

Divide-and-rule policies in Balochistan

"Divide and rule, a sound motto. Unite and lead, a better one."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Sprichwörtliches" (1814)

From a classical perspective, it is the primary function of a state to protect its people against external enemies. However, in our contemporary world, the state itself seems to have become the worst enemy of its own people: civil conflicts are today far more common than interstate wars. All fourteen major armed conflicts listed by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2008: 4-5) for 2007 were fought within states.

From the very moment of its creation as an independent state in 1947, Pakistan has been in conflict over the Kashmir region with its neighbouring state India. In the aftermath of the Mumbai terrorist attacks, this old dispute again keeps international observers at the edge of their seats. But in the shadow of this confrontation, Pakistan has been at war with a small faction of its own people: militant insurgents, belonging to the small ethnic minority of the Baloch, have opposed the rule of the central government. Like the Kashmir conflict, the Baloch rebellion is a 'birth defect' of the Pakistani state. Since the first insurgency in 1948, several waves of violence have caused many deaths, and yet no final settlement has been achieved. This essay attempts to shed some light on a conflict that has often been referred to as Pakistan's 'other' or 'forgotten' war.

Theoretical concepts and propositions

In this section, I lay down the theoretical framework that guides my empirical analysis in order to provide a deductive-nomological explanation. In the first subsection, I outline the concept of divide-and-rule policies in the context of failing states. The second part draws on the rational choice theory of government responsiveness.

Domestic 'divide and rule' policies in failing states

Divide-and-rule¹ policies in a broad sense can be defined as political, military or economic strategies implemented by groups to gain or retain power over other groups. The implementing group divides other large groups, which pose a threat to their power, into smaller groups or prevents smaller groups from linking up and collectively becoming a threat to their power. Another type of divide-and-rule strategies a group may choose to apply is the provision of support to cooperative third parties in order to counterbalance an opposition to its rule.

The application of 'divide-and-rule' policies to gain or retain power over other groups seems to be as old as power itself. As a form of military and political governance, divide-and-rule strategies can be traced back at least to the Persian conquests of Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar's Gallic campaign. Modern colonial powers equally applied divide-and-rule strategies to maintain control over vast territories with a minimal number of troops and administrators. To achieve their goal of effective rule at a minimum expense, they deliberately reinforced existing societal cleavages. Two prototypical examples are the exploitation of the caste system and of religious divisions in British-India (James 1997) or the reinforcement and formalisation of socio-economic and ethnic differences between the Hutus and the Tutsis in Rwanda under the Belgian rule (Pottier 2002: 14-15). The after-effects of these policies still pervade the political landscape in post-colonial societies.

Nicolò Machiavelli was probably the first thinker who described divide-and-rule strategies as a theoretical concept, embedded into a larger context of power and war in "Dell'arte della guerra" (1520).² James Madison (1787) later described divide-and-rule as a useful principle in internal politics, which could serve the state as a safeguard against domestic factionalism and insurrection.³ Although ancient, the divide-and-rule concept has never been formally elaborated in a model-theoretic framework, nor has it been systematically applied in empirical studies in political sciences to my knowledge. If anything, it has occasionally served as an *ad*

¹ The term 'divide-and-rule' is derived from the Latin dictum 'divide et impera' or 'divide ut regnes'. It has also been translated as 'divide-and-conquer', but this implies that the concept is limited to an interstate context. Throughout this paper, the term divide-and-rule will be used since the concept is here applied to domestic politics.

² A translated version of "The Art of War" is available online: <http://www.constitution.org/mac/artofwar.txt> (accessed 13/01/2009)

hoc explanation for certain divisive policies. It goes without saying that this omission cannot be remedied in the narrow context of this essay. However, I will try to apply the divide-and-rule concept, as defined above, as a useful heuristical tool – an analytical exaggeration – to describe the policies of the Pakistani military government towards the nationalist rebellion in Balochistan.

I argue that the old (and vague) concept of divide-and-rule can be re-applied in the context of ‘weak’ or ‘failing’ states. To some extent, the internal challenges weak governments are facing today resemble the challenges imperial powers were confronted in the colonial era. Admittedly, this comparison is lopsided, but there is a striking similarity: governments in failing states – as many imperial powers – usually face opposition from parts of the population and have insufficient material resources at their disposal to maintain the monopoly on the legitimate use of force within their borders with conventional means. As oppositional forces – (secessionist) rebel movements, warlords, or terrorists – gain local or regional power, governments are tempted to implement divide-and-rule policies to spread conflict within or between the groups in order to maintain control. Essentially, a government’s failure to ‘unite-and-lead’ – as it would intuitively be expected to do – may lead to a strategic shift and the attempt to divide-and-rule instead to avert the loss of power.

I will apply the ‘divide and rule’ concept to the policies of the Pakistani army in the countries’ South-Western Balochistan province. Pakistan constitutes a highly interesting test case for the divide-and-rule concept. As Noam Chomsky puts it, Pakistan is the “*paradigm example of a failing state*” (Business Recorder 2008). The figures support this view: Pakistan is ranked 9th on the “Failed State Index 2008”.⁴ Above all, Pakistan is the most populous state on the whole list and the only nuclear power besides North Korea. Chomsky also explicitly refers to the nationalist rebellion in Balochistan to justify his claim.

³ Madison outlines the principle in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, summarising the thesis of The Federalist Paper 10. An online copy is available here: <http://press-pubs.uchicago.edu/founders/documents/v1ch17s22.html> (accessed 12/01/2008)

⁴ The “Failed States Index”, issued annually by the American think tank “Fund for Peace” and the journal “Foreign Policy”, attempts to quantify the degree to which governance in a state has failed. The ranking is based on twelve (unweighted) indicators which can take values from 0 (most stable) to 10 (least stable). The additive index can therefore take values from 0 to 120. The twelve indicators are designed to capture three distinct dimensions: there are six political, four social and two economic indicators. The rankings (starting 2005) are available at:

The rational choice theory of government responsiveness

The basic model of rational choice theory and public interest approaches (Downs 1957; Buchanan 1975) provide the framework for my second proposition. I hypothesize that authoritarian regimes have a higher tendency than democratic regimes to rely on divide-and-rule policies if conventional rule fails. *First*, their stakes will presumably be higher than those of democratic governments. If they fail to defend political opponents they may not only have to fear their replacement but more severe consequences like physical violence or even a systematic ‘politicide’. *Second*, they will usually be less dependent on (and therefore less responsive to) the security concerns of the broader population, which is likely to be adversely effected by ‘divide-and-rule’ policies. Rather, authoritarian governments tend to draw support from small and coherent constituencies such as the national or local elites, the military, the bureaucracy or the police. The security of this clientele is oftentimes dependent on the continued rule of the government. Therefore, they might enable the leaders to pursue divide-and-rule policies in their own interest because they profit from a ‘dividend of conflict’.

Contrarily, democratic governments can be expected to respond to political discontent of regional groups, either through inclusion and stronger representation in central decision-making processes, or through federalisation and decentralisation. In democratic systems, the constituency is much broader than in authoritarian states. Security concerns and general political demands of the broader population have to be respected by governmental decision-makers in order to succeed in free and fair elections. This provides incentives to target the ‘median voter’ through balanced unite-and-lead policies, rather than the application of divide-and-rule principles.

To put this hypothesis to a test, I will try to analyse whether the ‘rules of the game’ in Balochistan have changed after a democratically elected coalition was formed in Islamabad in March 2008. My analysis will be very explorative and provisional, since the government has only been in office for a short period of time. Furthermore, it is hitherto unclear whether the civil democratic government has been able to take effective control over the military and the intelligence agencies, or to which extent these actors are still pursuing their own agendas.

http://www.fundforpeace.org/web/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=99&Itemid=323 (accessed 12 January 2008)

Empirical analysis

The principal problem when analysing the evolution of the conflict and the current situation in Balochistan is the limited availability of reliable sources and objective first-hand information. Both official Pakistani government sources and information provided from Baloch nationalists, such as the ‘government of Balochistan in exile’ or the ‘Baloch Society of North America’, is voluminous, but has a natural ideological bias. In my analysis, I therefore heavily rely on news sources, as well as reports from Pakistani and international human rights organisations and think tanks. Of course these sources may occasionally be biased as well, due to underlying interests and hidden agendas, but it nevertheless appears to be the most reasonable choice.

It should also be made clear from the beginning that it is not intended here to judge the integrity of the Baloch nationalists or the historical legitimacy of their claims. However, it is a fact that episodes of Baloch rebellion and insurgency, launched at least in the name of nationalism, have appeared from the start and throughout the history of independent Pakistan. Most independent sources agree that both sides have committed crimes against humanity at all stages of the conflict and I will try to refrain from any moral or ethical judgement. Rather, this analysis is an attempt to provide descriptive evidence on the policies and strategies that have been applied by one of the conflict parties, namely the Pakistani central government.

In what follows, I first present some facts and figures on Balochistan and evaluate its strategic importance. I then recapitulate the emergence of Baloch nationalism and its role in the early history of the Pakistani state. The third subsection investigates the policies of the Pakistani government under President Musharraf. Finally, I conduct an explorative analysis of the policies of the new civil government.

Some facts on Balochistan and evaluation of its strategic importance

Balochistan is the largest of Pakistan’s four provinces, spreading over an area of some 347,190 square kilometres – which roughly equates to the size of Germany. It covers approximately 44% of Pakistan’s territory, but is sparsely populated: according to official government estimates from the latest 1998 census, around 6.57 million people lived in

Balochistan at the time, less than 5% of Pakistan's total population. Its ethnic composition is 54.7% Baloch, 29% Pashtun, and 16.3% others – mainly Sindhis, Hazaras and Punjabis living in the bigger cities. The official language is Balochi. The provincial capital is Quetta, located in the northwest of Balochistan, close to the Afghan border. The rough terrain of the province is dominated by deserts and mountains: the upper highlands rise as high as 3,700 metres, and valley floors and plains make up only 15% of the landscape. The climate of the highlands is characterised by extremely cold winters and hot summers. The plain areas are also very hot and dry in summers, with temperatures rising up to 50 degree Celsius, while the winters are relatively mild, with temperatures never falling below the freezing point.⁵

The Balochistan province is of critical economic and strategic importance to Pakistan for two principal reasons: *First*, Balochistan is richly endowed with energy and mineral resources. The province's oil and coal reserves cover more than 40% of Pakistan's demand and its gas production accounts for almost 36% of the countries' total production. Balochistan also has significant gold, copper, silver, platinum, aluminium and uranium reserves. *Second*, Balochistan is geopolitically important. It is located astride some important transfer routes between South, South West and Central Asia, bordering Afghanistan in the North and Iran in the West. The proposed Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipelines would both cross Balochistan.⁶ Furthermore, its 770-kilometre coastline links Pakistan to the Gulf States and the Strait of Hormuz, through which oil tankers headed towards Japan and the West have to pass. The Baloch coast is also of particular importance to the Pakistani military, because the Ormara, Pasni and Gwadar naval bases are located here. In addition, the U.S. military uses the Dalbandian airfield, located at Balochistan's western frontier, to provide logistical support for special forces and intelligence operations in Afghanistan. Finally, Pakistan conducts its nuclear tests under the granite mountains of the Ras Koh and in the neighbouring Kharan Desert (Grare 2006a: 4-5; ICG 2006: 2-3).

⁵ All figures stem from the official website of the Pakistani Population Census Organization: <http://www.statpak.gov.pk/depts/pco/index.html>

⁶ However, the future of the ambitious \$7.5 billion Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline project, often touted as a 'peace pipeline', is uncertain in the aftermath of the Mumbai attacks. According to Indian newspaper "The Hindu", high sources from the Indian Petroleum Ministry said there would be no progress on the trilateral talks in the near future. See: <http://www.hindu.com/2009/01/05/stories/2009010552621100.htm> (accessed 14/01/2009). India's participation in the \$7.6 billion Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline project has also come under discussion again.



Source: Own graphic illustration based on a map drawn from Grare (2006a: 2)

Notwithstanding its aforementioned strategic and economic importance, Balochistan is the least developed province in the country. According to the Report of the Parliamentary Committee on Balochistan (2005), the province generates revenues of only 1.6 billion rupees⁷ – just enough to pay the monthly salary of government officials. The province, therefore, is dependent on federal grants of 27 billion rupees, and has a deficit of 15.5 billion rupees. The report also compares the performance of Balochistan on some of the core development indicators to the national average:

⁷ The current exchange rate of the Pakistani rupee against the US dollar is around 80:1, so 1.6 billion rupees correspond to around \$20 million.

Indicator	Balochistan	Pakistan
Literacy	26.6%	47%
Primary School Enrolment	49%	68.3%
Access to Sanitation	7%	18%
Infant Mortality Rate (per 1000 live births)	108	100
Village Electrification	25%	75%
Access to Safe Drinking Water	20%	86%

Source: Senate of Pakistan (2005)

According to the annual report of the Karachi-based Social Policy and Development Centre (2007: 99-121), roughly one third of Balochistan’s population lives below the poverty line, and it has the lowest economic growth rate and the highest unemployment figure in the country. Expenditures for education are decreasing in real terms, access to health care in primarily rural Balochistan is insufficient and the immunisation rate of children is the lowest in the country.

The emergence of Baloch nationalism: a troubled history

Islamabad has always denied the existence of a distinct ‘Baluch identity’. However, the Baloch claim their tribal history can be traced back over two millenniums. Some important milestones are the formation of a short-lived tribal confederacy under the leadership of Mir Jalal Khan in the early 12th century and the establishment of the Kanat of Kalat by the Ahmedzai tribe in the 17th century, which was supported by most major Baloch tribes (ICG 2006: 3; Grare 2006a: 6).

Following the two Afghan wars in 1839 and 1879, the British gradually gained control over large parts of Balochistan. The British then divided the region, giving Iran (then Persia) much of western Balochistan, while a portion of the north was ceded to Afghanistan soon after the Durand Line was drawn in 1893. The remaining territory was split up into three zones: British Balochistan, a narrow strip of land along the Afghan border; the semi-autonomous Kalat State Union; and Nabatat, or the leased areas. The British administrators largely refrained from exercising direct control over the Kalat State Union, the heartland of what today constitutes

the Pakistani Balochistan province, as long as the Baloch did not deny the British army access to Afghanistan. To maintain local loyalty, the British Empire paid subsidies to handpicked sardars, the local tribal chiefs, which enjoyed a considerable degree of internal autonomy as long as they obeyed imperial orders (HRCP 2006: 36; ICG 2006: 3; Breseeg 2004).

In the colonial era, mainly due to the reinforcement and the formal institutionalisation of the sardari system through the British administrators, a distinct national identity developed in Balochistan. During the final decades of the British Raj, the Baloch campaigned for their full national independence (Axmann 2008). But after the fall of the British Empire and the division of the Indian subcontinent into sovereign dominion states, the Baloch were compelled to join the newly created state of Pakistan on 14 August 1947. Consequently, within 24 hours of the creation of Pakistan, the Khan of Kalat – the ruler of the largest ‘princely state’ in Balochistan – declared independence. After prolonged negotiations between the Khan of Kalat and the Pakistani government over the future status of Balochistan had failed to resolve the diplomatic conflict, Balochistan was shocked by a military invasion of Pakistani troops on 01 April 1948. Pakistan intended to destroy the rule of local tribal chiefs in the long term and to concentrate all authority in the hands of the central government in Islamabad. The superiority of the Pakistani military forced the Khan of Kalat to surrender and to accept the merger into Pakistan. By signing the document of accession, he ended a short episode of 225 days of independence. Subsequently, Pakistan sought to subsume the Baloch identity into a larger Pakistani identity. It tried to impose the Urdu language on the Baloch people and the first two constitutions did not recognise the Baloch as a distinct ethnic group (Grare 2006a: 7; Fulcher 2006; Baloch 1987: 8-13).

Pakistan’s forceful military occupation of Balochistan and the abandonment of the principal of self-rule planted the seeds of the conflict that still seethes today, and led to a series of nationalist Baloch insurgencies in the earlier history of Pakistan:

1948: The first of four waves of violent unrest took place immediately after the annexation of the State of Kalat. Prince Kharim, the brother of the Khan of Kalat, continued to resist against the Pakistani army with a troop of around 700 guerillas. He surrendered after the government in Islamabad had reportedly granted amnesty to him and his men. However, he and hundreds of his men were arrested shortly after, resulting in the widespread belief that the Baloch nationalist have been betrayed (Harrison 1981: 21).

1958-60: After Islamabad had merged the four provinces of Pakistan into the 'One Unit' in 1954, a large opposition movement emerged in Balochistan, provoking a renewed invasion of the Pakistani military. Babu Nouroz, the chief of the Zehri tribe, led a resistance of a 1000 militia that could not be decisively defeated by the Pakistani army for over a year. Nouroz was arrested during peace talks with the army. Five of his relatives were hanged on 15 July 1960 and Nouroz himself died in prison in 1964. Since then, he became a symbol of Baloch nationalism (Fulcher 2006).

1964-65: Left-leaning militants, operating under the umbrella of the Baloch People's Liberation Front, again launched a revolt in the name of Baloch nationalism. The Pakistani army once more responded with force, including aerial attacks and the permanent establishment of military garrisons in Balochistan, which further alienated the Baloch people (ICG 2006: 4).

1973-77: The bloodiest episode of the conflict was a full fledged civil war in the mid 1970s. Although Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and his Pakistani People Party (PPP) had adopted a (formally) democratic and federal constitution in 1973, the provincial government was dissolved in 1973 (ICG 2006: 4-6; HRCP 44.45). The nationalist Baloch opposition responded strongly and again took up its arms and fled to the mountains. The Pakistani army then sent in 70,000 troops in September 1974 to terminate the insurgency. But by late 1975 they were facing an opposition of nearly 55,000 armed Baloch nationalists and the war became increasingly un-winnable. It is reported that at least 5,300 Baloch guerrillas and 3,300 Pakistani military men were killed in the conflict, before a settlement was negotiated in 1977 by army chief General Mohammad Ziaul Haq, who had ousted Bhutto in a coup (Harrison 1978: 138).

In the aftermath of the 1973-1977, first indications of 'divide and rule' strategies of the Pakistani military can be observed in Balochistan. General Ziaul Haq systematically empowered Islamist Pashtun parties in Balochistan. The Pakistani state supported thousands of Deobandi Madrassas, run mainly by the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, to provide leadership and to recruit foot soldiers – both to counter the Baloch nationalist movement and to support the anti-Soviet jihad in bordering Afghanistan. According to the International Crisis Group (2006: 6), ever since that time "Baloch nationalist leaders, as well as Pashtun moderate parties [...], have had to face two adversaries: an overbearing central government and, closer to home, the

military-backed Pashtun Islamists.” It is interesting to note in the context of this analysis that the Pakistani army applied divide-and-rule tactics for the first time when conventional military means had proven to be inadequate – or too costly – to bring an end to the insurgency.

The policies of the military government of President Pervez Musharraf

On 12 October 1999, General Pervez Musharraf became the de facto head of government of Pakistan, deposing Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a bloodless coup d'état. Only four months before, Sharif himself had appointed Musharraf as army chief, promoting him over the heads of two more senior military figures. But Sharif's silent assumption that Musharraf, who did not belong to the dominant Punjabi officer class in the Pakistani army, would be unable to build a strong powerbase turned out to be a severe miscalculation. When Sharif had ordered the withdrawal of the Pakistani forces from the Kashmir campaign on 05 July 1999 – only days after pledging his full support – he came under pressure from the military. As relations between him and army chief Musharraf became increasingly tense, Sharif officially dismissed Musharraf on 12 October 2008 and tried to install ISI chief Mohammed Aziz in his place. However, none of the senior military commanders accepted Aziz's appointment. Sharif's attempt to regain control over the army turned against him immediately: He was arrested by the military that same day, and General Musharraf became Pakistan's acting Head of State (BBC 2000).

During Pakistan's 'democratic interlude' of the 1990s, relations between the Baloch nationalists and the central governments under Benazir Bhutto or Nawaz Sharif appeared relatively stable – though still highly controversial – and ethnic tensions within Balochistan seemed to subside. The Baloch nationalist struggle was mainly fought on the political scene, focussing on demands for administrative, economic and social autonomy. Baloch nationalist parties, such as the Balochistan National Party (BNP) or the Jamhoori Watan Party (JWP), emerged as major political forces. Nationalist parties won majorities in most provincial and national elections between 1988 and 1999, and they frequently participated in the formation

of provincial governments – occasionally engaging in coalitions with Pashtun-majority parties (The News International 2008).⁸

However, following the 1999 coup d'état, the relations between the Baloch nationalists and the central government in Islamabad rapidly deteriorated. The installation of a centralised authoritarian rule under President and army chief Pervez Musharraf reduced the national parliament to a rubber-stamp institution and deprived the provinces of the little degree of self-determination they had been granted by the 1973 constitution. Instead, Musharraf set up a 'Local Government Scheme' that bypassed the provinces and heavily relied on the military regime for its survival (ICG 2006: 8-9). Baloch nationalists opposed this 'devolution of power' as a mechanism to impose a unitary form of government in the name of decentralisation.

The 2002 national elections revealed first indications of divide-and-rule tactics of the Pakistani military government. According to the International Crisis Group (2006: 8; 2007: 1), the government manipulated the vote to sideline Baloch as well as moderate Pashtun nationalist parties. Musharraf then arranged the formation of a coalition between his party, the Muslim League-Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) and the six-party religious alliance of the Muttahida Majlis-i-Amal (MMA). Many posts in the cabinet were given to the Pashtun Islamist Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) – the dominant member of the MMA alliance – in an attempt to counter moderate Pashtuns and Baloch nationalists.

The conflict between the military government and nationalist Baloch militants escalated after medical doctor Shazia Khalid was raped at the government-owned Sui gas plant in the Dera Bugti district of Balochistan on 02 January 2005. Among the suspect was a Pakistani army officer. The military's refusal to let the local police interrogate the suspect sparked violent uprisings by the Bugti tribe and other Baloch nationalists. The militants attacked the Sui facility, gas pipelines and electricity grids, thereby disrupting the nationwide energy supply (BBC 2005). Peace was temporarily restored through the initiation of a dialogue between the

⁸ In 1988, Baloch nationalist parties obtained 47.8% of the votes cast in the province, with the BNP and the JWP forming the government. The vote bank increased to 51.74% in 1990. Nawab Zulfiqar Ali Magsi formed the provincial government with the support of the Pakistan Muslim League – Nawaz (PML-N) and the Awami National Party (ANP) after the 1993 polls. The last election before General Musharraf came to power took place in 1997, when once again Baloch nationalist parties dominated the provincial political makeup. The BNP's Sardar Akhtar Mengal became chief minister in a coalition with the JWP and the Pashtun-majority Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F).

government and Baloch opponents, but the talks failed after Musharraf insisted that the JWP and its leader, Nawab Akhbar Kahn Bugti, were solely responsible for the unrest. Another provocation to Baloch nationalists was the government's announcement to construct three additional military cantonments at strategically important sights in Balochistan (ICG 2006: 8). When Musharraf visited the Kohlu district – one of the designated cantonment sights – Baloch militants fired eight rockets at the remote location of the meeting. Days after the attack, military forces took action in Kohlu and the violence escalated to a level unprecedented in the more recent history of Pakistan (New York Times 2006).

Following the events in Kohlu, the military government hardened its political stance, insisting that the insurgency in Balochistan was led by only a handful of extremist tribal leaders. Musharraf maintained that most other sardars had voluntarily sided with the government, while these few 'terrorist' dissidents – allegedly opposed to any economic development or democratic reform in the province – needed to be fought with all necessary means (ICG 2006: 22-23). From that time on, the government has proven its determination to re-establish its control over Balochistan both through direct use of force, and through the application of (more or less) subtle military and political divide-and-rule policies.

According to an extensive report issued by the Human Right Commission of Pakistan (2006: 1-2; 46), the military's use of heavy artillery in the Kohlu and Dera Bugti districts following the attack on President Musharraf killed many civilians and forced almost 85% of the population to flee from the region. It also reports the use of excessive force by the paramilitary Frontier Constabulary (FC), widespread incidences of disappearances and torture and accounts of summary executions, some allegedly carried out by the FC. In March 2007, the HRCP submitted a verified list of 148 missing persons to the Pakistani Supreme Court. Amnesty International (2006) cites a Pakistani Senator, claiming that 180 people have died in the bombings in Kohlu/Dera Bugti and that 122 children had been killed by paramilitary forces. Another statement quotes the federal Interior Minister, admitting that some 4000 people had been arrested in 2005. On 26 August 2006, the military killed Baloch leader Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, creating another symbol of national resistance (Harrison 2006; The Daily 2006). The killing of the former leader of the JWP led to the convention of a Grand

The BNP-led government fell out with Nawaz Sharif in 1998 over a variety of issues, a main one being the testing of nuclear bombs in the Chagai plains (The News International 2008).

Jirga, attended by 85 Baloch tribal chiefs and elders, which resulted in the filing of an appeal to the International Court of Justice in The Hague (Dawn 2006).

Direct military force applied by the Pakistani army and the FC was complemented by a political divide-and-rule strategy. The government held on to the provincial government dominated by the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) and helped the Islamist party to expand its influence in the region. According to several sources, this policy has contributed to increased sectarian violence and a gradual ‘Talibanisation’ of the province. The Pakistan Security Research Unit (2007: 4) analyses that the military government left religious party leaders, who promoted a pro-Taliban agenda, untouched to counterbalance the increasingly threatening secular Baloch opposition. Grare (2006a: 11) puts forward an even stronger argument, claiming that the government encouraged and even subsidized the setting up of madrassas in the province through the Ministry of Religious Affairs at the expense of a secular education: the budget of the Ministry of Religious Affairs is estimated at 1.2 billion rupees, compared to only 200 million rupees earmarked to the Ministry of Education. The author argues that the policy aimed to penetrate deeper into ethnic Baloch areas. The International Crisis Group (2007: 7) contends that material and logistic support from the JUI-F has helped the Taliban to recoup, rearm and launch attacks into Afghanistan from Balochistan. This analysis is supported by a report from the U.S. Congressional Research Service (2008: 10), stating that “[t]he ‘Kandahari clique’ operates not from Pakistan’s tribal areas, but from populated areas in and around the Balochistan provincial capital of Quetta.” The report further says that leading U.S. military officials were increasingly mistrusting the Pakistani military and the paramilitary FC. The Christian Science Monitor (2007) reports that a captured Taliban spokesman said Mullah Mohammed Omar was hiding in Quetta under the protection of the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI).

The government has also attempted to reinforce divisions between Pashtun and Baloch nationalists. Traditionally, all major Pashtun nationalist parties oppose military operations against the Baloch and back their demands for more political and economic autonomy. However, they also want a separate province for the Pashtuns in Balochistan or an amalgamation of Pashtun areas with the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP). As the International Crisis Group (2007: 6-8) analyses, the central government systematically favoured the Pashtuns at the expense of the Baloch. Accordingly, several new districts have been created – exclusively in the Pashtun areas. Furthermore, the government reportedly

provided identity cards to many of the estimated two million (mainly Pashtun) Afghan refugees that settled in Balochistan. This would permit them to vote and probably strengthen the Pashtun parties in the provincial and national elections. Although divide-and-rule may not be the only principle that guided these policies, such a one-sided approach inevitably created distrust and jealousy.

The policies of Pakistan's new civil government: first indicators of change?

On 18 February, the Pakistan People Party (PPP) and the Pakistan Muslim League (PML-N) won the largest shares of seats in the parliamentary elections – which had been postponed following the murder of Bhenazir Bhutto – and subsequently formed a coalition government under Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani. On 07 August 2008, Asif Ali Sharif, the widower of Benazir Bhutto and co-chairmen of the PPP, and Nawaz Sharif, leader of the PML-N, announced the initiation of an impeachment procedure against President Musharraf under §47 of the Pakistani constitution. The threat of impeachment, based on charges that he had violated the constitution when sacking about 60 Supreme Court judges during the state of emergency in November 2007, resulted in Musharraf's resignation on 18 August 2008. On 06 September 2008, Zardari was elected President by a secret ballot in the national and provincial assemblies. He won a clear majority of 408 votes out of 702, among them 59 out of 62 votes in Balochistan province (BBC 2008a; 2008b; U.S.CRS: 34-45).

The evidence that the policies of the Pakistani government towards the Baloch rebellion have changed since the formation of a civil government coalition is mixed. However, it is not absolutely clear how much control the coalition really had over the army, particularly before Musharraf's resignation as President in August 2008 – although Musaharraf had already stepped down as army chief on 28 November 2007. Many of the army actions during the period of 'cohabitation' between March and August 2008 may have been beyond the influence of the PPP/PML-N alliance.

The Asian Human Rights Commission (2008) reports a particularly cruel case of Human Rights violations by the Pakistani military, which had occurred just a few days after the civilian government was inaugurated. Four people were arrested and burned alive in a coal tar on 05 April 2008, after they had failed to provide the military with the names of Baloch insurgents.

On 01 May 2008, Prime Minister Gillani publicly apologised for the persecution of the Baloch people and pledged to halt military assaults in Balochistan, saying that “no army action will be carried out in the province until a strategy is formulated in consultation with representatives of the provincial government.” Later that month, the new government coalition arranged for the release of a Baloch nationalist leader and former provincial chief minister, Akthar Mengal, who had been imprisoned for two years (AFP 2008). This was interpreted as sign of reconciliation by many Baloch nationalists. The coalition also announced the establishment of a commission to trace disappeared persons as part of efforts to normalize the situation in Balochistan (AI 2008: 12).

However, contradicting Gillani’s earlier assurances, the military action in Balochistan’s Dera Bugti district was resumed on 19 July and intensified throughout August 2008, leaving over 100 people deaths, while more than 250 disappeared (The Guardian 2008). Low-level military action is still reported from the Dera Bugti and the Sui areas. Furthermore, the Information Secretary of the Balochistan National Party (BNP), Mr Sanaullah Baloch, complained in an interview with Pakistani newspaper Daily Times (2009) that the ‘Talibanisation’ of Balochistan was still in progress. He accused the government and the ISI of supporting pro-Taliban forces “to pit the religious elements against the Baloch nationalists”.

Conclusion

The above analysis has shown that the Pakistani central government, particularly under the rule of General Pervez Musharraf, has frequently applied divide-and-rule policies to maintain control over the Balochistan province – most notably at times when conventional military means proved insufficient. However, it has also become clear that this policy has not succeeded to permanently silence the Baloch insurgents. On the contrary, it has contributed to the formation of a distinct nationalist identity of the broader Baloch population. Evidence on my second proposition – that the civil government would refrain from divide-and-rule policies – is ambiguous. Despite some declarations of good will and cautious reconciliation attempts, ostensible signs of a change of policy are few. However, this analysis is provisional.



The coming months and years will be crucial for the further development of the conflict. If the civil government wants to win over the ‘hearts and minds’ of the moderate Baloch people, it would be well-advised to recognise the struggle of the Baloch for greater autonomy – regardless of the authenticity of nationalist feelings. Such a move would deprive local warlords of one of their most important weapons – ideology. A determined fight against drug and arms trafficking could strip them of a second weapon – money. The re-investment of a higher of the resource revenues generated from Balochistan into promising development projects in the province that benefit the broader population could round off such a policy of ‘stick and carrot’. However, other strategic necessities may get in the way of such considerations: The civil government also cannot afford to alienate Muslimist forces which pose a potentially more serious threat. I opened with a quote from Goethe, and I close with one from his poem *The sorcerer’s apprentice* (1797) – hoping that this pessimistic view will not become a permanent reality for the Pakistan government:

*“Sir, my need is sore.
Spirits that I’ve cited.
My commands ignore.”*

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