

The Baluch insurgency: linking Iran to Pakistan

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■ Executive summary

The Sistan and Baluchistan Province of Iran has long been associated with instability and armed conflict. The two million largely Sunni Muslim Baluch living in the province have suffered sustained racist persecution and discrimination in predominantly Shia and Persian-speaking Iran.

Analysts claim that lack of development and cultural and religious repression in Sistan and Baluchistan have encouraged popular support for the insurgency among the Baluch community. Iran claims that the main bases of the two main Baluch insurgents groups, Jundullah and Jaish-ul Adl, are in Pakistan's Baluchistan Province, which shares a 1,165-kilometre border with Iran. Iranian forces are increasingly carrying out cross-border attacks against these groups, straining relations between Iran and Pakistan and possibly fuelling sectarian violence in both countries.

Pakistan is battling its own Baluch separatist insurgency. It is feared that the mistreatment of the Baluch community on both sides of the border could lead to an alliance between religiously motivated anti-Iranian Sunni militant groups and the various secular Pakistani Baluch separatist groups.

Iranian Baluch militants groups are not only causing an increasing internal security crisis in Iran, but are also threatening to become the key to the survival of the Taliban on the Iran-Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

The Baluch in Iran and Pakistan: historical context

The Baluch are the indigenous people of the Baluchistan region, which is split among the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan, the Pakistani province of Baluchistan, and a small area of Afghanistan.

Baluch historians point to the fact that historically an independent Baluchistan existed for several centuries. Afghans, Persians and Sikhs all made repeated but unsuccessful attempts to establish complete control of Baluchistan (AI, 2007). However, during the 19th century the British and Persian empires divided Baluchistan into spheres of influence. In 1928 independent West Baluchistan (today the Sistan and Baluchistan Province of Iran) was forcibly annexed to Iran by Reza Shah Pahlavi, who overthrew the Qajar dynasty in a military coup soon after the "Persian constitutional revolution" took place between 1905 and 1907 and founded the Pahlavi dynasty. Baluch activists say that this dynasty created a centralised, predominantly

Persian state in Iran that enshrined ethnic suppression, forcing the Baluch community to fight to protect their rights under Iranian rule (UNPO, 2010).

In 1979 Iran became an Islamic republic and Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi was forced into exile. However, Iran's new theocratic rulers continued and strengthened Pahlavi's policies towards the Baluch, perceiving the Sunni Baluch as a threat to their Shia revolution (Tatchell, 2008).

In 1839 the British gained control over a part of the Baluch region situated in modern-day Pakistan by defeating the forces of Mehrab Khan Baluch, the then-ruler of the Baluch state. The greater part of Baluchistan was – formally or informally – under the British Empire until Indian independence in 1947; the prime British interest in the area was that of securing and protecting the North-Western Frontier Province of British India from both Afghanistan and Iran (Khan, 2011).

Many Baluch believe their province was forcibly incorporated into the new state of Pakistan when the Indian subcontinent was divided into India and Pakistan at the end of British rule in 1947, and since then the province has been in turmoil (IRIN, 2006). Prior to Indian independence there was a serious possibility that the Baluch would be accorded self-rule under the leadership of Ahmed Yar Khan, the ruler of the Baluch state of Kalat, who claimed that Kalat was never a part of the British Indian Empire (Bangash, 2011).

In the late 1940s Kalat state was declared an independent nation by the British government, while other adjoining areas such as those inhabited by the Bugti and Marri tribes were also included in the new state. When India and Pakistan became independent in August 1947, Baluchistan also declared its independence (Tatchell, 2011). Pakistan, the British and Baluchistan accepted the independent status of Baluchistan through a tripartite agreement signed on August 4th 1947.

To ascertain the will of the people concerning the future of the state, Ahmed Yar Khan established two houses of parliament in October 1947 (Bangash, 2011). Rejecting the Baluch's legitimate claim to self-rule, the Pakistani government tried to force Baluchistan to join Pakistan, but both houses of the Baluch parliament rejected this (Tatchell, 2011). Khan was willing to compromise with the Pakistani government on defence, foreign affairs and communication matters, but was not prepared to abandon the sovereign status of the state. However, the Pakistani government moved forces into Kalat territory and pressurised Khan to sign the instrument of accession merging Baluchistan with Pakistan. Baluch separatist groups argue that this accord was mandated by neither the Baluch parliament nor the Baluch people (Tatchell, 2007).

Khan rose up in revolt, triggering the first of a series of insurgencies in the province. New uprisings, essentially seeking greater autonomy, led to confrontations between Baluch nationalists and separatists and the Pakistan military in 1958, 1962 and 1973-77 (IRIN, 2006). The current armed conflict between Baluch separatists and the Pakistani army has been ongoing since 2004. Members of the powerful Bugti and Marri tribes and parts of the Baluch middle class support the separatists with influence and money, making the current insurgency stronger than previous ones (*The Economist*, 2012).

Sunni Baluch Muslims in Shia-ruled Iran

Iran's state religion is Shia Islam and the majority of its population is ethnically Persian. However, millions of minorities from various ethnic, religious and linguistic backgrounds also live in the country, among whom are the Baluch, who speak Baluchi and are Sunni Muslim

(Beehner, 2006). Iran has roughly 1.6 million Baluch concentrated in its south-eastern Sistan and Baluchistan Province, comprising about 2% of its total population (Siddique, 2007). A small number of Baluch also live in Kemran Province. Many Baluch have migrated to other parts of Iran, particularly Tehran, to find work.

The Baluch in Iran have long suffered racist persecution, and the combination of ethnic and religious differences has led to their being harshly victimised by successive Iranian Shia governments, from that of the shah to those of presidents Ahmadinejad and Hasan Rouhan.

Sistan and Baluchistan is one of the poorest and most deprived provinces in Iran. In recent years it has suffered severe droughts and extreme weather conditions that have further damaged the province's meagre resources. It has Iran's worst indicators for "life expectancy, adult literacy, primary school enrolment, access to improved water and sanitation, and infant and child mortality" (AI, 2007: 3).

The province has the lowest per capita income in Iran, with almost 80% of Baluch living below the poverty line by some estimates. The province holds significant reserves of natural resources, including gas, gold, copper, oil and uranium, but unlike what has happened in Pakistani Baluchistan, Tehran has not exploited the energy and mineral reserves in Sistan and Baluchistan and prefers that the area's resources and population remain undeveloped (Zurutuza, 2011).

The area was called Baluchistan 80 years ago, then Iran's rulers changed the name to Baluchistan and Sistan, while today it is Sistan and Baluchistan. Similarly, once known as Duzzap, the provincial capital was renamed Zahedan by the Pahlavis.¹

Some analysts say that the area is full of Shia missionaries seeking to convert the local Sunni population, but the painful irony of this is that Tehran actually supported Sunni Islam in the region in the early 1980s to quell the growing communist and secular feelings among the local Baluch community.²

Restrictions on journalists and rights groups mean it is difficult to obtain a clear picture of what is going on in the area. However, Tehran's repression of the Baluch is well documented by international rights groups, especially Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Rights groups complain that freedom of expression remains a serious issue within Iran, where the government is continuously trying to silence dissent while calling for reforms in the name of "national security" (HRW, 2008).

Analysts say that a lack of development, together with cultural and religious repression in the area, has

¹ Email interview with Karlos Zurutuza, a journalist who covers Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan Province extensively, February 20th 2014.

² Ibid.

stimulated popular support for the insurgency. In response to armed resistance by Baluch groups (see below), Iranian security forces have arrested suspected militants, beaten and tortured suspects to obtain confessions – some of which has been shown on television channels – and carried out extra-judicial killings. Executions of alleged “enemies of God” are a common occurrence; victims include journalists, bloggers, poets and even teenagers, the majority of whom are executed without trial.³ Statistics compiled by some rights organisations suggest that the Baluch, who comprise 2% of Iran’s population, have accounted for “at least 20% of Iranian executions since 2006” (Farooq, 2013). The United Nations special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Iran has expressed concern over the abrupt increase in executions in the country since the start of 2014: at least 40 people were reportedly hanged in the first two weeks of January (OHCHR, 2014).

Baluch militant groups in Iran

Jundallah, Jaish-ul Adl and Haraqat Ansar Iran are the three militant groups operating in Iran’s Sistan and Baluchistan Province and carrying out attacks against Iranian interests.

Jundallah (“Soldiers of God”), also known as the Iranian Peoples’ Resistance Movement (Jonbesh-e Moqavemat-e Mardom-e Iran), was founded in 2002 to defend the Baluch minority of Sistan and Baluchistan and started its armed campaign in 2005. Since then it has been carrying out armed assaults against officials and members of the security forces, as well as taking hostages and occasionally killing them. Jundallah’s first major terrorist attack inside Iran was in the autumn of 2005 when then-Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was visiting Baluchistan. His motorcade was attacked, at least one person was killed and many more were injured. Then in March 2006 Jundallah terrorists blocked a road near Tasooki in Baluchistan and murdered 22 people (Sahimi, 2009).

Abdolmalek Rigi (also known as Abdul Malik Rigi) was the leader of Jundallah until his capture and execution in 2010 by the Iranian government. Reports suggest that the group comprises around 1,000 trained fighters, operates in Baluch areas in Iran and has bases across the border in the Baluch region of Pakistan (Al, 2007). A Quetta-based analyst believes that Jundallah recruits its cadres largely from Sunni religious seminaries and its core militants are from the Rigi tribe who live on both sides of the Iran-Pakistan border (Siddique, 2009). According to the people who worked with the Rigi, Jundallah is a decentralised militant group and its strategy is to facilitate and train small groups already fighting the Iranian regime.

In February 2010 Iranian authorities arrested Abdolmalek Rigi and his deputy, Abu Hamza, but there were contradictory reports about how Iranian security forces detained

him. Iranian officials claimed that Rigi had been arrested on board an aircraft flying between Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia and Dubai (MacDonald, 2010). However, other accounts said Rigi had been arrested inside Iran or Pakistan. Al-Jazeera TV reported that he had been handed over to Iran by the Pakistani authorities (Black, 2010). Pakistan’s ambassador to Tehran, Muhammad Abbasi, had also claimed that “Rigi’s arrest could not happen without Pakistan’s help”, but without giving further details (MacDonald, 2010). *Time* claimed that Rigi was picked up from Dubai in a highly sophisticated operation carried out by Inter-Services Intelligence, Pakistan’s main intelligence agency (Thahroor, 2010). Iran has so far executed dozens of Jundallah members, including Abdolmalek Rigi and his brother, Abdolhamid. It was widely believed that Abdolmalek Rigi’s death would put an end to the Jundallah-led insurgency, but did not do so. In fact, it has become more violent – the group has carried out three major attacks since the death of its leader (*Dawn*, 2011).

Jaish-ul Adl (“Army of Justice”) is a militant group that claimed to have captured five Iranian border guards in February 2014 in the Jakigour area of Sistan and Baluchistan Province. On October 25th 2013 the group killed 14 Iranian border guards and wounded three others in the border region near the city of Saravan in the province (Press TV, 2014). In November 2013 Jaish-ul Adl shot dead an Iranian prosecutor in Zahedan, which was followed by a bomb blast in December 2013 that killed three Iranian Revolutionary Guards.

There is very little information about Jaish-ul Adl, but analysts believe that it could be an offshoot of Jundallah, because the group is pursuing the same goals as Jundallah. A December 2013 report suggests that Jundallah renamed itself Jaish-ul Adl in 2012, and that Salahuddin Farooqui and Mullah Omar (an Iranian Baluch rebel unrelated to the Afghan Taliban leader) are two of its most important leaders. Omar is the brother of Maula Bux Darakhshan, alias Mauluk, an Iranian Baluch who founded Sipah-e-Rasoolallah (“Army of the Prophet of Allah”) in the 1990s and allied it with Pakistan’s anti-Shia Sunni militant groups (Hussain, 2013). After Darakhshan was killed by Iranian forces in 2006 Omar, a clean-shaven man in his early 40s, led the anti-Iran group from Kulaho village in the district of Kech in Pakistan’s Baluchistan Province (Hussain, 2013). Iranian intelligence agencies also believe that some leaders who separated from Jundallah formed Jaish-ul Adl (Esfandiari, 2013).

In February 2014 Jaish-ul Adl captured five Iranian border guards. On April 4th four of them were released, while one was reportedly killed. Jaish-ul Adl claimed on Twitter that it released the four Iranians at the request of eminent Iranian Sunni clerics and handed them over to a delegation of clerics (*Dawn*, 2014). However, some media reports claimed that the Iranian government released 60 Jaish-ul

3 Ibid.

Adl members in exchange for the release of the border guards (Khalid, 2014).

Harakat Ansar Iran (HAI), another insurgent group, has also been active in Sistan and Baluchistan Province, carrying out attacks against Iranian interests. However, HAI differs from Jundullah and Jaish-ul Adl in that it has connected its cause with wider Sunni and jihadist causes, at least through its media releases. These include several social media accounts in English and Arabic and are almost certainly produced by groups outside Iran (Paraszczuk, 2013). Identified by the HAI website as the group's head, Abu Yasir Muskootani declared that Abdolmalek Rigi's supporters are still alive and that the Baluch people should now heed the call for jihad against the Iranian regime (Zambelis, 2012).

Separatists or radical Islamists?

Analysts believe that places of worship, and especially mosques, are the only places of association for the Baluch community in Iran, which is blurring the lines between Baluch ethno-nationalism and separatism, and Sunni extremism in the country (Siddique, 2009). Jundullah's aims are not entirely clear, but in an interview in October 2008 Rigi said that the group does not seek to break away from Iran to form a separate Baluchistan autonomous region and simply wants the state to respect the human rights, culture and faith of the Baluch people (Hardy, 2010).

However, some journalists claim that Rigi changed his approach after interacting with the banned Pakistani sectarian group Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), and his anti-Iranian stance as a Baluch shifted to one of being anti-Shia. Through this connection with LeJ Rigi went to the Afghan province of Zabul, but the Afghan Taliban refused to deal with him for fear that he was linked with U.S. intelligence (Shahzad, 2009). In 2009 Rigi met with al-Qaeda leaders in the Turbat district of Pakistani Baluchistan; al-Qaeda agreed to support Rigi's insurgency in Iran and in return urged him to facilitate al-Qaeda members' movement in and out of Turkey and Iran from the Pakistani side of Baluchistan (Shahzad, 2011). Experts believe that this transformation of Jundullah's approach and alliances resulted in the deadliest year for the Iranian government in terms of insurgent attacks. Several high-profile attacks were carried out in Iranian Baluchistan, during one of which General Noor Ali Shooshtari, deputy head of the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, and Rajab Ali Mohammadzadeh, its chief provincial commander, were killed (BBC News, 2009).

Jaish-ul Adl's leader, Mullah Omar, clearly said in a recent interview that he does not lead a religious movement, although at the same time he maintained that Iran is suppressing the Baluch community because they are Sunnis and Baluch. He said that his group is fighting for its people's religious and national rights (Hussain, 2013).

Foreign support?

Iranian authorities regularly accuse Baluch militant groups operating in Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan Province of being supported by foreigners, mainly the U.S., Britain, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and with militant groups such as the Taliban and al-Qaeda (Hardy, 2010). The U.S. and Britain flatly reject this accusation; however, some media reports suggest that the U.S. is secretly funding militant ethnic groups, including Baluch groups, in Iran in an attempt to pressure the Iranian government to abandon its nuclear programme (Lowther & Freeman, 2007).

Relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia have been hostile since the Iranian revolution. In the 1980s and 1990s Pakistan was the scene of what was effectively a proxy war between Iran and Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia has funded hardline Sunni militant groups in Pakistan, such as LeJ, for years, angering the minority Shia community, while Iran has channelled money to Shia militant groups, such as Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan (Rehman, 2011). Experts believe that Saudi Arabia funded Sunni groups to create armed resistance to Iran (Shaukat, 2014). Iranian officials have alleged several times that Saudi intelligence agencies had been directly supporting Jundullah especially in the June 2008 abduction of 16 Iranian police officers from the Sarawan district of Sistan and Baluchistan Province (Press TV, 2008).

The Iranians also suspect that Jundullah operated from Pakistani territory with the clandestine support of Pakistan's powerful Inter-Service Intelligence and that its leader, Abdolmalek Rigi, was based in Pakistan and carried a Pakistani national identity card in the name of Saeed Ahmed. However, Islamabad denied these accusations (Dawn, 2010).

Alliance between Iranian and Pakistani Baluch militants

Several Baluch tribes and many families are divided by the Iran-Pakistan border and there is normally a daily exchange of goods between the people on either side of the border. Baluch nationalists refer to Iranian Baluchistan as West Baluchistan and regard it a part of a would-be Great Baluchistan.

The anger and frustration of Iran's Baluch minority are reflected in the broader struggle of their co-ethnics in Pakistan's Baluchistan area, where some Baluch separatist groups are fighting a nationalist and secular battle against Islamabad in order to form their own country. Despite the differences between Baluch fighters from opposite sides of the border, Pakistani Baluch seem increasingly close to their kin in Iran, experts believe.⁴ After Abdolmalek Rigi's arrest Baluch people held protests demanding the release of the Jundullah leader and the rioting accelerated after his killing. A Jundullah spokesperson expressed deep

⁴ Ibid.

appreciation for the “overwhelming” reaction of the people of Pakistani Baluchistan over Rigi’s killing and appealed to them to help Jundallah liberate Iranian Baluchistan (PIPS, 2012). Analysts fear that the mistreatment of the Baluch on both sides of the border could possibly lead to an alliance between religiously motivated anti-Iranian Sunni militant groups such as Jundallah and the various secular Baluch separatist groups, such as the Baluch Liberation Front and the Baluch Liberation Army (*Baloch Hal*, 2013).

Some security experts believe that Iranian Baluch militant groups, and especially Jundallah, have strong roots among ethnic Baluch in Pakistan. Jundallah carries out its operations against the Iranian Shia regime mostly in the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan, but the Iranian government alleges that its main base is in Pakistan’s Baluchistan Province (Shahzad, 2010). However, Pakistani government officials say that Iranian claims about the presence of Iranian militants in Pakistani Baluchistan are wrong (Nasar, 2014).

The Iranian authorities are afraid of increasing support for Iranian Baluch militant groups among the Baluch in Pakistan and have been taking measures to stop Pakistani Baluch from crossing the border into Iran. According to the 1956 agreement between Iran and Pakistan, Pakistanis who obtain the *Rahdari*, or “red permit”, are allowed to travel to Iran to visit their relatives living on the other side of the border. In terms of this permit, Pakistanis can travel up to 60 km inside Iran, while Iranians can cross to the Pakistani border town of Taftan. But in late March 2014 Iranian border guards deported dozens of Pakistani families from Sistan and Baluchistan Province even though they possessed valid travel documents (Baloch, 2014b).

Also, to curb the cross-border movement of militants, Iran is building a 3-metre-high, 700-kilometre-long wall along its border with Pakistan, replacing an intermittently tattered border fence. Previous Iranian attempts to prevent both the movement of militants and drug trafficking “have included digging canals, building barriers and putting up barbed wire to seal the country’s border” (Ghasmille, 2011). Although the Pakistani Foreign Ministry said that Iran has the right to erect border fencing in its territory, Pakistan’s Baluch political parties opposed the construction of the wall and said that the Baluch on both sides of the border were not consulted about it (Notezai, 2012).

Pakistan is not willing to annoy its powerful neighbour because both states have collaborated in the past in quelling Baluch separatist movements and have important economic ties (Hardy, 2010). In February 2014 Iran and Pakistan signed a pact sharing responsibility for combating drug smugglers and militants operating across the border, and making it easier to extradite prisoners. On April 6th 2014 the Iranian parliament passed a bill that will pave the way for Tehran and Islamabad to enhance security cooperation (*Express Tribune*, 2014).

Cross-border attacks

The Iranian security forces have been firing large numbers of rockets from the Iranian side of the border at the border towns of Panjgur and Mashkil in Pakistani Baluchistan. In 2013 and even in 2014 the firing of mortars across the border, incursions of Iranian military personnel and violations of Pakistan airspace by Iranian helicopters were reported along the Pakistan-Iran border. Nine attacks were reported in the last three months of 2013, killing five people and wounding 14 others. In a number of similar attacks Iran’s border forces attacked civilians with mortars and direct gunfire in the Kech, Panjgur, Musakhel and Washuk districts of Pakistani Baluchistan (PIPS, 2014). Pakistani officials confirmed that the Iranians had violated the border and fired rockets on 11 or 12 occasions within a month (Shah, 2013). The chief minister of Pakistani Baluchistan, Dr Abdul Malik Baloch, has also expressed his anger over cross-border attacks and asked the central government to take up the issue of border violations with Iranian officials.

However, activists in Pakistani Baluchistan complain that the mainstream Pakistani media have mostly under-reported the issue. Pakistani officials have also confirmed that the issue was not reported because of the sensitivity of the relationship between Iran and Pakistan (Baloch, 2014a). Pakistani Baluch separatist groups alleged that Iran is carrying out these operations inside Baluchistan with the support of Pakistan as a continuation of their longstanding anti-Baluch nexus (*Azadi*, 2013). The Iranian authorities claim that “their forces are taking action against narcotic dealers, human trafficking, and drug pushers and whenever they get a chance they push the people across the Iranian border” (Baloch, 2013).

In response to the kidnapping of its border guards by Jaish-ul Adl, Iran threatened to send its forces into Pakistani territory to free the guards if Islamabad did not take measures to secure their release. In reaction, Pakistan urged Iran to respect its borders and said that Iranian forces have no right to cross the border in violation of international law.

Conclusion and future scenario

In addition to Iran’s rivalries with the U.S. and Saudi Arabia-led Gulf Arab monarchies and the crippling effects of the economic sanctions imposed on Iran due to its nuclear programme, the resurgence of a Baluch insurgency can strongly impact Iran’s stability and hence that of the entire region.

Although the grievances of the Baluch Sunni militant groups in Iran are local, they are becoming increasingly linked by the ideology of “global jihad” and the larger sectarian strife between Sunni and Shia Islam; or to put it another way, they reflect by proxy the regional conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Political analysts suggest that Iranian Baluch militant groups are a good example of how extremism can develop among the marginalised communities of South-west Asia and how militant groups in general are exploiting the complicated relations among competing regional states.

The activities of Baluch militant groups such as Jundullah and Jaish-ul Adl are growing in Iran and have already proved to be an annoyance in Pakistani-Iranian relations. These groups have stepped up cross-border raids from their havens along the Pakistan-Iran border targeting Iranian security personnel and civilians. In response, Iranian security forces are carrying out cross-border raids against the Iranian Baluch militant groups on Pakistani territory, violating the international border. A further increase in violence carried out by Baluch militant groups could damage relations between the two countries. Some analysts fear that Iranian Baluch militant groups are not only causing an internal security crisis in Iran, but are also threatening to become the key to the survival of the Taliban militants on the Iran-Pakistan-Afghanistan border (Karthikeya, 2009), because these groups' cooperation with LeJ could provide new operational space and opportunities to LeJ's allies, i.e. Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan and other jihadi groups in the cross-border region.

Sectarian violence is an unpredictable menace in Pakistan. The activities of Baluch militant groups in Iran from their hideouts in Pakistani Baluch areas and, in response, cross-border raids by Iranian security forces into Pakistani territory are also threatening to increase sectarian tension in bilateral relations between Iran's largely Shia rulers and Sunni Pakistan. Iranian Baluch militants are aligning with Pakistani anti-Shia groups, especially LeJ, which is involved in the killing of Shia Muslims in Pakistan.

Iran is also afraid of the threat that Baluch insurgent groups pose to "its territorial integrity and to regional stability" (Zambelis, 2012) and has therefore deployed additional security and military units to Sistan and Baluchistan Province, held military exercises in the province, taken measures to coordinate the activities of these units under the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps and tightened control of the border with Pakistan. However, analysts believe that the grievances of Baluch groups in Sistan and Baluchistan are "cultural, economic, ethnic, and sectarian, and cannot be permanently resolved by military force alone" (Aryan, 2009).

Instead, what is needed is a fair distribution of resources and the intensive development of public infrastructure. Analysts say that the Iranian government must make a greater effort to help the local Baluch population, create employment in the province, and allow local forces to be more involved in border control provided by the police and security forces. The government should also engage local Baluch elders in decision-making; allow for greater participation by the region's elites and clerics in public, security, and social issues; and put pacifying measures in

place in an attempt to strengthen cooperation between Shias and Sunnis (Samii, 2006).

However, instability in Iran's Sistan and Baluchistan Province perpetrated by Baluch insurgent groups will scare away potential investors in a much-delayed but important Iran-Pakistan pipeline project and may prevent its construction altogether. This pipeline, which is currently under construction, is expected to deliver natural gas from Iran to Pakistan and to pass through the Baluch region of the two countries.

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