intelligence agencies, military and civil, and barring them from detaining prisoners;
   (c) withdrawing travel restrictions, internal and external, on Baloch opposition leaders and activists;
   (d) ending intimidation, torture, arbitrary arrests, disappearances and extra-judicial killings;
   (e) allowing all political parties to function freely, respecting the constitutionally guaranteed rights of speech and expression, assembly, association and movement; and
   (f) respecting the constitutional obligation to preserve and promote distinct language and culture.
3. Entrust the Baloch with more responsibility for their own security by:
   (a) accepting provincial jurisdiction over law and order and policing;
   (b) retaining Balochistan Levies, re-establishing those that have been disbanded, reforming them into a professional force accountable to provincial authority and replacing them by the police only once police reform has been enacted countrywide;
   (c) ensuring that locals are recruited to the police force and Levies in Balochistan; and
   (d) meeting the quota for Baloch recruitment in the armed forces and federal security agencies.
4. Allow local and international media unhindered access to all districts in Balochistan, including the conflict zones.
5. Begin immediately a dialogue with all regional and national-level political parties on ways of solving the crisis and create a favorable environment for such a dialogue by:
   (a) implementing at once recommendations of the Mushahid Hussain parliamentary subcommittee, particularly those that pertain to revised gas royalties, social sector expenditure by the federation as well as oil and gas companies, and jobs for Baloch in the federal government and its institutions;
   (b) establishing and empowering the special task force proposed by the Mushahid Hussain subcommittee to monitor and implement these recommendations;
   (c) revising the distribution criteria for National Finance Commission awards to account for backwardness, level of development, geographic size, and revenue levels of the provinces; and
   (d) reviving the moribund Council of Common Interests, accepting parliamentary authority over the body, and accepting and implementing its decisions.
6. Ensure sustainable development with local ownership by:

(a) meeting Baloch concerns about Gwadar Port by placing the project under provincial government control; ending the practice of allocating coastal lands to security agencies; giving local fishermen unimpeded access to their fishing grounds; revising the "master plan" so locals are not dislocated; addressing pressing health and education needs, with an emphasis on new technical institutes and colleges; and implementing job quotas for locals at the port and related projects;

(b) ensuring in Sui and other oil and gas extraction projects that the well head value and natural gas rates are on par with other provinces; renegotiating natural gas rates and the royalty formula; encouraging oil and gas companies to hire and train Baloch workers and allocate funds for social development; and consulting with the province on privatisation of the oil and gas industry and other state-owned enterprises; and

(c) making the provincial government a party to all investment and development projects.

7. Refocus policies towards human development by:

(a) allocating an annual financial package for social sector development pursuant to district level recommendations;

(b) granting specific funds for hospitals, technical institutions, medical colleges and universities, as well as high schools in all districts; and

(c) developing irrigation schemes, including small dams, for rural Balochistan, on the recommendation of the provincial government.

To the National Assembly:

8. Enhance provincial autonomy and strengthen the federation by:

(a) eliminating the Concurrent Legislative List and devolving all its subjects to the provinces;

(b) constituting a bipartisan parliamentary committee to recommend, within a fixed timeframe, the transfer of subjects from the Federal Legislative List to the provinces, beginning with subjects in Part II of the list;

(c) enacting legislation to regulate and monitor land allotment, sales and transfers in Gwadar; and

(d) constituting a parliamentary committee, with an equal number of members from the ruling and opposition benches, to examine cases of abuse of power by security agencies.

To the Supreme Court:

9. Form a high-level judicial commission to enquire into the 26 August 2006 killing of Baloch nationalist leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti.

To the International Community:

10. Urge the Pakistan government to immediately end military action in Balochistan.

11. Press the Pakistan government to end all practices that violate international human rights standards, including torture, arbitrary arrests, detentions, and extra-judicial killings.

Islamabad/Brussels, 14 September 2006

International Crisis Group
WORKING TO PREVENT CONFLICT WORLDWIDE

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PAKISTAN: THE WORSENING CONFLICT IN BALOCHISTAN

I. INTRODUCTION

Three decades after the 1973-1977 insurrection in Balochistan, a low-level insurgency again challenges central control over the province. After almost seven years of military rule, deprived of representative participatory institutions and with their natural resources exploited by Islamabad, Baloch alienation is at an all-time high. Although regional parties and leaders are still struggling to obtain political, economic and social rights within a democratic, federal, parliamentary framework, militants have picked up the gun.

Baloch political parties and militants have a common goal – to assert provincial control over Balochistan's natural resources and gain a voice in shaping its political, economic and social development. "We want to live as an equal partner in the federation, with our democratic rights respected, including the ownership of our resources, these resources belong to the people of Pakistan".[1]

By choosing confrontation, the Musharraf government bears responsibility for the state of the conflict. "The writ of the government will be established at any cost", said Interior Minister Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao.[2] But that writ is impossible to impose unless citizens accept the legitimacy of the actions. By refusing to negotiate Baloch demands for provincial autonomy and control over their resources and opting instead to forcibly subdue dissent – political or militant – the Musharraf government has upped the stakes. Islamabad might be able to retain central control through brute force but its policy directions will likely undermine the remaining vestiges of state legitimacy in the troubled province.

That tensions between the centre and the Baloch have reached new heights under centralised authoritarian rule is not surprising. The military government's disregard for provincial autonomy has sparked the unrest.[3] Baloch alienation is also rooted in Islamabad's longstanding neglect of the resource-rich province, which remains the poorest of Pakistan's four federal units.[4]

Popular support for Baloch nationalist parties and sardars (tribal chiefs) who articulate Baloch political aspirations and social and economic demands is widespread. Musharraf's decision to sideline this regional leadership and attempt instead to consolidate central control through military force has left little space for a negotiated settlement. Reviewing the 1973-1977 insurgency the U.S. academic Selig Harrison said: "There is still a chance to avert renewed conflict through negotiations but the communication gap is rapidly widening".[5] In 2006, this gap has increased dangerously, particularly after the military killed Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, one of the most influential Baloch political leaders, on 26 August 2006. Bugti had taken to the mountains in early 2006 after his hometown of Dera Bugti was attacked and besieged by the military. He was killed in his remote mountain base in a military operation that involved the use of helicopter gunships and ground troops.[6]

Yet, Islamabad denies it is conducting a military operation, insisting instead that a few tribal chiefs, threatened by its development schemes which would undermine their hold over local power, are responsible for an insurgency limited to their tribal fiefdoms.[7] But the military government is

[1] Crisis Group interview, National Party (NP) President Dr Abdul Hayee Baloch, Islamabad, January 2006.
[2] "No talk with 'miscreants', says Sherpao", *Dawn*, 28 June 2006.
[3] See Crisis Group Asia Reports N°40, *Transition to Democracy?*, 3 October 2002; N°102, *Authoritarianism and Political Party Reform in Pakistan*, 28 September 2005.
[4] Pakistan has four federal units: Balochistan, Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), Punjab and Sindh.
[5] Selig Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baloch Nationalism and Soviet Temptation* (New York, 1981), p. 4.
[6] Musharraf reportedly congratulated the troops on the successful operation but his government backtracked in the face of protests and violence in Balochistan and Sindh. It now claimed that Bugti had not been targeted and that he was killed by a "mysterious explosion" that had occurred when troops entered the cave to negotiate his surrender. His burial on 1 September in Dera Bugti under the supervision of the security agencies, and in the absence of his immediate family members, was equally controversial; his sons have demanded that the body be exhumed and examined by independent international experts. "End of Bugti era", *The Nation*, 28 August 2006; "Bugti wasn't target killed: Aziz", *Daily Times*, 29 August 2006; "Government wanted to catch Bugti alive, says Owais", *The Nation*, 29 August 2006; "Forlorn funeral for Bugti", *Dawn*, 2 September 2006; "Sons want Bugti's body exhumed", *Dawn*, 8 September 2006.
[7] "Out of 113 *tehsils* (subdistricts), the problem persists in only two", said Balochistan Governor Owais Ahmed Ghani. Malik

neither the harbinger of modernisation and development, nor is Baloch resistance limited to a handful of tribal chiefs. On the contrary, Baloch dissent has become a broad movement for political, economic and social empowerment.

By ignoring the fact that the conflict can only be resolved through a negotiated political dialogue with local stakeholders and intent on a forced solution, the Pakistani military does not seem to have learned from past mistakes. Authoritarian, centralised rule led to Pakistan's dismemberment in 1971, when the majority Bengali population of the east wing opted for secession. In Balochistan, there is, as yet, little support for independence but the longer the conflict festers, the higher the costs for the federation.

This report examines Baloch grievances and demands, assesses the impact of state polices – political, economic and military on centre-state relations and identifies ways to resolve the conflict.

Siraj Akbar's interview with Owais Ahmed Ghani, *Friday Times*, 14-20 July 2006.

II. CENTRALISED RULE AND BALOCH RESISTANCE

Balochistan is the largest of Pakistan's four provinces. Some 347,190 square kilometres in size, it covers 43 per cent of its land area but has only around 6 per cent of its population.[8] The ethnic make-up, according to last official estimates, is 54.7 per cent Baloch, 29.0 per cent Pashtun.[9]

It is the least developed province but rich in energy and mineral resources,[10] meeting more than 40 per cent of Pakistan's energy needs through its gas and coal reserves and accounting for 36 per cent of its total gas production. Large energy reserves remain untapped.[11] However, 46.6 per cent of households have no electricity.[12] Consistent degradation of the water supply and absence of storage systems, such as small dams, have turned much of Balochistan, with its predominantly rural population, into an arid wasteland.[13] According to the Karachi-based Social Policy and Development Centre, poverty levels are twice that of Punjab, Pakistan's largest and most prosperous province; urban unemployment is 12.5 per cent, compared to the countrywide average of 9.7 per cent; and half the population lives below the poverty line.[14]

[8] According to the 1998 census, Balochistan's population was 6.5 million. By some estimates it is now approximately seven million, including the Pashtuns and Punjabi settlers. Others believe that it exceeds eight million. "Census at a Glance", Population Census Organisation, Ministry of Population Welfare, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad; Kamila Hayat, "Pakistan: Roots of the Balochistan conflict run deep", IRIN, UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 16 February 2006. Crisis Group interview, Balochistan National Party (BNP) Senator Sanaullah Baloch, Quetta, November 2004.

[9] 1998 census, available at http://www.statpak.ov.pk/depts/pc/pco/statistics/other_tables/pop_by_mother_tongue.pdf. Pashtun leaders dispute this figure and claim a 40 to 50 per cent share, whereas the Baloch allege that the Pashtun population includes Afghan refugees who have acquired false documents or have settled in the province permanently.

[10] Along with oil, gas and coal resources, Balochistan also has significant gold, copper, silver, platinum, aluminium and uranium reserves.

[11] Frederic Grare, "Pakistan: The resurgence of Baloch nationalism", *Carnegie Papers*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, no. 65, January 2006, pp. 4-5.

[12] "Compendium of Environmental Statistics of Pakistan – 2004", Federal Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, 2005, p. 64.

[13] Three quarters of the population is rural.

[14] Hayat, op.cit. The literacy rate is 26.6 per cent (15 per cent for females), primary school enrolment is 49 per cent (21 per cent for females), 7 per cent have access to sanitation, 20 per cent to clean drinking water and 25 per cent to village electrification.

Balochistan is strategically located. Bordering on Afghanistan and Iran,[15] it lies astride the communication routes of South, South West and Central Asia.[16] With a 760-km coastline, Balochistan links Pakistan with the oil-rich Gulf States and the sea lanes of the Arabian Sea, close to the Strait of Hormuz through which oil tankers bound for the West and Japan must pass. This coast is particularly important to the Pakistan military. Three of its four naval bases are located there.[17]

A. A TROUBLED HISTORY

> *"The people of Pakistan did not get a nation – the Pakistan army got a state"* – Kachkool Ali Baloch, Leader of the Opposition, Balochistan Assembly.[18]

Since a majority of Baloch belong to the moderate Hanafi Sunni sect, Baloch ethnic nationalism is grounded in secular principles, with tribal and clan loyalties also historically playing an important role in determining identity. Over time, this nationalism has assumed a more organised political shape, represented by regional parties. Political identity co-exists with narrower tribal and clan loyalties; the two are not necessarily at cross-purposes.[19] However, Baloch nationalism is at odds with Islamabad's attempt to create and impose a top-downward concept of national identity, which has become a source of tension between the centre and the smaller federating units in the multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, multi-regional state.[20]

Since the twelfth century, short-lived tribal confederacies have been formed in Balochistan. In the seventeenth century, the Ahmedzai tribe formed a tribal confederacy in Kalat, which gained the support of most major Baloch tribes. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, however, the British gradually asserted control over and then divided Balochistan, giving Iran (then Persia) much of western Balochistan in 1871, while a portion of the north was ceded to Afghanistan soon after the Durand Line was drawn in 1893 to divide British Balochistan from that kingdom. To maintain local loyalty, the British provided subsidies to Baloch tribal chiefs, granting tribes a degree of autonomy so long as they accepted imperial directives.[21] The Baloch entered independent Pakistan, therefore, with a distinct national identity and memories of a degree of self-rule.

Pakistani policy-makers followed the British policy of using handpicked tribal chiefs to control the territory on their behalf, enhancing the power of those sardars locally, and ousting others who defied state control.[22] Pakistani strategies of institutionalising central control over the territory also relied on coercion. In 1948, the military took action, for the very first time within Pakistan, to oust the ruler and annex Kalat State, where the British had exercised indirect control.[23] The forcible annexation resulted in the first Baloch rebellion, which was quickly put down by the army, with the rebel leaders arrested and imprisoned.

This use of force, combined with the centre's denial of political and administrative autonomy, planted the seeds of the conflict that now engulfs the province, as did the centre's exploitation of Balochistan's natural resources. While the Baloch were deprived of the income their

See "Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan", (7), Senate of Pakistan, Islamabad, November 2005, p. 64.

[15] The traditional Baloch homeland is divided between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran.

[16] Routes for the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipelines would cross Balochistan.

[17] These are the Ormara, Pasni and Gwadar naval bases.

[18] Crisis Group interview, Kachkool Ali Baloch, leader of the opposition, Balochistan Assembly, Quetta, March 2006.

[19] Of the four major Baloch nationalist parties, Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, the chief of the largest Bugti tribe, who was killed in a military operation on 26 August 2006, headed the Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP); Sardar Ataullah Mengal and his son Sardar Akhtar Mengal, chiefs of the Mengal tribe, are leaders of the Balochistan National Party (BNP); Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri, chief of the Marri tribe, heads the Baloch Haq Talwar; Dr Abdul Hayee Baloch, leader of the National Party (NP), is not a tribal chief.

[20] "It is in the nature of the nation-state that it regards demands for regional and ethnic autonomy as provincialism, tribalism and narrow nationalism. The nation-state recognises only one form of nationalism as legitimate and that is the nationalism of the state itself". Adeel Khan, "Baloch Ethnic Nationalism in Pakistan: From Guerrilla War to Nowhere?", *Asian Ethnicity*, vol. 4, no. 2, June 2003, p. 288. See also Samina Ahmed, "Centralisation, Authoritarianism and Mismanagement of Ethnic Relations in Pakistan", in Michael E. Brown and Sumit Ganguly (eds.), *Government Policies and Ethnic Relations in Asia and the Pacific* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997).

[21] The British policy of allowing internal autonomy to the sardars was called the "Sandeman System", after a colonial administrator.

[22] National Party Secretary General Mir Hasil Bizenjo said: "In the 17th century, the concept of tribal chiefs emerged (but) it was not a formal institution. It was done by Sandeman. He created and transformed it into a hereditary institution, which was not the case among the Baloch people…He fixed salaries for [sardars]. Those sardars who opposed the British refused the salary. After the emergence of Pakistan, its bureaucracy continued with the institution of the sardari system. In fact, it made it stronger. Even today the same thing is happening". Shamim-ur-Rehman's interview with Hasil Bizenjo, *Dawn*, 12 February 2006.

[23] The British divided the territory into three zones: British Balochistan, with Quetta, the present capital and the mainly Pashtun-majority lands merged into a separate administrative unit, the Chief Commissioner's Province; the semi-autonomous Kalat State Union, and leased areas. In the 1950s, they were merged into what was called One Unit.

province provided the federal exchequer, Baloch areas remained under-developed, lacking even the most basic amenities. And when development schemes were initiated, outsiders benefited. For instance, Punjabis were given most of the arable land created by the construction of the Pat Feeder canal. Top-downwards attempts at nation building also deliberately neglected regional languages such as Balochi in an attempt to promote Urdu, the mother tongue of less than 10 per cent of Pakistan's population, as the national language.

Baloch alienation assumed new heights under centralised authoritarian rule, taking the shape, once again, of armed resistance, this time against Pakistan's first military ruler, General Mohammad Ayub Khan, who came into power in 1958. From 1958 to 1960, the military government arrested prominent Baloch dissidents and, violating agreements on safe conduct and amnesty, executed rebels who had surrendered.[24] The decade of military rule saw the Baloch resort to political as well as military means to gain their rights. In the former arena, the Baloch supported parties such as the National Awami Party (NAP) that stood for political and fiscal autonomy and opposed One Unit, the amalgamation of the provinces of the west wing of the country into a single entity.[25] The 1960s also witnessed an armed Baloch revolt, with left-leaning militants, mainly from the Marri, Mengal and Bugti tribes, led by Sher Mohammad Marri, and operating under an umbrella organisation, the Baloch People's Liberation Front. The army's response, then as now, was indiscriminate force, including aerial attacks, which more often than not killed civilians. Then as now, the military also expanded its presence through the establishment of cantonments (military garrisons), alienating the Baloch further.

After Ayub's downfall, his successor General Yahya Khan's short-lived military rule saw a full-fledged civil war in Pakistan's east wing, when the Bengalis, rebelling against the West-based authoritarian order, opted to secede. In 1970, the Yahya regime held Pakistan's first national elections on the basis of adult franchise in a last minute bid to placate ethnic and political grievances that had led to mass protests in both wings of the country. One Unit was also dissolved and Balochistan was given the status of a full-fledged province. The demarcation of the new province, however, also contained the seeds of ethnic discord. Pashtun majority districts of Loralai, Zhob and Pishin were included, while despite local opposition, adjoining Baloch majority districts in Sindh and Punjab, such Jacobabad and Dera Ghazi Khan, were excluded.

[24] Rebel leader Nawab Nauroz Khan Zehri died in prison at 90. His son and companions were executed and are still honoured in Balochistan as martyrs who died for Baloch rights.

[25] The east and west wings of Pakistan were divided by 1,000 miles of Indian territory.

B. RETAINING THE MILITARY OPTION

Khan Abdul Wali Khan's National Awami Party (NAP), which included in its leadership prominent Baloch politicians such as Sardar Ataullah Mengal, Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri and Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, had contested the 1970 elections on a platform of provincial autonomy. The party won eight of Balochistan's twenty assembly seats, the rest going to splinter groups and independents.

In the newly truncated Pakistan, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) formed the government at the centre but failed to win a single seat in Balochistan. NAP formed Balochistan's first provincial government in alliance with the Pashtun-majority Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI). Under Chief Minister Ataullah Mengal and Governor Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo, the NAP government moved swiftly to fulfil its electoral pledges. It was under this Baloch nationalist leadership that the province, for the first time since Pakistan's independence, witnessed real social and economic development. In a bid to end the ethnic discord between the Baloch and Pashtuns in his province, Chief Minister Mengal also suggested that the northern Pashtun-majority belt of Balochistan be transferred to Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Baloch-majority areas of Sindh and Punjab (Jacobabad and Dera Ghazi Khan) be incorporated into Balochistan.[26]

Pakistan also had a new constitution, drafted in 1973, creating a parliamentary, federal structure. The constitution was adopted with the consensus of all major political parties but NAP's Baloch leaders were dissatisfied with the extent of provincial autonomy.[27]

Although the constitution created a federal bicameral framework,[28] it also created a powerful centre. Legislative powers were divided between the federation and the provinces through two lists, Federal and Concurrent. The Federal Legislative List was divided into two parts. Part I included subjects such as defence, external affairs, citizenship, currency, public debt, telecommunications, taxes other than on agricultural income, citizenship, census, maritime shipping, national highways and strategic roads.

[26] Taj Mohammad Breseeg, *Baloch Nationalism: Its Origins and Development* (Karachi, 2004), p. 102.

[27] The 1973 constitution was passed with the NAP's consent, overriding the reservations of a majority of its Baloch leadership, including Sardar Ataullah Mengal and Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri, about limited provisions for provincial autonomy. Crisis Group interview, Senator Sanaullah Baloch, Balochistan National Party, Quetta, March 2006.

[28] The composition of the upper house (Senate) is based on provincial parity; the lower house (National Assembly) is formed on the basis of population.

Part II included eight subjects that were also of interest to the provinces such as railways, minerals, oil and natural gas, and industrial development. The subjects that fell to the Concurrent Legislative List, such as civil and criminal law, transfer of property and registration, population planning, social welfare, environment, tourism and electricity were shared between the centre and the provinces; although federal legislation could override provincial laws. Provinces had sole control only over the residuary subjects.[29]

The authors of the 1973 constitution had created the Concurrent List in the belief that occasional federal intervention might be called for but members from the smaller provinces believed it gave the federal government too much authority. An analyst commented that the proponents of federalism had "signed the Constitution in the legitimate expectation that, with time, better working arrangements between the centre and the provinces would emerge. The power of the federation would be diluted. The process of politics would evolve mechanisms which would augment the role of the provinces in the affairs of the state".[30] The authors of the constitution had indeed envisaged that the Concurrent List would be removed in ten years.[31] In 2006, if provincial demands for autonomy were to be met, it would no longer be sufficient merely to eliminate the Concurrent List. The National Assembly would also have to constitute a bipartisan parliamentary committee to recommend, within a fixed timeframe, the transfer of subjects from the Federal Legislative List to the provinces, beginning with subjects in Part II of the list that are of special interest to the provinces.

The 1973 constitution also created a number of bodies and mechanisms to regulate inter-provincial and centre-province relations and ensure provincial autonomy. The National Economic Council (NEC) was tasked with reviewing the economic condition of the country and formulating policies for economic development, in consultation with the provinces.[32]

Appointed by the president, and composed of the provincial chief ministers and equal numbers of federal ministers appointed by the prime minister, the Council of Common Interests (CCI) was to "formulate and regulate policies in relation to Part II of the Federal Legislative List", such as oil and gas, water, and industrial development, as well as the subject of electricity on the Concurrent List. The CCI would also "exercise supervision and control over related institutions".[33] The provincial governments or the federation can lodge complaints with the CCI, which was meant as a forum to voice provincial grievances and demands and authorised to take decisions by a majority that the federal and provincial governments must accept or refer to a joint sitting of parliament. Three decades, and several authoritarian interventions later, the CCI remains ineffective. It is infrequently convened and follows the directives of the executive.[34] If it were to make the CCI a permanent body and exercise more authority over its actions, however, the parliament could transform it into an effective mechanism to regulate centre-provincial relations.

The National Finance Commission (NFC) was established to make recommendations, among other matters, on the distribution of revenues from taxes between the federation and the provinces and on grants from the federal to the provincial governments.[35] To be constituted by the president at intervals not exceeding five years, it was to consist of the federal and provincial finance ministers and other persons appointed by the president in consultation with provincial governors. It remains a contentious body since it distributes federal resources, a matter of prime concern to the provinces, but it operates under federal control. The main criterion for the federal awards – population – is itself contentious since it favours Punjab, the most populous province.[36]

Even with its highly centralised form, the 1973 constitution could have assuaged provincial grievances and eased centre-periphery tensions had successive federal governments respected it in spirit and in form. But constitutional rights, guarantees and protections have been honoured mainly in the breach.

Having given Pakistan a democratic constitution, Prime Minister Bhutto then refused to respect democratic norms and the principles of representative rule. He moved against his Baloch opposition by dissolving the NAP government in 1973, accusing Baloch leaders, including Governor Bizenjo and Chief Minister Mengal, of attempting to undermine the state. Breaking ranks with the nationalists, Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti accepted the post of governor, the representative of the federal government in Balochistan. In 1975 the NAP was banned. Its radical Baloch elements responded by joining the Marri and Mengal tribes in a militant struggle that had been launched soon after the

[29] The Federal and Concurrent Legislative Lists are included in the Fourth Schedule of the 1973 constitution.
[30] Makhdoom Ali Khan, "1973 Constitution: The founding of the federation", unpublished paper cited in Zulfikar Khalid Maluka, *The Myth of Constitutionalism in Pakistan* (Karachi, 1995), p.248. Khan is presently the attorney general of Pakistan.
[31] I.A. Rehman, "An anti-federation mindset", *The News*, 15 January 2006.
[32] Article 156.
[33] Article 154.
[34] Anwar Syed, "The role of the CCI", *Dawn*, 3 September 2006.
[35] Article 160.
[36] Rehman, op.cit.

NAP government's dissolution, led by the left-leaning Balochistan People's Liberation Front (BPLF), under Mir Hazar Khan Marri, operating from Marri territory as well as sanctuaries in Afghanistan.[37] The Balochistan National Army (BLA), another left-leaning militant group, also surfaced during the insurgency. In the political realm, the leftist Baloch Students Organisation (BSO), divided though it was in competing factions, became one of the most important recruiting grounds, and has remained so, for the Baloch nationalist parties.

The military was able to restore a semblance of centralised control by deploying some 80,000 troops and killing thousands of militants. But military action also claimed hundreds of civilian lives, including women and children, increasing, as now, local support for the militants who also killed thousands of soldiers.[38] The military operation heightened Baloch political awareness and alienation, particularly among the youth.[39] While the military was perceived as a brutal occupying force, Baloch leaders such as Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri, Sardar Ataullah Mengal and Ghaus Bakhsh Bizenjo became heroes.[40]

The insurgency ended only as the result of a negotiated settlement by Army Chief General Mohammad Ziaul Haq, who had ousted Bhutto in a coup in 1977. Opting to end an un-winnable war, General Ziaul Haq withdrew the army and released thousands of Baloch leaders and activists but also resorted to divide-and-rule policies. Then, as now, the military opted to empower Pashtun Islamist parties in Balochistan with two goals in mind: to counter the Baloch nationalists and to promote the military's agenda in neighbouring Afghanistan, then engulfed in a U.S.-led, Pakistani-supported anti-Soviet jihad. Thousands of Deobandi madrasas, run by the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) and supported by the Pakistani state, supplied recruits for the Afghan jihad, and after the Soviet withdrawal, for the mujahidin parties during Afghanistan's bloody civil war. These madrasas provided the leadership and foot soldiers for the Taliban in the 1990s, and still contribute recruits to the Taliban cause.

Since the Zia era, Baloch nationalist leaders, as well as Pashtun moderate parties such as Pashtoon Khwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) and Awami National Party (ANP), have had to face two adversaries: an overbearing central government and, closer to home, the military-backed Pashtun Islamists.[41]

C. A DEMOCRATIC INTERLUDE

During the democratic decade of the 1990s, despite the military's constant interventions, ethnic tensions subsided because of representative participatory institutions.[42] In Balochistan, nationalist parties such as Sardar Ataullah Mengal's Balochistan National Party (BNP) and Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti's Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP) emerged as major political forces.[43] The Pashtun Islamist JUI performed reasonably well in the more conservative Pashtun belt. Baloch leaders were also represented in or aligned to the two national level parties, the Pakistan People's Party and Nawaz Sharif's Muslim League (PML-N) that dominated the democratic transition, in government or in opposition.

After the 1988 elections, Mengal's BNP emerged as the largest party and eventually formed government in alliance with Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, who was appointed chief minister. After the 1990 elections, Taj Mohammad Jamali formed a coalition government with the JUI to be replaced, following the 1993 elections, by Nawab Zulfikar Ali Magsi, who had the support of the PML-N and ANP. The Baloch

[37] The Pakistan government's response to the insurgency in the 1970s closely resembled its actions today. According to an analyst, the "Pakistani state's brutal use of superior firepower, less than subtle portrayal of ethnic interests as feudal and tribal interests…antagonised almost every Baloch tribe and therefore united the warring tribal factions against the centre". Vernon Hewitt, "Ethnic construction, provincial identity and nationalism in Pakistan: The case of Balochistan", in Subrata K. Mitra and R. Allison Lewis (eds.), *Subnational Movements in South Asia* (Boulder, 1996), p. 50.

[38] More than 5,000 Baloch militants and at least 3,000 military personnel were killed in the 1973-1977 insurgency. Selig S. Harrison, "Nightmare in Balochistan", *Foreign Policy*, no. 32, Autumn 1978, p.139.

[39] Calling upon the military to learn a lesson from the 1970s insurgency, the Pakistan People's Party provincial leader in Balochistan, Nawabzada Lashkari Raisani, said: "It remains a major problem for the PPP (in Balochistan). When we go to the people, they still remember it". Crisis Group interview, Quetta, November 2004.

[40] During the insurgency, Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri led the resistance from Afghanistan, returning to Pakistan in 1991. His son Nawabzada Balaach Marri, accused by the Musharraf government of leading the current resistance, was educated in Moscow.

[41] After Bhutto banned the NAP, it resurfaced as the Awami National Party.

[42] Working from behind the scenes, the military engineered the dismissal of three consecutive elected governments, in 1989, 1993 and 1996, before they had completed their term of office, culminating in the final dismissal, the coup against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in October 1999.

[43] In the 1988 national elections, Baloch nationalist parties obtained 47.8 per cent of votes cast in Balochistan. In the 1990 elections, they obtained 51.74 per cent of the vote. Inayatullah Baloch, "Nationality Problems and Political Parties in Pakistan: The National Awami Party and its Successor", in Georg Berkemer, Tilman Frasch, Hermann Kulke and Jurgen Lutt (eds.), *Explorations of History of South Asia* (New Delhi, 2001), p. 364.

nationalist parties dominated the 1997 election, with BNP's Sardar Akhtar Mengal appointed chief minister.[44] Although there were also stresses and strains in the relationship with Islamabad,[45] the Baloch nationalist struggle, represented by parties and given the opportunity to articulate grievances and demands through the national and provincial legislatures, moved from the militant to the political realm.

Baloch politics, within the province and at the national level, focused on demands for regional autonomy – political, administrative, economic and social. Yet, differences with central governments led by Benazir Bhutto or Nawaz Sharif over issues such as royalties and employment did not degenerate into conflict in the 1990s, even after prime ministers reneged on pledges of provincial autonomy and dissolved nationalist-led provincial governments.[46] It was with military rule's return that ethnic competition and bargaining in Balochistan transformed into conflict.

[44] The BNP formed the government in coalition with the JWP and the JUI.

[45] The BNP, for example, fell out with Nawaz's Muslim League on a host of issues including the nuclear tests that were conducted in Balochistan's Chaghai district in 1998. Crisis Group interview, BNP Senator Sanaullah Baloch, Quetta, March 2006.

[46] "We supported Nawaz Sharif to get rid of the Eighth Amendment (removing the powers of the president to sack the prime minister) in return for provincial autonomy but he violated the agreement and dismissed our government", said BNP national parliamentarian Abdul Rauf Mengal. Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, February 2006.

III. BACK TO THE BEGINNING

A. CENTRALISED POWER

> *"We felt we could achieve our democratic rights and our goals after the 1988 election but now we feel we are back to square one, after ten years (of democracy following the 1988 elections until Musharraf's coup). The Baloch youth now feel that all doors are closed. So people resort to other methods, especially violence."* – Sardar Akhtar Mengal, President, Balochistan National Party.[47]

On 12 October 1999, General Musharraf dismissed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, justifying his coup on the grounds of democratic reform, including the removal of provincial grievances through the devolution of power.[48] Instead, the Punjabi-dominated military government, bent on regime survival and consolidation, moved quickly to concentrate all power in its hands.[49] Musharraf's constitutional manipulations made the president, the symbolic head of the federation, all powerful, reducing the national parliament to a rubber stamp and depriving the Baloch of the voice they had gained in the democratic forums of the 1990s. With Musharraf wearing the dual hats of president and army chief, centralised authoritarian rule also deprived the provinces of the rights, imperfect as they were, guaranteed by the 1973 constitution. Following the footsteps of other military rulers, Musharraf set up a façade of local government, the centrepiece of his reform.[50]

[47] Crisis Group interview, Sardar Akhtar Mengal, President, Balochistan National Party, Quetta, February 2006.

[48] Justifying the coup, Musharraf said that he intended to "strengthen (the) federation, remove inter-provincial disharmony and restore national cohesion". "Address to the Nation by Chief Executive Islamic Republic of Pakistan General Pervez Musharraf", 17 October 1999, available at http://www.president ofpakistan .gov.pk.html.

[49] Punjabi and Pashtun representation in the armed forces is estimated at 87 to 95 per cent, although their combined share of the population is closer to 75 per cent. It is even higher in the military's senior ranks. Baloch representation is far less in percentage terms. By official accounts, there are 15,000 Baloch in the 550,000-strong army (excluding the paramilitary forces that operate under army command). BNP Senator Sanaullah Baloch estimated that the Baloch made up only 1.3 per cent of the armed forces, with Punjabis dominating senior positions in the military as well as in the civil service. Ihtasham-ul-Haque, "Arms supply to rebels cut off: Musharraf", *Dawn*, 5 September 2006; Hasan-Askari Rizvi, *Military, State and Society in Pakistan* (Lahore, 2003), pp. 240-241; Ahmad Faroqui, *Rethinking the National Security of Pakistan: The Price of Strategic Myopia* (Burlington 2003); and Crisis Group email interview, Senator Sanaullah Baloch, August 2006.

[50] See Crisis Group Asia Report N°77, *Devolution in Pakistan: Reform or Regression?*, 22 March 2004.

Ostensibly meant to devolve power, the Local Government Scheme bypasses the provinces and has created a clientele for the military at the local levels that depends on the regime for its survival.

Unsurprisingly, Baloch nationalists have rejected the devolution plan as a mechanism to impose a unitary form of government in the name of decentralisation, and a negation of provincial autonomy. According to a Baloch leader, the devolution plan, which "aimed at transferring administrative and financial power to local governments", has "undercut established political parties and drained power away from the provinces. (It has) strengthened military rule and may actually raise the risks of internal conflict".[51]

Rigging the national elections in 2002 to counter its civilian adversaries, the military also reinvigorated its long-standing alliance with the mullahs, helping the six-party religious alliance, the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA), to gain power in the NWFP.[52] In Balochistan too, the elections were rigged to sideline Baloch as well as Pashtun nationalist parties. Musharraf then oversaw the formation of a coalition government between his party, the Muslim League-Quaid-i-Azam (PML-Q), and the MMA. Although a Baloch, Jam Mohammad Yousaf, was appointed chief minister, he had little control over a cabinet in which prime posts were given to Fazlur Rehman's JUI (JUI-F).[53] With Pashtun Islamists running the province at the military's behest, marginalised at the centre and lacking a voice in their own province, Baloch nationalists rejected the military's electoral, political and constitutional manipulations.

Baloch and Pashtun nationalist parties in Balochistan were, and remain, divided in their approaches to ethnic rights. Mahmood Khan Achakzai's Pashtoon Khwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP), for instance, supports either the creation of a separate province for Balochistan's Pashtun-majority districts, called Pashtoonkhwa Southern (based on the former Chief Commissioner's Province) or their merger with the NWFP. Till the restructuring of the boundaries, it demands equal rights for the Baloch and Pashtuns in the province.[54] But averse to authoritarian rule and concerned about the growing power of the Islamist parties, the moderate Pashtun parties joined their Baloch counterparts in challenging Musharraf's political order. The Baloch opposition also closed ranks, across regional, tribal and class lines, against the mullah-military alliance.

In 2005, tensions between the Baloch and the military spun out of control and assumed the shape of a province-wide, low-level insurgency.

B. OUTBREAK AND DIRECTIONS OF CONFLICT

The rape of Dr Shazia Khalid, a company doctor at the Sui Gas plant, on 2 January 2005 was the spark.[55] The army's refusal to allow the local police to interrogate the suspects, who included an army officer, unleashed a storm of protest in the Sui tehsil (subdistrict) of Dera Bugti, spearheaded by JWP leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti.[56] Bugti tribesmen and Baloch militants attacked the Sui installation, security forces and gas pipelines, disrupting the supply of gas countrywide. Retaliatory action by security agencies, including army troops, claimed scores of civilian lives in Dera Bugti district.[57]

Peace was temporarily restored after ruling party officials, including PML-Q president Shujaat Hussain and Secretary General Mushahid Hussain began talks with Nawab Bugti. But President Musharraf was inflexible, blaming Bugti for the unrest. "Who has given Bugti the authority to speak on behalf of Balochistan?", he said.[58] With the talks stalemated, tensions again rose, and the crisis took on an even more serious dimension after an attack by Baloch militants on General Musharraf's public meeting in Kohlu

[51] Ibid., p. 1.
[52] See Crisis Group Asia Report N°49, *Pakistan: The Mullahs and the Military*, 20 March 2003.
[53] MMA portfolios include irrigation and power, planning and development, food, agriculture, education, religious affairs, local bodies, communications, health, minorities' affairs, information and information technology, and engineering. The MMA also runs the Balochistan Development Authority. Crisis Group Asia Report N°95, *The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan*, 18 April 2005, pp.20-21.
[54] The new province, they propose, should be named "Pashtoonkhwa" or "Afghania". Presentation of the delegation of the Pashtoon Khwa Milli Awami Party before the Parliamentary Committee meeting, chaired by Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chief Minister's Secretariat, Quetta, 5 November 2004, pp.3-37; also "Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan", op. cit.
[55] Dr Khalid has since sought asylum in the UK. "Pakistan: Further information on: Fear of Safety: Dr Shazia Khalid", Amnesty International, 31 March 2005, available at http://www.web.amnesty.org/library/Index/ENGASA330042005?open&of+ENG-376, html.
[56] A murder case was brought against Nawab Bugti, following an attack on a paramilitary convoy in March 2005.
[57] Dera Bugti *Nazim* (mayor) Muhammad Kazim Bugti issued a list of 59 civilian casualties of the 17 March 2005 military action in Dera Bugti. Many were women and children. PPP parliamentarian Sherry Rehman presented the list to the National Assembly. Asim Yasin, "Sherry presents proof of Dera Bugti killings", *Dawn*, 22 March 2005.
[58] Fahd Hussain, "In the shadows of Dera Bugti, contours of new government policy", *The News*, 26 March 2006.

town on 14 December 2005.[59] Days after that attack, security forces took action in Kohlu district.[60]

The army chief had provided the provocation by laying the foundations of a cantonment in Kohlu. Although Musharraf's visit was ostensibly aimed at announcing a major development package for the district, the army chief intended to send a strong message to his Baloch opposition that the state would enforce its writ by military means. Musharraf's assurance that "all the resources of the province will be utilised for your well-being, so do not pay heed to the elements who indulge in utterly baseless propaganda"[61] had little credence, given his decision to construct additional military cantonments at three sites of economic significance for the central government: in Dera Bugti, Nawab Bugti's home base and the site of Pakistan's largest gas installations; in Kohlu, Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri's constituency, reportedly rich in oil and gas reserves; and in Gwadar, the Chinese-built and financed deep water port on Balochistan's southern tip, also the site of a Pakistani naval base.

Although the government denies it, regular troops are conducting operations alongside paramilitary forces, mainly the Frontier Corps (FC), in Balochistan.[62] According to Musharraf, some 1,000 army personnel are merely assisting the paramilitary and other security forces there. U.S intelligence sources put the numbers at six army brigades, plus paramilitary troops, some 25,000 in all.[63] The government has cordoned off and limited media access to the worst hit areas, Dera Bugti and Kohlu.

As the military has expanded its operations, the militants, too, have escalated their attacks. The insurgency has spread almost province-wide, with the exception of the northern Pashtun belt, with frequent attacks on gas pipelines, electricity grids and railway tracks, as well as government installations and personnel in almost all Baloch majority areas – from Chagai bordering on Iran and Gwadar on Balochistan's southern coast, to Hub, the industrial city that borders on Sindh.[64] With the insurgency also spilling over into Sindh and Punjab, which have significant Baloch populations, the conflict has affected three of Pakistan's four federal units.

Although negotiations with the Baloch leadership could have helped defuse tensions before they reached current dimensions, the military, it seems, believes in only one solution: to enforce the writ of the state by force. It was this reasoning that led to the 26 August 2006 military operation that killed JWP leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti. But with his death, Bugti has become a symbol of Baloch resistance, a martyr who sacrificed his life for the Baloch cause. Many more young and angry Baloch, not just in Balochistan but also in Sindh,[65] and even the Baloch majority districts of Punjab, are likely now to join the militants.[66] And as the ranks of the militants grow, the military, too, might be forced to expand its presence and the scale of its operations, fuelling in turn more alienation and anger.

C. POLITICAL ACTORS

Islamabad insists that a handful of sardars in Balochistan are responsible for the conflict.[67] These tribal chiefs are resisting state authority to protect their personal fiefdoms since the central government's development policies would undermine their hold over their tribes, and hence their control over the resources of their tribal lands. "We will not let them (the sardars) flourish and challenge the government's writ", said Musharraf. "The government's writ will be established in Balochistan".[68]

[59] On 15 December 2005, Baloch militants also attacked a military helicopter, injuring the Frontier Corps Inspector General, Major General Shujaat Zamir Dar, and Deputy Inspector General Brigadier Saleem Nawaz.

[60] Said a Baloch opposition leader, "The military psyche is worse than what they say is our sardari (tribal) culture. For a single attack, the revenge the military takes is far worse than what they call tribal revenge". Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, January 2006.

[61] "We will not be deterred by anti-development elements", said Musharraf. "Saboteurs can't deter progress", *The Nation*, 15 December 2005; Sarfaraz Ahmed, "Musharraf's Kohlu visit not a wise move", *Daily Times*, 20 December 2005.

[62] Formally controlled by the interior ministry and ostensibly deployed at the province's request, the Frontier Corps is headed by serving military officers, and is, for all practical purposes, a subsidiary force of the army.

[63] "Rebel sardars 'to be fixed': Musharraf praises role of agencies, criticises media", *Dawn*, 21 July 2006; Selig Harrison, "Pakistan's costly 'other war'", *The Washington Post*, 15 February 2006.

[64] In 2005, there were 187 bomb blasts, 275 rocket attacks, eight attacks on the natural gas pipelines, 38 attacks on electricity transmission lines and nineteen explosions on railway lines. Sarfaraz Ahmed, "Sardars face rebellious tribesmen", *Friday Times*, 6-12 January 2006.

[65] In the protests that followed Bugti's death, the interior of Sindh came to a standstill.

[66] PPP national parliamentarian Sherry Rehman warned: "The Baloch will pick up steam. This could spread to the minority areas of Punjab and parts of NWFP as well. We are already seeing nationalist forces voicing their sense of insecurity and expressing solidarity with the Baloch". Crisis Group interview with Sherry Rehman, Islamabad, 28 August 2006.

[67] Since the insurgency began, the Musharraf government singled out Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri and Sardar Ataullah Mengal, who were also sardars of the Bugti, Marri and Mengal tribes, as the main culprits.

[68] "Disarming of militias needed for peace: President denies army action", *Dawn*, 4 February 2006.

The Baloch, however, are adamant that the centre's denial of democratic rights, and exploitation of Balochistan's resources have sparked the conflict. "We are democrats and nationalists", said the National Party's provincial general secretary. "We believe in a democratic Pakistan that respects the rights of all nationalities. The unrest in Balochistan is the result of injustices. We believe that Balochistan's problem is political and can be solved politically but the ball is in the military's court".[69] Opposition politicians also point out that the centre was responsible for perpetuating the sardari system, relying on divide-and-rule policies and using pliable sardars to consolidate its hold over the province.[70] Indeed, many of the more than 70 major Baloch sardars are beneficiaries of state patronage in return for services rendered.[71]

The insurgency extends far beyond the tribal belt into non-tribal regions such as the southern Makran belt. And its political support goes far beyond the Bugti, Marri and Mengal tribes, accused by Islamabad of instigating and sustaining the insurgency. Baloch politician Abdul Rauf Mengal said, "it is not just the three tribes but all Baloch people are fighting [for their rights], and most of them are ordinary Baloch".[72] The large majority support the four Baloch nationalist parties, the Balochistan National Party, the National Party, the Jamhoori Watan Party and Baloch Haq Talwar that propagate Baloch rights, although, as earlier mentioned, tribal and political loyalties often overlap.

The Balochistan National Party. Formed by Sardar Ataullah Mengal, the head of the Mengal tribe, the second largest in the province, the left-leaning Balochistan National Party resulted from a merger of Mengal's Balochistan National Movement and Ghous Bakhsh Bizenjo's Pakistan National Party. While Ataullah Megal's son, Sardar Akhtar Mengal, now heads the party, the BNP's Central Executive Committee has very few sardars. And the party's demand of maximum provincial autonomy, limiting the federal government's authority to four subjects, defence, foreign affairs, currency and communications, resound far beyond the Mengal tribe.

The Jamhoori Watan Party. Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti headed the Jamhoori Watan Party, formed in 1990. With a long career in government (as interior minister in the 1950s, governor of Balochistan under Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and chief minister of Balochistan's first provincial government after the restoration of democracy in 1988) and opposition, he was also the chief of the largest Bugti tribe. Nawab Bugti's importance was not only in his hereditary title but because his home base of Dera Bugti contained the Sui gas fields, which provide Pakistan most of its natural gas. While the JWP support-base is largely limited to the Bugti tribe, and many of Nawab Bugti's supporters were fellow tribesmen who had taken up arms at their sardar's behest, Bugti's defiant stand had won him the support of many other Baloch, including those who were initially sceptical about his motives, given his past history of working with the centre against Baloch nationalist forces.[73] Defending Nawab Bugti, Sardar Akhtar Mengal insisted: "If Bugti was a turncoat then he would not be in the mountains; he could have made a deal (with Musharraf), which he did not".[74] After Bugti's death at the military's hands, he is honoured as a martyr for the Baloch cause. His party, the JWP, will remain a major political player.

Baloch Haq Talwar. Like Nawab Bugti's JWP, Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri's Baloch Haq Talwar is also largely tribal in its membership and structures. As discussed below, the Marri tribe is at the forefront of the resistance to military rule. The government accuses the ageing Marri's son, Nawabzada Balaach Marri, of leading the insurgency.[75]

The National Party. Tribal structures are much stronger in the Marri and Bugti areas than the Makran division and coastal areas, where Dr Abdul Hayee Baloch's National Party (NP) has a substantial popular base. Formed out of a merger of the Balochistan National Movement and the Balochistan National Democratic Party, it strongly opposes the central government's projects in the Makran belt such as Gwadar port, demanding that the Baloch should have the right to control their own resources and to determine their own priorities, political and economic. With its educated, non-tribal cadre, the National Party is opposed to the sardari system. Yet it rejects the Musharraf government's claims that the sardars are solely responsible for all of Balochistan's ills. Instead, the National Party places the blame for the crisis squarely on the military's shoulders.

[69] Crisis Group interview, National Party leader Tahir Bizenjo, Quetta, February 2006.
[70] "Most sardars" said Tahir Bizenjo "are clients of the military". Ibid.
[71] BNP leader Ataullah Mengal said: "There are 72 sardars sitting in Musharraf's lap. He should go and develop their areas. But the state of those sardars' area is as deplorable as that of any other area in the province". Ataullah Mengal's interview in *The Friday Times*, 7-13 July 2006.
[72] Crisis Group interview, BNP national parliamentarian Abdul Rauf Mengal, Islamabad, February 2006.
[73] Bugti had, for instance, assumed the governorship of Balochistan after Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's dismissal of Ataullah Mengal's NAP-led government.
[74] Crisis Group interview, BNP President, Sardar Akhtar Mengal, Quetta, March 2006.
[75] Balochistan's police chief claimed that Balaach Marri, a provincial parliamentarian, headed the BLA, an accusation denied by Marri who said, "I have no links with the BLA but I appreciate their struggle because they are demanding complete control of the Baloch over their natural resources. "BLA declared terrorist organisation", *The Nation*, 10 April 2006.

The NP has joined forces with the BNP, the JWP and Baloch Haq Talwaar in demanding an end to military action and Baloch rights within a democratic, federal pluralistic framework.[76] The Baloch Alliance, said NP leader Dr. Baloch, will "stand the test of time", stressing that when "we see trouble from outside to our nation, we stand as one".[77] Admitting that the four parties "still had political differences", said BNP leader Akhtar Mengal, "on the Balochistan issue, we are one".[78]

Balochistan Students Organisation. Formed in 1967, the Balochistan Students' Organisation (BSO) represents the educated Baloch middle class and students and has emerged as an independent political force, with its demands including jobs for the Baloch youth and recognition of Balochi as a medium of instruction in the province.[79] Divided into three factions, the BSO has united in the face of the challenges facing the Baloch.[80] Although the BSO is not politically aligned with any nationalist party, like them it strongly opposes military rule.

The four Baloch parties and the BSO believe that the militants are justified in targeting the military but also insist that Baloch nationalists do not support secession. Our demands, said a Baloch leader, are "not against the country. We never want to disintegrate the country. We want our rights within (its) geographical boundaries".[81]

If the vast majority of Baloch support the demand for a democratic, federal polity and provincial rights, the Pashtuns are divided among the Pashtun nationalist parties, such as Mahmood Khan Achakzai's Pashtoon Khwa Milli Awami Party (PKMAP) and Pashtun-dominated Islamist parties such as Fazlur Rehman's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), the largest party in the MMA and Musharraf's coalition partner in the provincial government.

The PKMAP. Formed in 1987, it advocates a democratic, parliamentary federation in which all nationalities are politically and economically empowered. It believes that the present constitutional arrangements work against the Pashtuns in Balochistan. But while the Pashtun and Baloch nationalist parties might differ on the political and economic rights of their ethnic constituents, faced with a common adversary they have closed ranks in demanding an end to military exploitation of and control over Balochistan.[82] Condemning the operations in Balochistan, a PKMAP leader stressed that the military intervention had deprived Pakistan, politically and constitutionally, of "a workable federation", adding, "the Pashtuns (in Balochistan) might not have resisted (central intervention and armed action) militarily but we support the demands of the Baloch and our political actions are supportive of them".[83] Stressed a PKMAP activist, "the basic tussle in Pakistan is between authoritarianism and democracy. We are entitled to our political rights….If the government forces us against the wall, we too will fight for them".[84]

The PML-Q-MMA coalition government includes some Baloch nationalist elements such as the breakaway BNP faction, BNP-Awami, but is dominated by JUI-F.[85] With the military government bent on using the mullahs to neutralise its Baloch and Pashtun opposition, the JUI-F, the dominant party in the MMA, has been given far more than its due share of cabinet seats. The PML-Q is justifiably disgruntled. Said a PML-Q provincial parliamentarian, "at the formation of the coalition government, a decision was taken to let the MMA run the show….The Chief Secretary [of Balochistan] supports the mullahs, but on the orders of the military".[86]

Baloch sardars, aligned to the ruling PML-Q, have benefited politically from military patronage but are also well aware that their support for Musharraf could prove a political liability in the future. Hence pro-government Baloch

[76] The four Baloch nationalist parties have forged a formal alliance, the Baloch Alliance (Baloch *Ittehad*).
[77] Crisis Group interview, National Party leader, Dr Abdul Hayee Baloch, Karachi, April 2006.
[78] Crisis Group interview, BNP President Sardar Akhtar Mengal, Islamabad, January 2006.
[79] Said a BSO office holder, "we see how Baloch students are treated" after graduating from Balochistan University. "We know we'll be treated the same way when we leave school and seek work". Crisis Group interview, Kalat, February 2005.
[80] "BSO has a clear policy on Baloch rights", said a BSO office holder, "We might be divided but we're united on the issue of Balochistan". Crisis Group interview, Kalat, February 2005.
[81] Crisis Group interview, JWP Secretary-General Senator Agha Shahid Bugti, Quetta, March 2006. A Pakistan People's Party member of the Balochistan legislature agreed that the Baloch political leaders were not "separatists; it is the federal government which is creating widespread support for the insurgency due to its heavy-handed military response". Crisis Group interview, PPP member of the Provincial Assembly (MPA), Shafiq Ahmed Khan, Quetta, March 2006.

[82] Formed in 1998 and currently headed by Mahmood Khan Achakzai, the Pakistan Oppressed Nations Movement (PONAM), an alliance of Baloch, Pashtun, Sindhi and Seraiki nationalist parties, seeks complete autonomy for the federal units, with the centre's powers restricted to defence, foreign affairs, and currency.
[83] Crisis Group interview, PKMAP leader, Abdur Rahim Mandokhel, Quetta, March 2006.
[84] Crisis Group interview, Pishin, February 2005.
[85] "The MMA is a coalition of parties", said Dilawar Khan Kakar, an MMA leader, "In Balochistan, there is only one MMA party, the JUI-F. The Jamaat-i-Islami has no role in the government of Balochistan". Crisis Group interview, Quetta, November 2004.
[86] "The nationalist parties wanted to form an alliance [with PML-Q], but there was no interest in cooperating", he said. Crisis Group interview with Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, Quetta, November 2004.

parliamentarians and sardars have taken care to hedge their bets. Conscious that the conflict within Balochistan is fast eroding their local standing, members of the ruling coalition have urged Islamabad to end military action and seek a negotiated peace. Criticising the use of force, the deputy speaker of the Balochistan Assembly, the PML-Q's Mohammad Aslam Bhootani, for instance, called for an immediate end to military operations and immediate negotiations to resolve the issues faced by the province. Dismissing the government's claims that the crisis had been engineered by a few sardars motivated by personal gain, he said: "They are not mere sardars. They are also major political leaders who enjoy mass support". In a grim prophesy, just weeks before Bugti was killed, he urged the government to remove the precondition of laying down arms if talks were to be held: "Sardars prefer death to surrender".[87]

D. BALOCH MILITANTS

> *"It is not the government's writ that has been challenged. It is the writ of the people which is challenged"*. – BNP President Sardar Akhtar Mengal.[88]

Balochistan Liberation Army: In the ongoing insurgency, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) has claimed credit for most attacks on government installations and personnel and on communication links and energy grids province-wide.[89] There is speculation that two other militant groups, the Balochistan People's Liberation Front (BPLF) and the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) might have merged into it. Other observers believe that the BLF operates mainly in southern Balochistan but coordinates its activities closely with the BLA. Nawab Bugti described the BLA, the BLF and the BPLF as "different groups or organisations". Denying any links to them, he said: "Whatever they do, they do on their own. They don't ask anyone".[90] The leader of the opposition in the Balochistan Assembly, Kachkool Ali Baloch, concurred that there were multiple militant groups with different tactics but an identical goal – to protect the Baloch people from an oppressive and exploitative centre.[91]

Reportedly Marri as well as Bugti tribesmen form the bulk of the BLA's cadre, some of whom participated in the 1970s insurgency and others who have taken up arms for the first time. The BLA also reportedly draws its strength from under-employed, alienated and politicised Baloch youth in Quetta, Balochistan's capital, and other towns.[92]

Although the government, as well as BLA spokespersons, attribute all militant activity to it, very little is known about its leadership, command structures, or manpower. No Baloch nationalist political party or tribal group publicly admits knowledge of or links to the militant group, and with good reason. On 9 April, the Musharraf government banned the BLA as a terror organisation, threatening to arrest anyone with links to it, a move that was seen by many as the first step in a systematic campaign to clamp down on Baloch dissent.[93] Since then, scores of Baloch nationalist leaders and activists have been charged with links to the BLA.

Given the shadowy nature of the organisation, it is nearly impossible to determine if it is responsible for coordinating and carrying out all militant activity, but it is not that difficult to determine the source of its arms. While senior government officials have repeatedly implied New Delhi's political and material support for the Baloch militants, weapons poured into Balochistan during the anti-Soviet Afghan jihad and the Afghan civil war, when the province was a major hub of cross-border activity. Kabul's inability to control its borderlands has also facilitated gunrunning into neighbouring Pakistani provinces, including Balochistan. Moreover, most Baloch possess weapons, and many sardars maintain private militias.

It is even easier to determine why Baloch militants have taken up arms, and why their struggle has wide support among the Baloch. "When nobody wants to hear our voice, we're forced to make them hear it through violence", said a young Baloch activist. A BSO member added, "the young people have taken up arms; they are fighting for their rights. They think they can't get them through a political struggle. If this still continues, if we can't get our rights through political means, we too will take up the gun. These are not things that a good citizen says. But we are now tired. This is our last struggle".[94]

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[87] "Dialogue urged on Balochistan crisis: Bhootani criticises military action", *Dawn*, 7 June 2006.
[88] Crisis Group interview, Quetta, March 2006.
[89] Responsibility for many of the attacks is claimed by a BLA spokesperson, Azad (Free) Baloch.
[90] "They are working for Baloch rights", said Nawab Bugti. Haroon Rashid's interview with Akbar Khan Bugti, *Newsline*, February 2005.
[91] Crisis Group interview, Quetta, March 2006.
[92] "Can Pakistan tame the restive province?, *The Economist*, 5 May 2005; Zahid Hussain, "Musharraf's other war", *Newsline*, January 2006.
[93] The BLA "had been proscribed for the reason that they were involved in terrorist activities, they were involved in missile attacks and bomb explosions. And they have themselves admitted responsibility for these acts", said Interior Minister Aftab Ahmed Khan Sherpao, with Interior Secretary Syed Kamal Shah adding that all those involved would be tried by Anti-Terrorism Courts. "BLA declared terrorist organisation", *The Nation*, 10 April 2006.
[94] Crisis Group interviews, Mastung, February 2005.

Justifying Baloch support for the militants, the leader of the National Party said: "Why would we condemn the insurgents? The violence is perpetrated by the federal government; it is they whom everyone should condemn".[95] Claiming that the militants were broadly representative of Baloch society and included tribal and educated, rural and urban Baloch, another Baloch leader stressed that unemployment, poverty and frustration and disillusionment with Islamabad were responsible for swelling the ranks of the militants. "The insurgency", he said, was "about political and economic rights".[96]

If the insurgency is the product of resentment against centralised authoritarian rule and the centre's refusal to respect constitutionally guaranteed provincial autonomy and democratic freedoms, the military's heavy-handed response has made matters worse. Indeed, Islamabad would have done well to heed the warning of a Baloch leader that the nationalist parties, which still adhere to the constitutionally sanctioned rules of the political game, "could be forced to move towards more hardline positions".[97] In January 2006, Nawab Bugti had said: "The denial of democratic rights and economic deprivation have compelled people to take up arms. It is war now".[98] With his death, the Baloch political opposition, and militants, will almost certainly harden their stance.

IV. BALOCH GRIEVANCES AND DEMANDS

A. POLITICAL AUTONOMY

> *"When we're deprived of democratic governance, of our resources, and our culture, you can understand the confrontation with the state. The 1973 constitution gave some autonomy to the provinces but even that limited autonomy has not been practised."* – Baloch Opposition Leader.[99]

If Islamabad's exploitation of Balochistan's resources and neglect of the province's development are responsible for Baloch alienation, the military government's refusal to negotiate the demands for provincial autonomy is primarily responsible for the conflict. Since Pakistan is a "multicultural, multi-regional state", said an opposition politician, "it should be run as a federation. The powers of the federation should be decided by the federating units", and the federal government "should be subservient to parliament".[100] But, as mentioned, Musharraf's devolution scheme has consolidated the centre's control over local levels of government, and his constitutional manipulations have made the national parliament subservient to the president, the nominal head of state in Pakistan's federal, parliamentary system.[101]

Under Musharraf's political dispensation, Balochistan's provincial government is, for all practical purposes, a subsidiary arm of the centre, working at its behest and following its directives. "The provincial government", said Dr Baloch, "is the tool of the federal establishment". There is no "provincial purview (over) political and economic decisions. All our decisions are made for us" by Islamabad.[102] The provincial legislature's sessions, for instance, have been repeatedly cancelled under central pressure to prevent the opposition from discussing the directions and impact of the conflict.[103] Even administrative appointments and transfers are made in Islamabad.

Inter-provincial tensions have also contributed to Baloch alienation. An ethnically skewed military and civil

[95] Crisis Group interview, leader of the National Party, Dr Abdul Hayee Baloch, Karachi, April 2006.
[96] Crisis Group interview, JWP Secretary-General Senator Agha Shahid Bugti, Quetta, March 2006.
[97] The difference between the militants and the nationalist parties, said Sardar Akhtar Mengal, was that the former "do not think they can achieve anything through democratic and constitutional means". While the "Baloch nationalists are still optimistic about engaging in the democratic process, they are increasingly frustrated". Crisis Group interview, BNP President Sardar Akhtar Mengal, Quetta, March 2006.
[98] Zahid Hussain, "Its war now: A major rebellion puts President Musharraf's policies to test", *Newsweek*, 16 January 2006.
[99] Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, January 2006.
[100] Crisis Group interview, leader of the National Party, Dr Abdul Hayee Baloch, Karachi, April 2006.
[101] See Crisis Asia Reports, *Pakistan: Transition to Democracy?*, op.cit; and *Devolution in Pakistan*, op.cit.
[102] Crisis Group interview, leader of the National Party, Dr Abdul Hayee Baloch, Karachi, April 2006.
[103] The opposition in the Balochistan Assembly unsuccessfully asked for the Assembly to be convened from 15 December 2005, when the military action began, but no sessions were held until 27 March 2006.

bureaucracy have reinforced perceptions that the centre represents Punjabi interests at the cost of the smaller federating units, including Balochistan. "The Baloch have tried their utmost to develop friendly relations with the Punjab-dominated establishment but they have backed us against the wall", said BNP leader and former Balochistan chief minister Ataullah Mengal, adding, "The Punjabi establishment will never back the idea of giving full autonomy to the other provinces".[104] Resentment is particularly high against the army. Asserting that the military operation in Balochistan was not just against the sardars but "against all Baloch, all Balochistan", a Baloch political activist said, "this is not a national army but an army of the Punjab".[105]

Since ruling PML-Q politicians lack a domestic constituency and depend on the centre for their own political survival, Musharraf has had, per force, to rely on the Pashtun Islamist parties to offset the Baloch opposition. In return, the military government has refrained from intruding on the mullahs' turf.[106] At the same time, it has turned a blind eye to the provincial government's corruption.[107]

B. SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONCERNS

In the absence of democratic institutions, Baloch anger over central control and exploitation of the province's economic resources and its development schemes, with little or no input from the province, has reached new heights. "It is totally a wrong concept that we oppose development. The basic question is about the nature and modalities of development. That is why the basic demand of Balochistan's political parties is that provinces must be given maximum autonomy. Trust them and give them the authority to undertake development projects", said a Baloch opposition leader.[108]

1. Gwadar

In 1992, when the Nawaz Sharif government decided to build a deep sea port at Gwadar on Balochistan's Makran coast, 624 nautical miles from the Straits of Hormuz, the locals had welcomed it. Now, the situation has drastically changed. President Musharraf insists that the Gwadar project demonstrates his government's commitment to developing Balochistan.[109] Since the Baloch are not stakeholders or beneficiaries, they strongly oppose it, perceiving the project as yet another central government scheme to exploit Balochistan's resources, while also altering the province's demographic composition to their disadvantage.

Conceived as a regional hub for transit and transhipment of goods for Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Middle East, the port has been a priority for the Musharraf government. Due to be completed in 2010, the government also intends to make Gwadar a focus for investment, encouraging the establishment of export-oriented petrochemical and other industries.[110] The port would serve the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipelines, should they be built. It is also expected to bolster Pakistan's strategic defensives by providing an alternative port to Karachi, which was blockaded by the Indian navy in previous wars.[111]

Gwadar port is run by the federal government, with no provincial control. For instance, Islamabad will not have to consult the provincial government when it hands over development of the second phase of the port to the private sector.[112] It will also retain the revenues when it transfers the port's operating rights to the private sector.[113] Because the Gwadar project provides little in terms of employment and development to the locals, there is immense resistance. Gwadar still has only one intermediate college and not a single technical school. No steps have been taken to improve the poor health facilities or to even provide access

[104] Interview with Ataullah Mengal, *Friday Times*, 7-13 July 2006.
[105] Crisis Group interview, Gwadar, December 2005.
[106] This includes official inaction on madrasa reform since JUI-F, the senior partner in the MMA alliance, runs most madrasas in Balochistan. See Crisis Group Report, *The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan*, op. cit.
[107] Perceptions of MMA corruption are widespread in Balochistan. Crisis Group interviews, Quetta, Pishin and Chaman, November 2004, February 2005.
[108] Shamim-ur-Rehman's interview with National Party leader Hasil Bizenjo, *Dawn*, 12 February 2006.
[109] Just two days before the military launched a full-fledged operation, Musharraf said: "We will run Gwadar as a modern port – it will not only bring massive economic development to the province and the country but also serve as a trade corridor for Central Asia, Afghanistan and the Gulf region". "Saboteurs can't deter progress", *The Nation*, 15 December 2005.
[110] See "Gwadar", Board of Investment, Government of Pakistan, available at http://www.pakboi.gov.pk?News_Event/Gawadar.html.
[111] Lieutenant Commander Ammad Hussain, Pakistan Navy, "Pakistan's Gwadar Port – Prospects of Economic Revival", thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey California, June 1995, p.19.
[112] Work on Gwadar port began in March 2002; the first phase was completed in 2005, with China providing $198 million of the $248 million for its construction and employing 450 Chinese engineers and workers. "Gwadar", Board of Investment, op.cit.
[113] A number of companies, including Dubai World Port, Hutchinson Port Holdings of Hongkong and Singapore-based PSA International are in the runing for the contract to operate Gwadar port. Muzaffar Rizvi, "DPW faces Hutchinson in race for Gwadar", *Khaleej Times*, 3 August 2006; Ihtasham-ul-Haque, "Three global firms competing to run Gwadar port", *Dawn*, 2 July 2006.

to safe drinking water to Gwadar and other parts of Makran division.[114]

But the central government, including the military and civil bureaucracies, has appropriated thousands of acres of prime coastal lands. Said a Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) official, "Gwadar's lands have been seized by state agencies, the coast guards, the navy, the paramilitaries. Every general has a plot in Gwadar. They say these plots were given because this is a federal project. But this is a land grab".[115] More than 80 per cent of locals rely on fishing for a livelihood. They have lost their prime fishing grounds, located along the East Bay where the port was constructed.[116] While they now barely make a subsistence living, security agencies restrict their movement on land and at sea. "When the fisherman goes home without fish, how does he feed his children? What is his crime?" asked a member of the local fishermen's organisation. He added, "We don't oppose development projects but we can't make a living, and the doors to employment are closed to our children and our brothers".[117]

The locals could also lose their homes if Gwadar's master plan, which was prepared with no local consultation, is implemented since they would be relocated some fifteen to twenty kilometres from the port area. "The location where the port is built is the richest fishing ground, but [when] the decision was taken to build it, the fishermen were not consulted", and when the master plan was announced, again with no local consultation, "people found that the whole city would be dislocated. There was a huge uproar", said a local NGO activist.[118] And the locals have yet to be compensated for their loss by jobs. There are no plans to employ them at the port.

The Baloch are equally concerned about the demographic impact of the influx of non-Baloch workers to man and run the port if and when it becomes functional. Non-Baloch have been given preferential access to contracts, jobs and land in Gwadar. The private sector has also been encouraged to embark on massive housing projects in the port city, covering thousands of acres of prime land, that have the potential of altering the demographic balance of the district and even the province.[119]

In the absence of economic opportunities in Balochistan, which lacks industries, the means of livelihood remain fishing, subsistence agriculture and horticulture and animal husbandry. As a result, there is constant out-migration, with only 56 per cent of Pakistan's total Baloch population residing within the province. The influx of millions of Afghans during the Afghan civil war has also already strained the delicate demographic balance between the Baloch and Pashtuns. The Baloch are well aware of the history of Karachi, Sindh's capital. With a Sindhi population of 0.5 million at Pakistan's independence, it now has more than 14 million people. Almost 90 per cent of them are non-Sindhis, rendering the Sindhis a minority in their capital city.

The Baloch opposition insists that Gwadar port should be placed under the control of the provincial government. The provincial cabinet should have a major say in this and other regional projects. They are also adamant that economic migrants and workers should not have voting rights in Gwadar.[120] Provincial parliamentarians from the ruling party have supported many of these demands, with the minister for Gwadar development authority, Syed Sher Jan Baloch, for instance, warning that Islamabad's policy of issuing licenses to domestic and international trawlers harmed the interests of local fishermen, and the fisheries minister, Mir Ashgar Rind, criticising the management of the Gwadar Port Authority for transferring the assets of Gwadar port to Karachi, without informing the provincial government.[121]

To prevent the government from completing the project and to deter investors until their demands are met, Baloch militants have attacked government installations and personnel in Gwadar. Chinese engineers have also been

[114] Background paper, Rural Community Development Council, Gwadar.
[115] Crisis Group interview, Gwadar, December 2005.
[116] "As the port became operational, the fishermen would also be deprived of the fish harbour, while harsh security restrictions were already undermining their trade". Deprived of their livelihood, they could be forced to leave Gwadar, assessed a local official. "Impact of development on fisheries sector in Gwadar". Paper provided to Crisis Group by an official of the Balochistan Coastal Development Authority.
[117] Crisis Group interview, local fishermen, Gwadar, December 2005.
[118] Crisis Group interview, Gwadar, December 2005.
[119] "Gwadar city" wrote a naval officer, "is being contemplated as a replica of Dubai" and, in accordance with the master plan, "development work is already underway to ensure that necessary facilities are made available to establish businesses and requisite housing needs". Lieutenant Commander Ammad Hussain, op.cit., p. 33. But with corruption and fraud marring many property development schemes, real estate prices have fallen drastically, pushed down also because of political unrest.
[120] Crisis Group interviews, Gwadar and Quetta, December-March 2006.
[121] Warning that the provincial government would not accept any policy of the federal government or Gwadar Port Authority that was made without consulting it, the fisheries minister pointed out that while the management of the port claimed to have shifted its offices to Gwadar from Karachi – one recommendation of the Hussain subcommittee – tenders relating to the port were still being issued in Karachi. "Balochistan seeks IPI gas pipeline royalty", *Dawn*, 10 June 2006.

attacked since China is a major investor in the project.[122] "We are determined we will not let the government implement any plan that goes against our interest, not any longer", said a local political activist. Another added, "the choice for the people here is either to die or to take up the gun".[123]

A senior GPA official warned, "Unless social indictors are raised, unless locals see tangible benefits, there will be no (local) by-in". He added that the project would not take off "unless the infrastructure is in place and unless security issues are addressed".[124] In the present climate, when none of these preconditions have been met, the federal government will likely face an uphill task in ensuring that the port project meets its economic potential.

2. Energy resources

Natural gas is a very important source of energy in Pakistan, supplying 49 per cent of Pakistan's energy needs according to the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Resources. Disputes over sharing the revenues from Sui gas field, the largest gas field in Pakistan, have long soured relations between the Baloch and the centre. Pakistan Petroleum Limited (PPL) operates Sui (PPL's largest producing field) and five other gas fields in Balochistan and Sindh, with the federal government holding 78 per cent of PPL's stake.[125] With new gas discoveries and higher prices charged and earned for natural gas, Balochistan's natural gas fields are a major revenue earner for the federal government. But the Baloch benefit little from the natural gas or its revenues.

According to the constitution: "The Province in which a well head of natural gas is situated shall have precedence over other parts of Pakistan in meeting the requirements from that well head".[126] Balochistan is responsible for 36 per cent of Pakistan's total gas production, but it consumes only 17 per cent of its own production, with 83 per cent of its natural gas provided to the rest of the country for industrial and household use.[127] Piped gas is available to only four of Balochistan's 28 districts.[128] Balochistan receives a 12.4 per cent royalty from its natural gas revenues but that royalty is based on a well head price that is far lower than that of other provinces.[129] Obtaining their due share of the profits is particularly important for the Baloch since the province lacks arable land, and its wealth is mainly mineral-based.[130] Despite the income it derives from Sui and other gas fields, the centre gives back little to the locals in terms of infrastructure development, hospitals, schools or technical training. Operating and senior staff of energy production and distribution facilities are employed from outside the province; the installations mainly employ Baloch as day labourers. With the centre refusing to accede to Baloch demands that the province obtain its rightful share of its natural resources and have a say in their distribution and exploitation, Baloch militants and moderates alike are adamant that this exploitation has to stop. Even the ruling party in Balochistan agrees that the province must get its fair share.[131]

For the militants, the answer lies in forcibly preventing the centre's exploration and extraction in regions that are resource-rich, such as the Bugti and Marri homelands.[132] Because the country so heavily depends on the supply of gas from Balochistan, the gas fields and Balochistan's distribution grids have become bargaining chips in the conflict. "The forces can't protect the gas facilities until the people support the state", said a political party activist.[133] With periodic attacks on pipelines and installations disrupting gas supplies, the Baloch are determined to increase the cost of the conflict for Islamabad. "We might

[122] In May 2004, militants killed three Chinese engineers and wounded another nine. Since 2005, there have been several attacks in Gwadar.
[123] Crisis Group interviews, Gwadar, December 2005.
[124] "What is essential" he said "was good governance, an efficient (port) operator, services, law and order and security of personnel". Crisis Group interview, Karachi, December 2005.
[125] Gas was first discovered at Sui in 1952.
[126] Article 158.
[127] Grare, op. cit., p.5.
[128] Ibid, p.3. While most of Punjab has access to it, even Balochistan's provincial capital Quetta was supplied natural gas only as late as 1980, and then, in Baloch perceptions, because it houses a large military cantonment. Crisis Group interviews, Quetta, May 2006.
[129] In Balochistan, the well head price for natural gas is $0.38 per thousand cubic feet; some sites in Punjab and Sindh get $3 and $2 respectively. Syed Fazl-e-Haider, "Gas subsidised at Balochistan's expense", *Dawn*, 21 August 2006. See also "Conflict in Balochistan – A report of the fact-finding missions: December 2005-January 2006", Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, Lahore, 2006.
[130] According to Article 161 (i) of the constitution, "the net proceeds of the Federal duty of excise on natural gas levied at well head and collected by the federal government, and the royalty collected by the Federal Government, shall not form part of the Federal Consolidated Fund and shall be paid to the Province in which the well head of natural gas is situated".
[131] Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Mohammad Yousaf has asked for the province's just share in gas development surcharge and gas royalty, in the absence of which, he said, the province faced a serious problem in balancing its budget and initiating development programmes. "Balochistan faces financial crisis: Jam", *Dawn*, 12 June 2006.
[132] Explaining why the Marris opposed oil exploration in their lands, Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri said: "We saw what happened in the Bugti area, where they have 'developed' the Sui gas, 80 per cent of which goes out of Balochistan to make others rich". Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, op. cit., p.47.
[133] Crisis Group interview, Mastung, February 2005.

not defeat the Pakistani army but we will drain out the Pakistani economy" said one Baloch politician.[134]

The Baloch reject Islamabad's accusations that tribal chiefs such as Nawab Bugti had resorted to militancy in an attempt to blackmail the state for their own personal gains, hoping to increase the income they obtained from the extraction of gas from their tribal lands.[135] Although Nawab Bugti did earn rent from the use of his tribal lands, it was the centre, not the sardars or the province that benefited most from the income. Balochistan receives $100 million[136] in provincial royalties on natural gas; the central government earns $1.416 billion annually in revenue.[137]

Baloch nationalist leaders insist they are not opposed to development but are against the exploitation of natural resources that do not benefit local communities. They also insist that the province, not the sardars or the centre, should be the main beneficiary of the income from Balochistan's natural gas and other mineral resources. If Balochistan had control over its resources, said one leader, "we ourselves can focus on social development such as education and healthcare".[138] Another stressed, "economic and political rights need to be achieved in tandem; one cannot be achieved without the other".[139]

Because Pakistan's currently exploited gas resources will likely be depleted by 2012, the government is keen on developing Balochistan's unexplored oil and gas reserves. By some estimates, Balochistan has 19 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves and 6 trillion barrels of off-shore and on-shore oil reserves.[140] But prospective deals with oil and gas companies have been negotiated by Islamabad without consulting Baloch stakeholders. Six new exploration concessions were signed with Pakistani and foreign companies, but with no input from the province.[141] The government also plans to sell 51 per cent of shares in PPL, Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited and Sui Southern Gas Company Limited, but again without consulting Baloch stakeholders.[142] With Nawab Bugti's death and the prospects of the conflict escalating further, more disruptions to energy supplies are inevitable and could deter investors.[143]

3. Distribution of resources

As mentioned above, the National Finance Commission (NFC), the mechanism used by the centre to distribute federal grants to the provinces, is contentious because it is controlled by the federal government, and in the Balochistan context, because the main criterion for NFC awards is population.[144] The NFC has only been constituted seven times and has only finalised its recommendations on three occasions, in 1974, 1990 and 1996. In 1979 and 1985, the NFC did not finalise its recommendations because of provincial disagreements over the allocation of funds. Under President Musharraf, too, the NFC failed to make recommendations in 2000 and 2005, thereby delaying the transfer of payments to the provinces. The award should be determined through consensus among the provinces and on an equitable basis, so President Musharraf's decision to announce it unilaterally is resented by the Baloch and the other smaller federal units.[145]

The centre's failure to change the formula is as strongly opposed by the ruling party in Balochistan as it is by the Baloch opposition. "We want a new formula for the distribution of national resources, something which takes

[134] Crisis Group interview, BNP leader Sardar Ataullah Mengal, Karachi, April 2006.
[135] PPL and the state-owned Oil and Gas Development Company (OGDC) operate the gas fields in the Bugti lands.
[136] Figures denoted in dollars ($) in this report refer to U.S. dollars.
[137] Syed Fazle Haider, "Higher poverty in Balochistan", *Dawn*, 6 February 2006.
[138] Crisis Group interview, JWP Secretary-General Senator Agha Shahid Bugti, Quetta, March 2006.
[139] Crisis Group interview, BNP president, Sardar Akhtar Mengal, Quetta, March 2006.
[140] Grare, op. cit., p.4.
[141] See "Balochistan", Board of Investment, Government of Pakistan, available at http://www.pakboi.gov.pk/Bfacts/balochistan_.html.
[142] In the energy sector, the Privatisation Commission intends to sell 51 per cent of shares, along with management control, of PPL, OGDC Limited, Pirkoh Gas Company, Pakistan State Oil, Sui Southern Gas Company Limited and Sui Northern Gas Pipeline Company Limited. See "List of Privatisation Transactions currently included in the Privatisation Program of the Privatisation Commission", 3 May 2006, available at http://www.privitisation.gov.pkabout/List%20pf%Privitisation%Prog.htm. See also Khaleeq Kiani, "Emerging gas market, privatisation and the CCI", *Dawn*, 17 July 2006.
[143] Foreign companies operating in Balochistan include the U.S.-owned Petronas Carigali, Hycarbex, Nativus, and Eni and the Polish-owned Polish Oil and Gas. In July 2004, a U.S. company stopped offshore drilling operations in Gwadar district. In January 2005, an attack by militants on the U.S.-UK-owned Uch capacity power plant in Sindh raised concerns about the security of foreign investments and assets in Pakistan. John C.K. Daly, "The Baloch insurgency and its threat to Pakistan's energy sector", the Jamestown Foundation, 21 March 2006.
[144] The NFC would "examine and review the resource distribution pattern, needs of the federation and its federating units and recommend methodology for distribution of resources generated by the Federal Government in a judicious and equitable manner". "A presentation on inter-governmental fiscal relations", ministry of finance, Government of Pakistan, Islamabad, May 2006.
[145] Crisis Group interview, PPP's Raza Rabbani, leader of the opposition in the Senate, April 2006.

into account multiple factors and not just population", demanded Balochistan Chief Minister Jam Yousaf.[146] By revising the criteria to account for backwardness, level of development, geographic size and revenue levels of the provinces, the centre would remove at least one major bone of contention.

C. SECURITY

The government plans on constructing a $1.67 billion road network, which it says would link Balochistan to the rest of the country and make Gwadar Port the hub of regional trade with China and Central Asia.[147] Baloch nationalists, however, believe this road-building project is aimed at easier extraction of Balochistan's natural resources and to enable the Pakistan army and security agencies to expand their control over the province.[148]

It is this distrust of the centre that lies at the heart of Baloch opposition to Islamabad's plans to change the policing structure of the province. Districts in Balochistan are divided into two categories, "A" and "B". A police force operates in the districts that constitute the "A" areas. In the "B" areas, some 96 per cent of the territory, the Balochistan Levies, a force recruited mainly from locals, is responsible for enforcing law and order. The government is now in the process of merging the two, replacing the Levies with the police.[149] Although the Levies are not well trained or equipped, and separate administrative arrangements undermine the rule of law, Baloch and Pashtun regional parties oppose the merger. They believe that a corrupt and undisciplined police, composed mainly of non-Baloch, would compound problems instead of redressing threats to law and order. "Had there been rule of law, then the merger would have worked but there is none", said National Party leader Tahir Bizenjo. "Replacing Levies with the police is no answer" said a PKMAP leader, "The police are at the heart of all evil. Instead the Levies should be trained professionally and better equipped".[150]

The Baloch have good reason to distrust the security agencies in their province. The Frontier Corps' checkposts, a para-military force that operates under central government command, have become a major source of insecurity for locals – Baloch and Pashtuns alike.[151] Complaints of abuse at the hundreds of FC checkposts include "extortion, humiliation, threats and outright use of lethal force without any provocation".[152] "The FC is here to kill us, not to protect us", said a political party activist.[153] The security presence in the sparsely populated province is undeniably overwhelming, and most security personnel are not locals.[154]

In a province that already has an excessive security presence, the government's decision to establish new military cantonments has reinforced local perceptions of the Pakistani army as a colonising force.[155] "We're not asking for heaven on earth, we're asking for education, jobs, health, water. Why can't Musharraf give us those instead? If more cantonments are built, we'll believe we're a colony of Pakistan", said a Baloch political leader.[156] Another asked, "Are cantonments considered the basis of development or destruction? The struggle in Balochistan is for economic development. But what is a cantonment? It is an instrument of colonisation".[157]

The Baloch opposition has called for the removal of the FC and its checkposts, an end to military operations, the return of the army to the barracks, the withdrawal of politically motivated cases and the release of political prisoners if peace is to be restored.[158] Many Baloch ruling provincial

[146] Malik Siraj Akbar, "Balochistan treasury embarrasses Islamabad", *Friday Times*, 23-29 June 2006.
[147] "Rs.100 Billion for Balochistan road network, says Musharraf", *Daily Times*, 4 April 2005.
[148] "Conflict in Balochistan – A report of the fact finding missions", op. cit., p.12.
[149] Said Musharraf, "95 per cent of Balochistan area was B area and only 5 per cent was A area". Now "overall fourteen out of 28 districts have been declared A area". President Musharraf's media interaction, Islamabad, 3 February 2006, available at http://www.presidentofpakistan.gov.pk?Files PressRoom/Interviews/2620062122Ammedia%.
[150] Crisis Group interviews, Quetta and Pishin, February 2006.
[151] The FC is mainly composed of Pashtuns from the NWFP.
[152] According to the HRCP, the FC, which numbers around 36,000, mans 493 check posts in Balochistan. Senator Sanauallah Baloch told the parliamentary committee on Balochistan that the Coast Guards had set up another 91 check posts. "Conflict in Balochistan – A report of fact-finding missions", op.cit. p. 41; "Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan", op.cit, p. 12. See also Carlotta Gall, "In remote Pakistan, a civil war festers", *The New York Times*, 2 April 2006.
[153] Crisis Group interview, February 2005.
[154] Zahid Hussain, "Gathering storm", *Newsline*, February 2005. Federal Minister for States and Frontier Regions Sardar Yar Mohammad Rind claimed that steps were being taken to redress the imbalance; 14,500 Baloch, including 450 officers, would be inducted into the army; 9,000 locals had been recruited in the police while 10,000 were being employed in the Balochistan Constabulary. "Balochistan situation", *The Nation*, April 10 2005; "Balochistan talks doors open: government", *Dawn*, 23 July 2006.
[155] Aside from the four cantonments at Quetta, Sibbi, Loralai and Khuzdar, BNP's Senator Sanaullah Baloch listed 59 paramilitary facilities, three naval bases, four missile-testing sites and two nuclear development sites. "Nationalists justify extreme actions by angry Baloch", *Daily Times*, 4 February 2006.
[156] Crisis Group interview, Kalat, February 2005.
[157] Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, January 2006.
[158] The Balochistan provincial assembly has passed numerous resolutions calling for the FC's operations to be curtailed, while

parliamentarians also support local ownership of development projects and agree with the opposition that military force will not solve the conflict but they are the products of and hence dependent on Musharraf's political order.[159] Nevertheless, a bipartisan consensus is emerging on many of these demands. On 27 March 2006, for instance, a joint adjournment motion was admitted in the Balochistan Assembly to debate the implications of the military action in Dera Bugti and Kohlu.[160]

V. ISLAMABAD'S RESPONSE

A. MOVING ON TWO TRACKS

Following the outbreak of conflict, the military government responded at first with negotiations to address Baloch grievances and demands. However, the Baloch opposition was unsure of Islamabad's intentions from the start, suspicious that the negotiations were in bad faith, more to placate unrest than to resolve differences. With their failure, the cynics were proved right.

1. One step forward

> *"There will be a stage when the political process and dialogue will no longer work. The Baloch and Pashtuns (of Balochistan) will not sit back and be marginalised; they will want to fight back. We want to be engaged in the political and parliamentary process and thus we are part of the Balochistan parliamentary committee and have offered amendments for the constitution but the federal government is unwilling to listen."* – PKMAP leader, Abdur Rehman Mandokhel, Quetta.[161]

Concerned about the insurgency and growing alienation, in September 2004 the Senate formed a parliamentary committee on Balochistan to seek a solution to the conflict. Parliament gave the committee, which included members of the Baloch opposition, 90 days to submit its report. There were two subcommittees, headed by PML-Q Senators. The subcommittee headed by Senator Wasim Sajjad was tasked with making recommendations "to promote inter-provincial harmony and protect the rights of the provinces with a view to strengthening the federation". The subcommittee headed by Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed was mandated "to examine the current situation in Balochistan and make recommendations thereon".[162]

In March 2005, with the situation in Sui fast deteriorating, Hussain also accompanied his party president, Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, to Dera Bugti, and reportedly reached agreement on resolving the crisis with Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti.[163] But the negotiations stumbled because President Musharraf chose confrontation instead.

Within the parliamentary committee, Islamabad refused to negotiate crucial demands of the Baloch opposition such

Baloch nationalist parties have demanded the withdrawal of the paramilitary force.

[159] "Dialogue urged on Balochistan crisis: Bhootani criticises military action", *Dawn*, 7 June 2006.

[160] "Motion on army action admitted for debate", *Dawn*, 28 March 2006.

[161] Crisis Group interview, PKMAP leader, Abdur Rehman Mandokhel, Quetta, March 2006.

[162] "Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan", op.cit.

[163] Saleem Shahzad, "Balochistan deadlock ends, says PML leader: Shujaat meets Bugti", *Dawn*, 25 March 2005.

as handing Gwadar port over to provincial control and abandoning the construction of additional military cantonments. With the military also escalating its crackdown on the Baloch opposition, the BNP withdrew from the committee to protest the arrests of its party workers.[164] According to a Baloch opposition member, "the government wanted us to bring the big issues [to] the table and we did. And there were acceptable recommendations made by the committee. But then the government renewed the armed campaign and reneged on its own words".[165]

The recommendations of the Mushahid Hussain subcommittee included the following: [166]

- review the checkposts manned by the Frontier Corps and the Coast Guards in interior Balochistan, removing those not needed; redirect the focus of both security agencies on border patrol and interdiction of arms and narcotics; train levies on the police pattern and provided the requisite logistics;
- halt construction of military cantonments until all major issues are resolved;
- increase royalties to the gas-producing districts of Balochistan, with the federal government paying arrears;
- ensure maximum provincial representation immediately on the boards of PPL, OGDC, and Sui Southern and put PPL privatisation to the CCI; require that oil and gas companies invest 5 per cent of total expenditures on social sector projects in consultation with public representatives; distribution companies should provide gas on a priority basis to the areas where it is produced;
- shift the head office of Gwadar Port Authority from Karachi to Gwadar, Appoint the GPA chairman and half the board of directors from Balochistan and allocate 7 per cent of the GPA's gross revenue, other than federal levies, for Balochistan's development, while giving locals employment preference, followed by people from Makran and then the rest of Balochistan; fishermen, displaced by the project, must be reimbursed and relocated near the East or West Bays;
- address under-development in Gwadar, Quetta and Sui, facilitate social sector development province-wide, especially in health, housing and education, and make a one-time grant to improve the province's medical infrastructure;
- make the development level and degree of backwardness the first criteria for NFC awards;
- strictly implement the 5.4 per cent employment quota for Baloch workers in all federal ministries, divisions, corporations and departments and consider special measures to compensate for the lack of recruitment of the Baloch into the armed forces and civil security forces; and
- create parity between the Baloch and Pashtuns in Balochistan in all spheres of life.

The subcommittee's failure to recommend an immediate end to military action and withdrawal of the military to the barracks reinforced Baloch perceptions that decision-making took place in army headquarters, not parliament. The parliamentary bodies, the opposition stressed, would serve no purpose so long as military action and state-sanctioned coercion continued. "The government must release all political prisoners. What is the point of sitting in that committee when we are accused of complicity in the violence? Talk and gun battles cannot coexist", said a Baloch leader, adding, "what can you expect from these committees since they themselves are powerless?" [167]

Indeed, the Wasim Sajjad subcommittee, which was tasked with reexamining fundamental constitutional issues, such as the division of powers between the centre and the federating units, has failed to produce a report, well beyond the 7 January 2005 deadline. And most of the recommendations of the Hussain subcommittee are only suggestions, with no specific mechanisms for their execution. The Hussain subcommittee did recommend convening a special task force to ensure the implementation of its recommendations, in consultation with parliament. This has yet to be constituted and it is unclear if it will be an advisory body or will be able to make binding proposals.

The government claims that it has started implementing the Hussain subcommittee's recommendations; that it is investing $2 billion in 140 development projects which are underway, and that it will provide more than 30,000 jobs to locals.[168] According to Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, the status of the Hussain subcommittee's recommendations are to be reviewed on a monthly basis. At the same time, Aziz, echoing the military's line, emphasised that "stern measures" would be taken against

[164] "PONAM not to contest polls under Musharraf", *Dawn*, 14 June 2006.
[165] Crisis Group interview, BNP national parliamentarian, Abdul Rauf Mengal, Islamabad, February 2006.
[166] "Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan", op.cit., pp.95-101.
[167] Crisis Group interview, BNP President Sardar Akhtar Mengal, Quetta, March 2006.
[168] Aziz claimed that 23,000 out of 30,000 vacancies created for the people of Balochistan in federal and provincial government departments had been filled. "Government launches development projects in Balochistan: PM", *The News*, 27 August 2007.

Baloch "miscreants" and "the writ of the government will be ensured at every cost". [169]

After Nawab Bugti's killing, the Baloch opposition would not be satisfied with anything less than a halt to the military action and release of political prisoners. So long as the military government refuses, it is unlikely to win over Baloch public opinion, while support for the militants will inevitably grow, undermining the prospects of a negotiated settlement of the conflict.

2. Divide and rule

The Baloch opposition was particularly concerned about the Hussain subcommittee's recommendations of "parity" for the Baloch and Pashtuns in the province, perceiving it as part of Islamabad's longstanding policy of divide-and-rule.[170] The report stated: "To promote harmony, stability and coexistence among all the communities in the Province of Balochistan, it is recommended that Baloch-Pukhtun parity be maintained in all spheres of life. Till the structural problems involved are resolved by mutual dialogue and consensus, the Subcommittee strongly feels that regional equity and balance within different parts of the province is as important as inter-provincial equity and balance". [171]

The Baloch and Pashtun nationalist parties are deeply divided on the issue of political and economic rights for their communities. As mentioned earlier, the PKMAP believes that the Pashtuns in Balochistan should be either allowed to form a separate province or merged with the Pashtun-majority NWFP. Till then, they should have equal rights with the Baloch. Strong advocates of democratic governance, the moderate Pashtun parties, however, also support the Baloch struggle against military rule and are deeply critical of Islamabad's use of force. The PKMAP, moreover, insists that it would resolve its differences peacefully and through a dialogue with the Baloch,[172] sentiments that are reciprocated by the Baloch nationalist parties. Referring to the controversy over the subcommittee's recommendation for Baloch-Pashtun parity, a Baloch leader said, "if there is any talk of a new Pashtun province in northern Balochistan, we can talk about it and come to terms with the Pashtun nationalists in a dialogue", adding that the Musharraf government was deliberately highlighting "this issue to divide the people of Balochistan because they just want to create hatred".[173]

Because Pashtun and Baloch nationalists are in agreement, the Musharraf government has little choice other than to rely on Pashtun-majority Islamist parties such as the JUI-F to counter its Baloch opposition. Ironically, ruling party leaders in Balochistan are as concerned about the military-mullah alliance as the Baloch and Pashtun nationalists. In their perceptions, because of Islamabad's patronage, the MMA has made political gains at the PML-Q's expense.[174] The Musharrraf government has, however, chosen to reject such internal dissent, insisting that the MMA remains a valuable partner in Balochistan, while the MMA has reciprocated by backing General Musharraf's policies, including his development schemes, in Balochistan, restricting its criticism of military action to rhetoric.[175]

The military government's approach of attempting to play up the Pashtun-Baloch divide and propping up the mullahs against the Baloch has long-term implications for Pakistan's stability and regional security. The MMA's partnership with the military has helped Islamist parties, particularly the JUI-F, to expand their influence in Balochistan. The resultant rise in extremist Deobandi sentiment has already manifested itself in heightened sectarian violence in the province.[176] The JUI-F's extensive madrasa network also continues to provide political and material support, including Pakistani and Afghan recruits, to the Taliban cause in Afghanistan.[177]

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[169] "PM rules out amnesty in Balochistan", *Dawn*, 14 July 2006.

[170] Crisis Group interview, National Party leader, Dr Abdul Hayee Baloch, Karachi, April 2006.

[171] Recommendation 7 (xv), "Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan", op.cit.

[172] Crisis Group interview, PKMAP leader Abdur Rehman Mandokhel, Quetta, March 2006.

[173] Mengal added: "Our party's constitution (also) calls for rejoining the Baloch areas of Punjab and Sindh (with Balochistan). If there is redrawing of provincial boundaries it will have to be for all groups". Crisis Group interview, BNP President Sardar Akhtar Mengal, Quetta, March 2006.

[174] "We are the king's party [Musharraf's party]", said PML-Q parliamentarian Jaffar Khan Mandokhail, "but everything is going to the MMA". Crisis Group interview, Quetta, November 2004.

[175] MMA's provincial president, Maulana Shirini, personally assured Musharraf of MMA support for his government's initiatives in Balochistan. "Balochistan MPAs [Members of the Provincial Assembly] are with Musharraf", *Daily Times*, 26 July 2006; "No harm slapping governor's rule on Balochistan", *Dawn*, 31 July 2006.

[176] In March 2004, for instance, 45 Shias were killed in a sectarian attack on Ashura, the holiest day of the Shia calendar, in Quetta. See Crisis Group Report, *The State of Sectarianism in Pakistan*, op.cit.

[177] Identifying cross-border activity as a major threat to Afghan stability, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative in Afghanistan, Tom Koenigs said: "A joint assessment of the factors driving (the Afghan) insurgency by Afghan security agencies and the international community painted a daunting picture of Taliban leaders in cross-border sanctuaries, equipping and training recruits from refugee camps and madrasas", adding that the "cross-border character of this insurgency is no longer a matter of debate". "Briefing to the UN Security Council by the Special Representative of the Secretary General in Afghanistan", 26 July 2006.

The moderate Hanafi Sunni Baloch perceive the spread of Deobandi influence and the Taliban presence in Balochistan as a political and social threat, but targeted by the military and struggling for their own survival, they are in no position to stem it.[178] Although the Baloch nationalist parties have repeatedly called on the international community to pressure the Musharraf government to end the military operation, influential international actors, including the U.S. and most European Union countries have largely chosen to remain silent or have even accepted the government's version of the conflict.[179]

The Bush administration's support for a government that is using U.S.-supplied weapons[180] against the Baloch could prove counter-productive for it and its Western allies as they battle the Taliban in southern Afghanistan, bordering on Balochistan. Baloch alienation could mean the loss of a potential ally against the Taliban, at a time when its main adversary, the JUI-F supports them. "We are fighting in the same atmosphere (against Islamic radicalism) as the United States", said BNP President Akhtar Mengal. But, he added: "All those weapons and aid that the U.S has given to Pakistan to fight al-Qaeda and the Taliban, [the Pakistan Army] is using against the nationalists in Balochistan".[181] Another Baloch leader stressed: "The Baloch have always believed in political struggle. But how can you continue to engage in political struggle when the rulers invade us with sophisticated U.S. weapons?"[182]

After Bugti's death, the MMA threatened and then quickly withdrew its threat to leave the Balochistan coalition government. Justifying the decision, Maulana Fazlur Rehman said: "We don't want to derail the democratic process".[183] Even if the MMA had carried out the threat, the military would have still backed them. With national elections scheduled for 2007, and the insurgency in Balochistan showing no signs of abating, General Musharraf cannot afford a free and fair contest in which the Baloch nationalist parties would, given the extent of Baloch alienation, capture political power in the province. The likelihood of the government rigging the provincial elections to favour the MMA, particularly the JUI-F, cannot be ruled out. And if the mullahs return to power further empowered and emboldened, the implications for Afghanistan's volatile south are more than evident.[184]

B. MILITARY RESPONSE

Islamabad pins its hopes on a military solution. Depicting all Baloch opposition, political or militant, constitutional or extra-constitutional, as a threat to law and order, intent on consolidating central control over the province, and anxious to exploit its economic assets, the Musharraf government's policy choices are fast marginalising the very parties and forces that could help mediate the conflict. With the military targeting their leaders and sidelining their parties, the danger lies in those alienated Baloch who still support the political process coming to believe there is no other recourse than the gun.

1. Blaming the sardars

As relations with the Baloch opposition deteriorated following the 1999 coup, and Baloch militants began targeting state installations and personnel, the Musharraf government's first attempt at silencing Baloch dissent was to register a case against six Baloch leaders on the grounds that they had glorified the deaths of militants killed in military operations.[185] As earlier mentioned, the government also initiated a brief dialogue with its Baloch opponents but soon hardened its stance.

Expressing his determination to re-establish the government's writ by force, President Musharraf is adamant

[178] Crisis Group interviews, Baloch nationalist leaders, Quetta and Islamabad.

[179] A U.S. State Department official said that Bugti's death would have "no effect" on U.S.-Pakistan relations. The U.S. took the position that Nawab Bugti "wanted to take control of natural resources in Balochistan through violent means and this is not something that the U.S. condones". Nor did the Bush administration object to the use of U.S.-supplied weapons against the Baloch. According to a U.S. State Department official, there was no bar on the use of these weapons against the Baloch insurgents. "When we transfer equipment (to Pakistan), it's for internal security and self-defence. There is no 'for al Qaeda use only' tag on it". Anwar Iqbal, "Killing won't affect ties, says US", *Dawn*, 29 August 2006; "Balochistan situation not to affect F-16 deal: US", *Dawn*, 5 September 2006; Tim McGirk, "Pakistan's other war", *Time*, 26 June 2006, p.26.

[180] These include U.S-supplied Cobra helicopters and F-16s. Gall, op.cit. See also "Mr. Musharraf's other war", editorial, *The New York Times*, 3 February 2006.

[181] David Montero, "A rebel's killing roils Pakistan", *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 August 2006.

[182] Interview with Sardar Ataullah Mengal, Balochistan National Party, *Friday Times*, 7-13 July 2006.

[183] Muhammad Anis, "Mind your bill, MMA warns in resignation threat: Religious alliance not to pull out from Balochistan coalition, says Fazl", *The News*, 6 September 2006.

[184] According to opposition leader Benazir Bhutto, the military government's targeting of secular and moderate parties and leaders in Balochistan such as the BNP was aimed at strengthening theocratic elements in the province. "Benazir seeks withdrawal of cases against Akhtar Mengal", *Dawn*, 15 June 2006.

[185] The six Baloch leaders, charged with publishing a calendar that depicted the dead militants as heroes, belonged to the Balochistan National Party and included MNA Abdul Rauf Mengal, Senator Sanaullah Baloch and former party president Sardar Ataullah Mengal's son, a former senator, Javed Mengal.

that the only way to resolve the conflict is to "fix" the sardars who are responsible for the conflict, and who, with what he believes is foreign backing, are a threat to the integrity of the state.[186] With Nawab Bugti's death in the 26 August operation, it appears that he intends to make good on his threat. It is also clear that decisions are still taken in the General Headquarters of the Pakistan army, with little or no consultation with civilians, even those that represent the federal government. In July, for instance, Balochistan Governor Owais Ghani had said that the government had no intention of harming Bugti. "He is too old to be punished. He is a respected figure. We just want him to give up arms".[187] A few weeks later, Bugti was killed.

The military government also maintains that with the exception of the "terrorists" who have taken on the state because of their opposition to development, all other Baloch sardars have sided with it. Rejecting the argument that the government's development schemes had sparked the insurgency and that the conflict was confined to the tribal territories of a few sardars, an opposition parliamentarian said: "If the federal government claims that the troubled areas in Balochistan are only 7 per cent of the province, then why is there no development in the rest of the 93 per cent?"[188] The Secretary-General of Nawab Bugti's party stressed: "If the (dissenting) sardars are guarding their self-interest, then they would side with the government, not confront it", adding, "only when you have the support of the masses and are fighting for the people, can you can confront the government".[189]

Filing charges, ranging from murder to attacks on government property, against the dissenting sardars, the government also appears to have given up the option of dialogue. To drive the point home, Islamabad has targeted the families of a number of prominent Baloch leaders. The first official notification of the seizure of assets of members of the banned Balochistan Liberation Army in July 2006 included not only Nawab Bugti and Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri's names but also those of their family members, including wives, daughters, sons-in-law, daughters-in-law and grandchildren.[190]

Islamabad's clampdown on Baloch dissent also extends far beyond the rebellious sardars. On 8 December 2005, Interior Minister Sherpao admitted that some 4,000 people had been arrested in Balochistan since early in the year, when the conflict began.[191] There is little more recent information about the numbers of Baloch detained but charges have been filed against some prominent national and provincial parliamentarians of the opposition parties; travel restrictions have been enforced against others. Most disturbingly, many Baloch dissidents have "disappeared", including students, doctors, lawyers and journalists, detained by intelligence agencies but not produced before any court of law.[192] Security forces and intelligence agencies are also accused of intimidation, arbitrary arrests, torture, disappearances and extrajudicial killings. The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) has evidence to support these claims.[193]

Amnesty International (AI) supported the HRCP charges of scores of arbitrary arrests and detentions, extra-judicial executions, torture, and "disappearances", and the excessive use of force by security and intelligence force in Balochistan since early 2005. It called for "human rights abuses [to] be stopped forthwith and that all allegations of human rights, including civil political and economic rights, be independently and impartially investigated with a view to bringing the perpetrators to justice".[194] The courts in Pakistan must meet their responsibility, holding the executive responsible for abuse of power. As an immediate step, the Supreme Court should constitute a high level commission to enquire into Nawab Bugti's killing. By taking a stand now, it would not only help the process of reconciliation but could also dissuade the military from targeting other Baloch political dissidents in a similar fashion.

AI has also rightly called upon the militants to abide by international humanitarian law, which prohibits the use of torture, deliberate killing of civilians and indiscriminate

[186] Ihtasham-ul-Haque, "Rebel sardars 'to be fixed': Musharraf praises role of agencies, criticises media", *Dawn*, 21 July 2006.
[187] Bugti was 79-years old. Malik Siraj Akbar's interview with Owais Ahmed Ghani, *The Friday Times*, 14-20 July 2006.
[188] Crisis Group interview, BNP Senator Sanaullah Baloch, Quetta, March 2006.
[189] Crisis Group interview, JWP Secretary-General Senator Agha Shahid Bugti, Quetta, March 2006.
[190] Of the 42 "BLA members" whose bank accounts were frozen, 25 were members of Nawab Bugti's family. Aside from Akbar Bugti, they included his sons, sons-in-law, daughter, daughter-in-law and grandchildren; and Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri's sons, granddaughters and daughters-in-law. Two parliamentarians, Bugti's son-in-law Senator Shahid Bugti and Marri's son, Balaach Marri, member of the Balochistan Provincial Assembly, were also included on the list. "Accounts of 42 'BLA members' to be frozen", *Dawn*, 21 July 2006.
[191] "Pakistan: Allegations of serious human rights violations in Balochistan must be investigated", public statement, Amnesty International, 10 February 2006, available at http://www.amnestyusa.org/news/document.do?id+ENGASA330042006.
[192] According to HRCP Chairperson Asma Jahangir, the Commission had credible evidence of intelligence services picking up dozens of people, most of whom had no links with the militants. "HRCP concerned about praise for agencies", *Dawn*, 22 July 2006.
[193] "Conflict in Balochistan – A report of the fact-finding missions", op.cit.
[194] "Allegations of serious human rights violations in Balochistan", op.cit.

attacks.[195] The use of landmines by the militants, in particular, has resulted in numerous casualties, not just of military personnel but also of civilian non-combatants.[196]

By relying on repression and coercion, the state has unfortunately encouraged the use of armed force by the Baloch. Systematically attacked by the centre, the Baloch political leadership is hardening its stance.[197] With their political parties under siege, and their leaders targeted, more, young alienated Baloch could be tempted to join the militants.

2. Military operations

Insisting that operations are not conducted by the army but by the FC and Balochistan Levies, Islamabad argues it has little choice but to resort to force to protect vital communications and energy links, safeguard security personnel and installations, and ensure that the rebel sardars and their armed followers do not undermine the government's development schemes.[198] President Musharraf has warned the Baloch nationalists to end their attempts to incite people with slogans like "sovereignty of Balochistan" and "rights of Balochistan", warning that his government would forcefully quell any attempts to impede the development process.[199] Ruling out any compromise with "miscreants" trying to sabotage peace and development in Balochistan, Musharraf reiterated, in an address to the nation, that "the time has come to end the sway of these sardars and establish the writ of the government to protect national assets and installations…there will be no political settlement with these cruel Baloch sardars who remained involved in anti-government, anti-democracy and even anti-state activities in the past".[200]

General Musharraf's warning to the Baloch leaders – to stop fighting or "you won't even know what hit you" – epitomises the military's approach to the crisis.[201] The military action, however, has alienated even the most moderate Baloch. If the insurgents have targeted gas fields and pipelines, electricity grids and railway tracks, official installations and personnel with rockets, mortars, submachine guns and landmines, the military and other security forces have used heavy artillery, air force jets and helicopter gunships in an indiscriminate and disproportionate show of force.

Since attacks by the military and paramilitary forces are not targeted and calibrated, they have claimed scores of civilian casualties in the two hardest hit districts, Dera Bugti and Kohlu. According to the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, many of the dead were women and children.[202] HRCP also found that thousands, including 85 per cent of Dera Bugti's population, were internally displaced by the fighting, most of whom have received little assistance from the government.[203] With Dera Bugti and Kohlu virtually under a state of siege, civilians are the worst hit. "There is a war-like situation", said HRCP Chairperson Asma Jahangir, "ordinary people are suffering greatly".[204]

Despite official claims that the military campaign is paying dividends, with many rebels eliminated and others surrendering, there are no signs of the insurgency abating.[205] Military action, which began in Dera Bugti and was then

[195] Ibid.
[196] Landmines, salted by the militants and the security forces "have emerged as a major source of civilian deaths and injuries" in Dera Bugti and Kohlu, said an analyst. "Pakistan: Humanitarian situation in parts of Balochistan deteriorating", IRIN, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Relief, 26 April 2006.
[197] Sardar Ataullah Mengal, for instance, stated: "We believe in democracy, human rights and the rights of nationalities [but] Musharraf cannot expect us to tow the line. We will not submit to the whims of a military dictator". Crisis Group interview with BNP leader Sardar Ataullah Mengal, Karachi, April 2006.
[198] Claiming that the situation was under control, Balochistan Governor Owais Ahmed Ghani said: "There were speculations about a military operation [but] we would never use the army against our own people, no matter how intense the violence. Within two months, with the cooperation of 850 Frontier Corps personnel from the NWFP, we had made tremendous progress in rounding up the terrorists and dismantling their networks. Since then the situation has greatly improved". Malik Siraj Akbar's interview with Owais Ahmed Ghani, op.cit.
[199] "Musharraf warns slogan-mongers", *Dawn*, 23 May 2006.
[200] Shakil Sheikh, "Musharraf warns India against blame game", *The News*, 3 August 2006; "No compromise with Baloch nationalists", *Daily Times*, 15 July 2006.
[201] "Don't push us. It isn't the 1970s when you can hit and run and hide in the mountains", said Musharraf, referring to military action against Baloch militants from 1973-1977. Zahid Hussain, "Gathering Storm", op.cit.
[202] "Conflict in Balochistan – A report of the fact-finding missions", op.cit. With a news blackout in some of the worst-affected areas, such as Dera Bugti and Kohlu, it is nearly impossible to obtain exact figures of casualties or detainees.
[203] Dera Bugti's nazim (mayor) and HRCP estimated that 100,000 people were displaced in Dera Bugti and Kohlu districts alone. Official figures are not available. "When pride stands in the way of tears", *Dawn*, 13 July 2006; "More fighting in Balochistan, but no aid in eight long months", IRIN, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Relief, 31 August 2006. See also "Pakistan: Humanitarian situation in parts of Balochistan deteriorating", IRIN, 26 April 2006.
[204] "Focus on the conflict in Balochistan", IRIN, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Relief, 2 February 2006. Asma Jahangir is a member of the Crisis Group Board.
[205] In July 2006 alone, the government claimed that 28 Bugti commanders surrendered voluntarily, along with 1,415 tribesmen. Media reports collated by Crisis Group in July 2006. The District Coordination Officer in Dera Bugti now claims that the entire district has been "cleared of saboteurs" and the writ of the government reestablished. "Six commanders, 500 men surrender: government", *Dawn*, 22 July 2006.

extended to the Marri areas, has not ended.[206] Insurgent attacks, too, are frequent, from the southernmost tip of Balochistan to the capital Quetta. With the government bent on a military solution, the prospects of rapprochement appear poor.

The federal government has the authority to intervene in the exercise of provincial power when there is a "grave menace to the peace and tranquillity or economic life" in Pakistan.[207] It can declare an emergency if internal disturbances are beyond the control of a provincial government.[208] A provincial government can also entrust functions that fall under its purview to the federal government. Otherwise, the maintenance of law and order and policing lie within provincial authority. The federal government can deploy the armed forces to act "in aid of civil power"[209] but the armed forces cannot act on their own violation. In Balochistan, however, the military government has, for all practical purposes usurped the province's policing powers and that of the federal government.

From the attack on General Musharraf at Kohlu on 14 December 2005 till now, the military's decision to subdue the Baloch militants once and for all has only resulted in both sides upping their stakes. The impact of the conflict is already felt outside Balochistan's borders, in the Baloch majority areas of Punjab and Sindh.[210] Following Nawab Bugti's killing, even if the military were, inconceivably, to win the battle for Dera Bugti and Kohlu, it has already lost the war for hearts and minds in Balochistan.[211]

VI. GEOPOLITICS

Islamabad insists that the Baloch 'miscreants' have foreign backing, political and material. Some government officials have implied that U.S. and British intelligence agencies support the militants – to undermine the proposed Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline and to prevent Gwadar from becoming a functional port at which China's presence might threaten U.S. oil and naval interests in the Gulf region.[212] But the brunt of the blame is placed on India.

India has expressed concern at the "spiralling military violence in Balochistan"[213] and has strongly condemned Nawab Bugti's killing.[214] Pakistan has not only denounced India's comments as interference in its internal affairs but President Musharraf has also accused it of arming and funding the Balochistan insurgency.[215] According to Balochistan's chief minister, Jam Mohammed Yousaf, India's intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing, supports terrorists and their training camps in Balochistan.[216] Balochistan Governor Owais Ghani accused India of financing the insurgency and Afghan warlords and drug barons of arming the militants.[217]

Pakistani intelligence agencies are convinced that Indian consulates in Kandahar, bordering on Balochistan, and the city of Jalalabad, bordering on NWFP, provide funds and arms to the Balochistan Liberation Army and the Balochistan Liberation Front.[218] In their opinion, Pakistan's regional adversary is fishing in Balochistan's troubled waters. Some Pakistani officials also believe that India wants to destabilise Balochistan to prevent China from using Gwadar port as a possible naval base and listening post

[206] Warning that "reckless military" actions in Balochistan would have terrible consequences, HRCP called attention to the operations in Kohlu district. "Army action has terrible consequences", *Dawn*, 5 September 2006; "18 killed in fresh Kohlu operation", *Dawn*, 4 September 2006.
[207] Articles 147, 148 and 149 of the constitution.
[208] Article 232.
[209] Article 245 states: "The Armed Forces shall, under the directions of the Federal Government, defend Pakistan against external aggression or threat of war, and subject to law, *act in the aid of civil power when called upon to do so*". Emphasis added.
[210] In January 2006, the BLA claimed responsibility for an attack on railway links in Dera Ghazi Khan. On 5 January, the army was deployed at Dera Ghazi Khan's airport after an abortive attempt on an electricity pylon. In Jacobabad, in Sindh, which also houses a significant Baloch population, there have been a series of attacks on gas pipelines. Shahzada Zulfikar, "Power supply to Machh suspended", *The Nation*, 8 January 2006; "Balochistan operation – security upped at DG Khan airport", *Daily Times*, 5 January 2006; and S.M. Wajih, "Rocket fired at gas pipeline in Jacobabad", *Daily Times*, 14 November 2003.
[211] "The treatment meted out (to the Baloch) by the federal government is not what happens in a democracy. You don't unleash the military against your own people", said an opposition Baloch politician. Crisis Group interview with Senator Agha Shahid Bugti, Quetta, March 2006.

[212] M. Ilyas Khan, "Back to the hills", *Herald*, September 2004. Crisis Group interviews, Islamabad, March 2006.
[213] "India defends comments on Balochistan", *The Tribune*, 2 January 2006.
[214] "The unfortunate killing of the veteran Baloch leader", said the ministry of external affairs spokesperson, "is a tragic loss to the people of Balochistan and Pakistan. This military attack [underlines] the need for peaceful dialogue to address the grievances and aspirations of [the] people of Balochistan. Military force can never solve political problems". "India condemns Bugti's killing", *The Financial Express*, 28 August 2006.
[215] Musharraf's spokesperson, Director-General Inter-Services Public Relations Major General Shaukat Sultan, accused India's Research and Analysis Wing of supporting "terrorist activities in Balochistan". Sarfaraz Ahmed, "Interview with Major General Shaukat Sultan", *Daily Times*, 15 September 2004; "New Delhi fuelling Balochistan violence, says Musharraf", *Daily Times*, 9 January 2006;
[216] "RAW camps in Balochistan", *Dawn*, 31 August 2004.
[217] "Afghans, India, fuelling Balochistan insurgency, says Owais Ghani", *Daily Times*, 7 February 2006.
[218] "Balochistan unrest: Agencies 'have proof' of Indian involvement", *Daily Times*, 13 February 2006.

in the Arabian Sea.[219] Even if India were conceivably cultivating Baloch dissidents, following an age-old pattern of both countries interfering in the other's internal affairs, the extent of such support would likely be limited. After all, a Balochistan that spins out of control would not serve India's interests. It would destabilise Afghanistan and undermine India's prospect of gaining access to the energy resources of Iran and Central Asia through pipelines that would traverse Balochistan.

The Pakistan government has offered little hard evidence of substantive foreign funding or cross-border sanctuaries and bases. Baloch nationalist parliamentarians understandably reject such linkages, pointing out that previous governments also had accused Baloch dissidents of serving foreign masters.[220] Senator Sanaullah Baloch emphasised that the militancy was an "indigenous, nationalist movement".[221] However, it is possible that the Baloch militants are financing their operations through the lucrative trade in drugs and arms across the borders with Afghanistan and Iran. The large and prosperous Baloch diaspora, especially in the Gulf States, which is sympathetic to the Baloch nationalist cause, is most likely another source of financing.[222] The militants must also have the support of their fellow Baloch in Afghanistan, but the latter's capacity would be limited to material assistance. Obtaining and using sanctuaries in the bordering Afghan provinces would be difficult, given the resurgent Taliban, who are certainly not sympathetic to the Baloch cause.

The Musharraf government is in a bind. It cannot claim that it is fighting against citizens who are demanding long overdue political, economic and social rights; hence the emphasis on a foreign-supported insurgency is partly a bid to gain domestic legitimacy for the use of force in Balochistan. It is equally keen to convince its international, in particular Western allies, that it has no choice but to use military force against terrorists who are bent on destabilising the state. Even if the government were to succeed in discrediting the Baloch militants internationally,[223] it would face a far steeper task in convincing the Baloch.

VII. CONCLUSION

Asked about a possible end to the stalemate in Balochistan, Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti said: "At the moment war is being imposed on us. If someone survives it, then we'll see. General Sahib [Pervez Musharraf] has promised to hit us in a way that we will not know what hit us. In one sense, it is quick death he is promising us. They could do this to a few Baloch leaders, but not to the whole Baloch nation".[224] In the wake of Bugti's death, Musharraf still insists that his government will enforce the writ of the state at all costs.[225] But making good on that claim requires far more than military force. By targeting political leaders and using indiscriminate force, the government will merely perpetuate the conflict. In the process, its legitimacy will be gravely damaged, and the state it claims to defend will emerge far weaker and more divided.

With Bugti's death, the directions of the conflict in Balochistan have become far more ominous, evident in the tide of anger that has swept the province. "Emotions are running high", said Amanullah Kanrani, JWP spokesperson, "We are devastated by our loss". Asked how the government could redress matters, he said: "[This] government cannot do anything more. It has played its last card".[226] Calling Bugti's killing "a huge disaster, not only for Balochistan but also for the whole country", NP leader Dr Abdul Hayee Baloch said that the Baloch "have all been devastated by the magnitude of the crime the government had committed. If this is what they could do to him, just imagine what they are doing to ordinary Baloch men, women and children every day. Hundreds have been killed, thousands have been arrested, and scores of others have simply disappeared. If this sort of barbarity does not constitute state terrorism, what does?" [227]

By eliminating a political leader, the military government has strengthened the ranks of the militants in Balochistan.[228]

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[219] "We have evidence that the insurgents are getting help from India and some other countries which are not happy with China's involvement in the construction of Gwadar port", said a senior security official. Zahid Hussain, "Musharraf's other war", op.cit.

[220] Similar accusations were made by the Ayub government. During the 1970s, Baloch dissidents were accused of working for Afghanistan and the Soviet Union but these charges were subsequently dropped.

[221] Crisis Group interview, BNP parliamentarian, Senator Sanaullah Baloch, Quetta, March 2006.

[222] A Baloch analyst maintains that "rich Baloch from the Gulf region" are a major source of financing, "since expatriates are generally more patriotic and nationalistic". Crisis Group interview, Sher Ali Mazari, Islamabad, February 2006.

[223] The British government placed the BLA on its list of terrorist organisations in July 2006 but others, including the U.S. have yet to follow suit. "UK declares BLA terrorist organisation", *Dawn*, 18 July 2006.

[224] Haroon Rashid's interview with Akbar Khan Bugti, *Newsline*, February 2006.

[225] Shaiq Hussain, "No compromise on writ of government, says Musharraf", *The Nation*, 28 August 2006.

[226] Crisis Group telephone interview, Amanullah Kanrani, spokesperson and Central Information Secretary, JWP, 28 August 2006.

[227] "Helicopter gunships were used to kill a frail 80-year man" whose "only fault was that he was struggling for his people's rights", said Dr Baloch. Crisis Group telephone interview with Dr Abdul Hayee Baloch, National Party, 31 August 2006.

[228] "You will see the youth of Balochistan that had been sitting in universities going into politicised but armed and dangerous

The insurgency is not likely to recede, nor will Islamabad manage to dampen Baloch anger so long as the military runs the show. With unrest refusing to die down in Balochistan and Baloch nationalist leaders submitting their resignations from the provincial and national legislatures,[229] some of the more politically astute of Musharraf's civilian colleagues are increasingly concerned about the direction of the conflict. Expressing grief at Bugti's death, PML-Q Secretary General Mushahid Hussain said: "He was a friend and a prominent political figure. His death, and the manner of it, is sad and unfortunate".[230] But Hussain and other ruling party leaders have little say in the making of policy and no control over a military establishment that is unaccountable to any civilian institution.

With Bugti's killing, the credibility of President Musharraf and the military has sunk to an all time low, not just in Balochistan but in all the smaller federal units. The extent to which the federation has been damaged can hardly yet be assessed. "There is no doubt at all that the federation has been gravely weakened", said an opposition leader. "There will be a very adverse impact on national stability and national integration. The only way out is an immediate restoration of genuine democracy".[231] If the dangerous and fast widening gap between the Baloch and the centre is to be narrowed, the restoration of democracy is indeed the only way out.

If a free and fair general election is held in 2007, the Baloch nationalist parties will likely sweep the polls in the Baloch majority areas of the province. With representative institutions restored, the Baloch would once again have political avenues and mechanisms to voice their grievances and demands. In the absence of military support for the Pashtun Islamists, Pashtun moderate forces in Balochistan, too, would be empowered. It is in the interests of the international community to ensure that this election is indeed democratic, free, fair and transparent. Instability in Balochistan not only damages the Pakistani polity but also adversely affects the stability of its immediate region and beyond.

Islamabad/Brussels, 14 September 2006

movements", said PPP national parliamentarian Sherry Rehman. Crisis Group interview, Islamabad, 28 August 2006.

[229] Malik Siraj Akbar, "BNP-Mengal quits assemblies", *Daily Times*, 4 September 2006.

[230] "Mushahid grieves over the death of 'a friend'", *Daily Times*, 28 August 2006.

[231] Crisis Group interview, Ahsan Iqbal, Information Secretary, PML-N, Islamabad, 29 August 2006.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF BALOCHISTAN

APPENDIX B

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

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Crisis Group's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, it produces analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. Crisis Group also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a twelve-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

Crisis Group's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made available simultaneously on the website, www.crisisgroup.org. Crisis Group works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

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