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## Rethinking Baloch Secularism: What the Data Say

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### Abstract

Since 1947, Baloch have resisted inclusion into the Pakistan and have waged several waves of ethno-nationalist insurgency against the state. Scholars and Baloch nationalist leaders alike generally assert that Baloch are more secular than other Pakistanis, more opposed to the political Islamist policies pursued by the state, and less supportive of Islamist militancy in the country. However, these claims lack empirical support. We employ data derived from a large national survey of Pakistanis from 2012 to evaluate these conventional wisdoms. Contrary to claims in the literature, we find that Baloch resemble Pakistanis generally with few important exceptions

**Keywords:** *Balochistan, political Islam, insurgency, support for Islamist militancy*

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## **Rethinking Baloch Secularism: What the Data Say**

### **C. Christine Fair and Ali Hamza**

When the British decolonized the Indian subcontinent in 1947, they divided the erstwhile Raj into the new dominions of India and Pakistan. Initially, Pakistan was comprised of two wings: East and West Pakistan, separated by the expanse of India. With Indian assistance, East Pakistan successfully seceded in an ethno-nationalist war of independence in 1971 and became Bangladesh. What was then West Pakistan is contemporary Pakistan. East Pakistan was not Pakistan's only troublesome province. Since 1947, Pakistan has been unable to fully integrate Balochistan into the national project. Several Baloch leaders resisted joining Pakistan from the outset, arguing that their agreements with the British allowed them to remain independent. Ultimately, these Baloch leaders acquiesced and joined Pakistan; however, many Baloch did not resign themselves to their newly-acquired Pakistani identity.

While Balochistan is Pakistan's largest province, it is the least densely populated, with less than six percent of Pakistan's population living there.<sup>1</sup> It borders Iran's restive Balochistan-o-Sistan province, as well as southern provinces of Afghanistan (Nimruz, Helmand, Kandahar, Zabol, Paktika). It is ethnically diverse and is home to many religious minorities (i.e. Sikhs, Hindus, Zoroastrians) and several Muslim sects (Rahman, 2013). While the Baloch claim to be the largest ethnic group in Balochistan, this assertion cannot be confirmed because Pakistan's last census was conducted in 1998. There are two compelling reasons to believe that Baloch may no longer hold this majority position. First, Balochistan has experienced considerable migration from other provinces in Pakistan. Second, millions of Afghans, mostly ethnic Pashtuns, have fled their conflict-riven homeland for Balochistan in various waves since the mid-1970s.

Even though Balochistan has an abundance of natural resources, it is the least developed province in Pakistan with abysmal human development measures. It has the highest incidence of poverty, the lowest literacy rate, and the highest neonatal, postnatal, and infant mortality rates in Pakistan (Arif & Ali, 2012; Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2015; National Institute of Population Studies, 2013). Ethnic Baloch in the province have waged five waves of insurgency against the federal government, ostensibly mobilized by discontent over decades of economic oppression,

<sup>1</sup> Among Pakistan's four provinces, Balochistan is the largest, occupying 43 percent of Pakistan's total area of 796,000 square kilometers (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics).

political repression, underdevelopment, and resource exploitation (Kupecz, 2012). In response, Pakistan's armed forces have conducted armed operations to put down the insurrections, the most recent of which is ongoing (Khan, 2009).

While much of the violence that Pakistan suffers is due to Islamist militants, Baloch rebels perpetrate violence in the name of their ethnicity rather than Islamism (Fair, 2015). As Mishali-Ram (2015) has observed, Baloch are the most alienated ethnic group in Pakistan and their "preserved separate cultural identity"—rather than Islamism—has played an important role in these separatist movements. Baloch activists themselves opine that they are more secular than Pakistanis generally, and this view is supported by scholarly and media accounts of the Baloch (Marri & Baluch, 2009; Walsh, 2011). No other ethnic group has been consistently portrayed as secular in Pakistan with the possible exception of the ethnic Mohajirs, who are Urdu speakers whose ancestors migrated to Pakistan from North India during or after partition (Khan, 2009; Grare, 2006; Harrison, 1981).<sup>2</sup> Ostensibly one of the main reasons for labeling the Baloch as secular is the major role that ethnicity, rather than religion, plays in Baloch separatist politics. However, secularism in politics may well co-exist with personal religiosity (Khan, 2009).

The Pakistani state, as we describe herein, has sought to insert political Islam into Balochistan as a means of undermining the ethnic appeals of the various militant groups. It has encouraged militant groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba and its various so-called "relief" wings to operate in the province, which has permitted these groups to proselytize Baloch. In addition, Balochistan has experienced enormous growth in religious seminaries (madaris, pl. of madrassah), and the province consistently has the highest madrassah enrollment rates in the country (Fair, 2014). In addition, Afghan refugees have long made their home in Balochistan after multiple waves of violence in Afghanistan dating back to the 1970s. Thus even if Baloch were more secular at some point in the distant past, there are several compelling reasons to be skeptical about this assertion today. First, it downplays the cumulative effects of the Pakistan military's "ideological push to counter secular nationalism with religious fanaticism" (Khan, 2009, p. 1083). Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies, most notably the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), have promoted political Islam and even Islamist militants in the province to, sometime literally, combat Baloch ethnic mobilization (Zurutuza, 2015; Grare,

<sup>2</sup> In recent years, the ethnic Mohajirs (the descendants of those Urdu speakers who migrated to Pakistan from North India) have constructed a "Mohajir identity which links ethnicity with religiosity, equating "Mohajir-ness" with "secularism" and "Punjabiness" or "Pathan-ness" with "fundamentalism" (Gayer, 2007).

2006; Shams, 2015). Second, it is very likely that the influxes of Afghan refugees have had impacts upon Balochistan's ethnic politics, support for Islamism, and local religious practices and beliefs (Ahmed, 1990; Hafeez, 1982; Cheema, 1988; Wirsing, 2008). Third, the Afghan Taliban's apex leadership, the so-called Quetta Shura, has long operated from Quetta, Balochistan. The organization could not operate so freely in the province without considerable local support, as well as state-provided security.

In this paper, we employ data derived from a large national survey of Pakistanis from 2012 to assess the degree to which Baloch differ from other Pakistanis with respect to their religious and political beliefs. We do so in two ways. First, we present descriptive analyses of several survey items that cast light on these issues, including respondents' sectarian orientation, degree of piety, knowledge of Islam, support for secular as well as Islamist policies, preferences towards political parties, and support for two Islamist militant groups operating in and from Pakistan, namely the Afghan Taliban and the Sipah-e-Sahaba-e-Pakistan (SSP). In these descriptive analyses, we compare Baloch to non-Baloch within Balochistan and across the country. We also compare Baloch to Punjabis due to the prominence of Punjabis in the military and other government institutions. Second, we conduct a hard test to evaluate Baloch support for the SSP and the Taliban using econometric analysis.<sup>3</sup> Arguably, support for Islamist militancy is one of the most important tests of Baloch secular credentials. Unfortunately, because comparable older data do not exist, we cannot track these concerns over time.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. Next, we provide a historical background of the conflict. In the third section, we critically review the extant literature on Baloch politics and religious beliefs. Fourth, we describe the data and analytical methodology that we employ. We then discuss the results of our descriptive analyses followed by an exposition of the regression results. We conclude with a discussion of the implications of our findings.

### **Balochistan and the Pakistani State**

The British Empire in South Asia coexisted with many princely states over which the British had varied levels of suzerainty, granting them considerable internal autonomy at the price

<sup>3</sup> Both organizations are rooted in the Deobandi interpretative tradition of Sunni Islam. Both share a common infrastructure of Deobandi mosques, madrassahs and have political support from the Deobandi political party in Pakistan, the Jamiat-e-Ulema Islami (JUI). In the early 1990s, the SSP fought alongside the Afghan Taliban as it struggled to consolidate its control over Afghanistan (Abou Zahab, 2002).

of fealty to the British. In 1884, the British annexed Balochistan, seeking both to establish a buffer zone between its own empire and that of the Russians and to secure safe transit routes to Afghanistan (Khan, 2009). The area of Balochistan was and remains fragmented by desert and mountains with pockets of settlements that were often tightly organized around tribal structures with few lines of communication connecting settlements to each other or to the rest of British India. Contrary to the claims of some contemporary Baloch nationalists, there was no historically stable “autonomous” Baloch kingdom per se that covered the expanse of today’s Balochistan. The sixth Khan (leader) of Kalat, Nasir Khan, managed to organize most of the major Baloch tribes under one military and administrative system in the mid-18th century. However, that arrangement was fleeting and did not survive his death, after which power and control again returned to the various tribes (Khan, 2009; Harrison, 1981). Prior to annexation, the Khan of Kalat promised the British safe passage through Balochistan, even though he did not control the anti-British tribes in the territory. When the British were eventually attacked, they held the Khan of Kalat to be in breach of the treaty and seized the region. They ceded the western part of the territory (now Sistan-o-Balochistan Province) to Iran and the northern part to Afghanistan. Part of the remaining area became “British Balochistan,” and the remainder was divided into the Khanate of Kalat and three principalities (Khan, 2009; Harrison, 1981).

At the time of partition, Lord Mountbatten (the Viceroy of India) persuaded most of the princely states within the Raj to choose between joining India or Pakistan. Most potentates of these princely states joined one dominion or the other based upon demography (Hindu or Muslim majority) and optimal geographical contiguity to one of the new states. When independence came, there were three princely states that had not joined India or Pakistan. The Muslim rulers of Hyderabad and Junagarh—both deep within India—opted to remain independent and join Pakistan respectively even though both governed Hindu majorities (India forcibly annexed them both). The Hindu ruler of the princely state of Kashmir, Maharaja Hari Singh, ruled over a Muslim majority. Singh hoped to remain independent. Despite signing a stand-still agreement with Singh, Pakistan dispatched thousands of so-called tribal marauders from Pakistan’s tribal areas and Swat to seize Kashmir for Pakistan (Nawaz, 2008). Singh asked India for military assistance, which India agreed to provide on the condition that he join India. After Singh signed the instrument of accession, India airlifted troops in defense of what had become Indian territory. That conflict became the first Indo-Pakistan War of 1947. When the war ended, Pakistan controlled about one third of the territory while India controlled the remainder. To date, Pakistan

contests the territorial disposition of Kashmir and has fought several conventional and sub-conventional conflicts in effort to seize the remaining territory (Whitehead, 2007).

A somewhat similar situation developed in what is now Balochistan. Many Baloch leaders did not embrace an independent Pakistan, before or after partition. As there was no Balochistan assembly in 1946, residents of the area were not allowed to vote in the 1946 elections, which were essentially a referendum on the creation of Pakistan. Despite these misgivings, “British Balochistan” joined the Pakistan union. However, the Khan of Kalat wanted independence. Unlike the other principalities, the Khan of Kalat had a treaty with Whitehall, not with the British Indian government, which many argued allowed him to remain independent of either of the new dominions. Mir Ahmad Yar Khan, the Khan of Kalat at the time, declared independence one day after Pakistan came into existence. Ultimately, Pakistan annexed the Khanate by force (Axmann, 2008). Some Baloch continue to decry their inclusion in Pakistan and contend that Pakistan and its army are an occupying force. As discussed below, several Baloch organizations have engaged in militancy either to achieve greater autonomy, with devolution of power to the province, or to attain outright independence.

After forcibly seizing Balochistan, Pakistan’s first governor-general, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, established an advisory council for the province under his direct oversight (Khan, 2009). From 1948 to 1955, Balochistan was an administrative unit managed by a Quetta-based commissioner, with most of the Baloch sardars (tribal leaders) receiving a stipend from the federal government. Pakistan inherited this policy of “levies” from the British (Aslam, 2011). Despite some misgivings among the Baloch, the province was relatively peaceful until 1955, when Pakistan promulgated the “One Unit Scheme,” which abolished all of the provinces in what was then West Pakistan. This change was intended to combine the strength of the western provinces to balance the ethnically homogenous and politically powerful Bengalis of East Pakistan. But the strategy, which denied provinces their own territorial identity and local governance, met resistance and was ultimately abandoned in 1970 (Khan, 2009).

Within several years of Pakistan’s creation, a few Baloch sardars had become wealthy after the discovery of natural resources on their lands. In 1958, a dispute arose about royalties from natural gas located in the area controlled by the Bugti tribe. In that year, some members of the Bugti tribe tried to disrupt the supply of gas from the Sui area in an effort to increase the royalty fees from the government (Aslam, 2011). Responding to unrest resulting both from Bugti efforts to manipulate the gas market and protests against the One Unit scheme, the

government launched a military campaign that lasted until the early 1960s. Following the elections of 1970, the ethno-nationalist National Awami Party (NAP) won the largest block of seats in both Balochistan and what is now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and formed governments in both provinces with the political support of the Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (an Islamist party associated with the Deobandi interpretive tradition). Following the 1971 war, the NAP government finally took control of the provincial government and tried to correct some of the developmental, economic, and political problems of the province. Pakistan's first elected prime minister, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, opposed such reforms, fearing that they would undermine the Punjabis (Pakistan's dominant ethnic group) and other non-Baloch who controlled businesses in the province (Khan, 2009).

In 1973, the Pakistani authorities manufactured a reason to invade Balochistan when they raided the Iraqi Embassy in Islamabad, discovering 300 Soviet submachine guns and 48,000 rounds of ammunition. Although Pakistani and American officials knew the weapons were meant for Baloch rebels in Iran and intended to punish Iran for supporting Kurdish rebels in Iraq, Bhutto's government claimed that Iraq was planning to transfer the arms to Pakistan's Baloch. The elected provincial government was dismissed, Governor's Rule imposed, and the central government dispatched 80,000 troops to fight 55,000 Baloch guerillas. Iran provided 30 Cobra helicopters with their own pilots to help Pakistan put down any insurrection (Iran has had its own problems with its ethnic Baloch, who struggle under ethnic discrimination and Shia domination). In the end, about 3,300 Pakistani army soldiers died, as well as 5,500 militants and thousands more innocent civilians (Aslam, 2011; Khan, 2009). After General Zia ul Haq toppled Bhutto's government, Zia launched several development projects, such as road construction, expansion of power transmission, and building small dams, in hopes of appeasing Balochistan's residents. Zia also ensured that Quetta received Sui gas for the first time even though deposits had been discovered in Balochistan some four decades earlier (Khan, 2009).

The most recent insurgent violence began with General Musharraf's seizure of power in 1999. In particular, Musharraf outraged many in the province when he announced several large development projects in partnership with the Chinese and the construction of two army cantonments. While many Baloch see the army cantonments as part of Pakistan's "colonizing presence," the Pakistan army has long sought to increase the number of Baloch in its ranks. This desire stems from the army's long held belief that the institution must reflect the population from which it draws. Achieving this goal has proved a challenge because few Baloch meet the army's

educational standards and/or wish to join (a similar situation prevails in Sindh). In response, the army has built cadet schools in Quetta in the hopes of increasing the number of recruits from the province. Pakistan's army has long dominated the state, and its extensive welfare system is the best in the country. Thus, disproportionate representation amongst its ranks and officer corps adds further ballast to the numerous critiques of the army's state within a state (Fair & Nawaz, 2011).

While the Baloch ethnic group is indubitably the largest in the province, it is not known whether or not its members comprise the majority of the province's inhabitants as the 1998 census is both out of date and does not ask about ethnicity; rather it asks about "mother tongue" (Khan, 2009). Using the 1998 Pakistani census data on mother tongue as a proxy for ethnicity, those who claim the Baloch language are a slight majority (55 percent), followed by Pashto speakers (30 percent), Punjabi (three percent), and Saraiki (two percent). Those who speak Urdu (the national language) comprise a mere one percent (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, n.d.). Unfortunately, there is no more recent census and little likelihood of new census data anytime soon.<sup>4</sup>

Balochistan, along with the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly the Northwest Frontier Province), has hosted millions of Afghan refugees since 1979. While Pashtuns had lived in Balochistan long before the Afghan crises unfolded, there can be little doubt that developments across the border have altered the ethnic, political, and even religious and social fabrics of the province, as many Afghans and their offspring have acquired (legally or illegally) Pakistani national identity cards and made Pakistan their home (Baloch, 2010). As of June 2015, there were more than 1.5 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, 2015). According to one news source, registered and unregistered Afghan refugees number one million in Balochistan (Shah, 2015).

In addition to being burdened with Afghan refugees, Balochistan is also Pakistan's most developmentally under-privileged province. Consider the statistics given in Table 1. Whether one looks at traditional measures of human capital or human development, Balochistan lags behind the rest of the country. In contrast, the Punjab tends to fare better than the nation on

<sup>4</sup> While the census is supposed to be decennial, but has been deeply politicized since the 1980s. The 1981 census was delayed until 1998 (a full 17 years). This extraordinary delay was due in part to the Pakistan government's hope that many of the millions of Afghan refugees who had flocked to Pakistan would return to Afghanistan before the census was conducted (Weiss, 1999).

average on most measures. Many people in the province of Balochistan—irrespective of their ethnicity—decry the lack of investment in the province and its persistent paucity of development relative to the other three provinces. This has fostered considerable anger at the Pakistani state, which, along with the area’s peculiar history, contributes to an episodic but intense demand among some Baloch for either greater autonomy or outright independence.

**Table 1.**  
Various Demographic Indicators – Pakistani Bureau of Statistics

Indicator	Pakistan	Balochistan	Punjab	Sindh	KP
Labor Force Participation Rate <sup>a</sup>	32%	25%	36%	30%	25%
Literacy rate <sup>b</sup>	58%	43%	61%	56%	53%
Percent of households using electricity for lighting <sup>c</sup>	93%	79%	95%	91%	94%
Use wood or charcoal for cooking <sup>d</sup>	45%	69%	40%	43%	67%
Using flush toilets <sup>e</sup>	74%	39%	81%	65%	73%
Human Development Index (2005) <sup>f</sup>	0.62	0.56	0.67	0.63	0.61

<sup>a</sup> Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Labor Force Statistics 2013-14, “Labour Force Participation Rates and Un-employment by Age, Sex and Area, 2013-14,” May 2015. Available at <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/Labour%20Force/publications/lfs2013-14/t18-pak-fin.pdf>.

<sup>b</sup> Government of Pakistan, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, “Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) 2013-14 National / Provincial,” May 2015. Available at <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/content/pakistan-social-and-living-standards-measurement>.

<sup>c</sup> Government of Pakistan, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, “Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) 2012-13 National / Provincial,” April 2014. Available <http://www.pbs.gov.pk/content/pakistan-social-and-living-standards-measurement-survey-pslm-2012-13-provincial-district>.

<sup>d</sup> Ibid.

<sup>e</sup> Government of Pakistan, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, “Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey (PSLM) 2013-14 National / Provincial,” May 2015.

<sup>f</sup> Haroon Jamal and Amir Jahan Khan, “Trends in Regional Human Development Indices,” SPDC Research Report No. 73, July 2007, <http://www.spdc.org.pk/Data/Publication/PDF/RR-73.pdf>.

While Balochistan is Pakistan’s most underdeveloped province, the region is also its most resource-rich. These reserves no doubt explain the central government’s interest in exerting ironclad control over the state. The desolate area contains copper, uranium, gold, coal, silver, and platinum deposits. In addition, it is responsible for about 36% of Pakistan’s total gas

production. Astonishingly, only 17% of the gas produced is consumed in Balochistan while the rest is consumed in other parts of Pakistan. Piped gas is available in a meagre four of Balochistan's 28 districts (Grare, 2006; International Crisis Group, 2006). Many Baloch lament (perhaps with some hyperbole) that the only time Baloch get gas hookups in their home is when the military builds a cantonment. Government officials counter unpersuasively that the population patterns of Balochistan make it very costly to expand the provision of natural gas, noting that it is easier to pipe it to densely populated Punjab with its extensive lines of communication. (For a similar view, see International Crisis Group, 2006). Not only is Balochistan denied the use of its own resources, the government has historically required Balochistan to sell gas at a lower rate than the other provinces. For example, Balochistan receives a mere \$0.29 per thousand cubic feet for its gas. Nearby Sindh gets \$1.65 and Punjab receives \$2.35 (Khan, 2009; Fazl-e-Haider, 2006).

To make matters worse, many of the development projects in the region have been given to the Chinese government, including exploration rights to the Saindak copper mine. The Chinese government will receive 50% of any proceeds from the mine and the Pakistani central government 48%, leaving a meager 2% for the Balochistan provincial government. The Chinese, following their well-honed management approach to such mega-projects, are highly self-sufficient and have not engaged local labor in these efforts (Khan, 2009). The construction of a deep-sea port at Gwadar has proved to be the most controversial of the central government's undertakings in the province in recent decades. The port is on Balochistan's Makran Coast, where the governments of Pakistan and China had hoped it would be a competitive alternative to the Iranian deep-sea port at Chahbahar, to be built with assistance from India. Work began in March 2002, with China paying \$198 million of the \$248 million total budget. China also provided 450 engineers (Grare, 2006; International Crisis Group, 2006). As with Saindak, the Pakistani and Chinese central governments will take 50% and 48% of the proceeds, leaving 2% for the province. Similar to Saindak as well, all of the construction contracts have gone to non-Baloch firms and the majority of the jobs on site are taken by Punjabis or other non-Baloch. Even if Balochistan's residents currently lack the skills suitable for the project, the government has missed an opportunity to train the local inhabitants and ensure that they are invested in the project's success (Aslam, 2011).

Many in the province (actual percentages are unknown) believe Gwadar and other large development projects to be part of a center-led effort to further colonize the province by Punjabis

and other patrons of the military and bureaucracy and to render the Baloch an ethnic minority in their “own province” (Bansal, 2008; Siddiqi, 2012). The reasons for this perception are numerous and include several disconcerting allegations: elites bribing revenue officials to register land in their name, cutting out locals who had owned the land for generations but lacked proof of ownership; civilians and military personnel alike acquiring land in Gwadar at extremely low cost and in turn selling it to developers from Karachi or elsewhere at a higher price; the army’s mafia-like behavior in appropriating Baloch land and offering it to Punjabis at concessionary prices; and the complete lack of involvement of Baloch at any level in the project (Khan, 2009). Moreover, the project will fundamentally change the demography of the area. Before it began, the population of Gwadar and its environs was a mere 70,000. When the project is complete, the population of the same area is expected to explode to nearly two million, mostly non-Baloch. Baloch nationalists fear that the expanding presence of Punjabis and Sindhis, among others, will transform the culture of the area. Even more provocative is the fact that the project has displaced many poor Baloch from the area without adequate compensation from the government. Since construction has begun, there have been numerous attacks against Chinese personnel, among other workers (Aslam, 2011).

The most recent phase of Baloch insurgency was precipitated when a Pakistan army officer allegedly raped Dr. Shazia Khalid, who was a company doctor at the Sui Gas plant in January 2005. When the army refused to permit the local police to interrogate the suspects, protests erupted in the Sui. Nawab Akbar Khan Bugti, leader of the Jamhoori Wattan Party, spearheaded the protests. Baloch militants and Bugti tribesmen assailed security forces and attacked the Sui gas installation and gas pipelines, which disrupted the supply of gas across Pakistan. Since then, the Pakistan army has employed the regular army and the Frontier Corps to wage a brutal counterinsurgency campaign noted for numerous human rights violations inclusive of extra-judicial disappearance of youths with no criminal records and the elimination of Baloch tribal leaders, among other excesses (International Crisis Group, 2006; Human Rights Commission of Pakistan, 2011; Human Rights Watch, 2010a, 2010b).

While Baloch nationalists are wont to call attention to their grievances and losses, they are not the only victims and in many cases they are the perpetrators of violence. Baloch nationalist militants are widely suspected to be the culprits in a wide array of killings of Punjabis, ostensibly to protest Punjabi colonization of the state. Teachers and police have been particularly vulnerable because they are seen as the representatives of the so-called Punjabi-

dominated state generally and the military in particular (as Fair and Nawaz, 2011, show), the Pakistan army is not as Punjabi-dominated as is widely believed). The targeted killing of teachers has had a profound impact on the province's already fragile educational system. There are too few educated persons in Balochistan to supply an adequate numbers of teachers, and the hostile and dangerous environment makes recruiting teachers from other provinces difficult. A second conflict, largely distinct from the ethnically-based tension, is the continuing problem of sectarian violence. In Pakistan, this almost always takes the form of Deobandi Sunni extremist violence against Pakistan's minority Shia community. In recent years, these Deobandi Sunni militant groups (e.g. SSP, Tehreek-e-Taliban-e-Pakistan, etc.) have also taken up arms against other Sunnis (e.g. Barelvis) whom they deride as being apostates or hypocrites (Fair, 2011). In Balochistan, the group most vulnerable to such attacks, which tend to be concentrated in Quetta and environs, is the Shia, Persian-speaking Hazaras (Human Rights Watch, 2010).

### **Baloch Political and Religious Beliefs and Practices**

Baloch nationalists claim economic oppression and resource exploitation as their principle grievances against the federal government, which they contend extracts the state's wealth for the development of the rest of the country rather than Balochistan (Kupecz, 2012). Scholars tend to agree that topmost on the agenda of the Baloch national rights movement is greater control of natural resources (Aslam, 2011). Due to the ethnic nature of the conflict, scholars often assume that Baloch are secular nationalists even if they are personally deeply religious (Hernandez, 2012; Breseeg, 2009; Siddiqi, 2012; Murtha, 2011). Ostensibly, Baloch politics have remained secular because Baloch believe their ethnic identity is under attack from ethnic outsiders and from political Islam, which the deep state has used as tool to counter Baloch ethnic nationalism. In contrast, Baloch harbor no such fears about their religious identity because it is not under threat. Therefore, Adeel Khan concludes "Baloch nationalists are strongly opposed to mixing religion with politics" (Khan, 2009). Consequently, analysts such as Khan further that this disinclines the Baloch from supporting the Taliban or other such groups in their midst. Baloch separatists encourage these beliefs. Noordin Mengal, who represents Balochistan on the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, declared that "we are the most secular people in the region" (Walsh, 2011).

Critically, none of these claims are based upon data that are representative of the Baloch in Pakistan or within Balochistan. In addition to the weak basis of the enduring claims themselves, there are other reasons to be skeptical about these commonly held beliefs about

Baloch. Beginning with Mohammed Daoud Khan's coup in Afghanistan in 1973, refugees began fleeing to Pakistan, particularly to the provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. With the 1979 onset of the so-called "jihad" against the Soviet occupation in Afghanistan, this influx intensified. Balochistan received millions of refugees from Afghanistan, the vast majority of whom were ethnically Pashtun. After the Soviet Union withdrew as the decade of the 1980s came to a close, Afghanistan remained in a state of conflict as different warring factions fought for control with Pakistan backing the Islamist faction under the Pashtun militant leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. After Hekmatyar failed to deliver a pliable regime that deferred to Islamabad's interests, Pakistan shifted support to the Taliban by 1993. While the Taliban brought some stability to the war-torn country, their brutality served as a deterrent to refugees' return. Following the events of 9/11 and the ensuing U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan, another round of displacements occurred. While many of these Afghans remained in refugee camps, others integrated into the province and elsewhere in Pakistan. Scholars have long speculated that these influxes of refugees have had impacts upon Balochistan's ethnic politics among other important issues (Ahmed, 1990; Malik, 1982; Cheema, 1988; Wirsing, 2008).

Second, the Afghan Taliban's apex leadership, the so-called Quetta Shura, has long operated from Quetta Balochistan. It is often presumed that the Taliban enjoy the support of the province's ethnic Pashtuns rather than the Baloch, but until now there have been no scholarly efforts to evaluate this contention.

Third, Pakistan's military and intelligence agencies have relied upon political Islam and even Islamist militants to battle Baloch ethnic mobilization (Zurutuza, 2015; Grare, 2006; Shams, 2015). One of the most brazen incidents of this occurred in 2013 when Balochistan experienced a deadly earthquake. The state permitted only one organization to provide relief, the Filah Insaniat Foundation (FIF), which is the most recent incarnation of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), which also operated under the name of Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JUD) within Pakistan. The United Nations and the United States, among other national and international entities, have declared LeT, JUD, and FIF to be international terrorist organizations (United Nations, 2012; U.S. Department of State, 2012). Organizations such as Médecins Sans Frontières were ready to provide relief but the government refused to let them do so, permitting FIF to exercise a monopoly over the relief efforts (Médecins Sans Frontières, 2013).

There are several reasons why the state is promoting this particular group in Balochistan. First, Pakistan has long sought to re-brand LeT as a humanitarian organization and to generate

support for the organization within Pakistan for this role. By doing so, the organization becomes ever-more mainstreamed while expanding its access to funding for operations as well as recruits (Roul, 2015). The second aspect is that the Pakistani state views LeT as an important ideological competitor to the various groups perpetrating violence in Pakistan. For example, LeT is a vigorous opponent of the various Deobandi groups killing Pakistanis under the banner of the Pakistani Taliban and the SSP (Fair, 2011). In fact, JuD personnel explained that the organization will focus on developmental and welfare projects in Balochistan because it believes that the popular grievances in Balochistan can “only be resolved by JuD” (Jafri, 2012). Hafiz Abdur Rauf, the chairman of FIF, claimed that “JuD will minimize the differences between the people” and further explained that the organization will mobilize volunteers from across Pakistan to work in the province. Hafiz Saeed, JuD’s leader, explained that Pakistan’s government needs “JuD’s ideology to resolve the issues of Balochistan” (Jafri, 2012). These factors taken together may also have exerted influence upon Baloch religious and political beliefs in the province.

### **Data and Methods**

We employed 2012 survey data collected by Fair et al. from a nationally representative, face-to-face, survey of 16,279 people that included 13,282 from the four main provinces (Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and 2,997 from six of seven agencies (Bajaur, Khyber, Kurram, Mohmand, Orakzai, and South Waziristan) in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) (Fair et al. 2016). For purposes of this analysis, we only used data for the 14,508 Muslim respondents.

To evaluate respondent beliefs about and knowledge of Islam, we created two additive indices based on multiple survey questions. We created the piety index from the following five questions:

1. Do you attend dars-e-Quran? (1 if yes)
2. How many times do you go to dars-e-Quran per week on average? (Scaled from 0-1, 1 if five times)
3. How often per week do you pray Namaz? (Scaled from 0-1, 1 if 29-35 times per week)
4. How many times did you pray Namaz in congregation in the Mosque last Sunday? (Scaled from 0-1, 1 if five times)
5. Do you pray “Tahajjud Namaz?” (1 if yes)

We created a knowledge index from the below questions:

1. Name as many of the five pillars of Islam as you can. (Scaled from 0 to 1, 1 if respondent can name all five pillars of Islam)

2. Is the way in which Muslims should pray Namaz (Salat or Salah) described in the Qu'ran? (If No, then 1)
3. What is the percentage amount required to be given as Zakat? (If 2.5%, then 1)
4. How many months do you have to hold wealth for Zakat to be due on it? (If 12 months, then 1)
5. What is the first revealed verse in the Qu'ran? (If al-Alaq, then 1).<sup>5</sup>

To proxy sectarian orientation, we used a variable that asked respondents to indicate which kind of madrassah they would use to educate their children. Categories included: Shia, Sunni (which includes Jamaat-e-Islami and Bareilvi), Deobandi, and Ahl-e-Hadis. Sectarian commitment may be relevant because most of the militant groups operating in and from Pakistan are Deobandi in orientation (Fair, 2015).<sup>6</sup>

To evaluate respondent commitment to Islamist projects of the Pakistani state, we used a question that asked respondents about their level of support for several issues: 1. Liberating Kashmiris from Indian rule; 2. Protecting Muslims outside of Kashmir from Hindu oppression; 3. Making Pakistan a state that is truly sharia-compliant; ridding Pakistan of apostates and hypocrites; and liberating Muslims from oppression. Support was measured on a 5-point scale of “extremely important”, “very important”, “moderately important”, “slightly important”, “not important at all.” We measured support for SSP and the Afghan Taliban using a survey question that asked respondents to indicate their support for both groups. Support was again measured on a 5-point scale (“not at all”, “a little”, “a moderate amount”, “a lot”, or a “great deal”). We also examined respondent propensity to vote for ethnic, Islamist, right-of-center, and left-of-center political parties using a question which asked respondents which party best represented their interests.

To conduct a more robust test of Baloch differences, we employed simple OLS regression (clustered at the primary sampling unit) to evaluate support of the Afghan Taliban and the SSP. Our main independent variables included: a binary indicating whether or not the respondent is Baloch, whether the respondent lives in Balochistan, and an interaction variable (non-Baloch x Balochistan) to assess the degree to which non-Baloch in Balochistan differ from Baloch in the province. We ran four variations for the SSP and Afghan Taliban models. The first included all independent variables (Baloch, Balochistan, Baloch x Balochistan). The second

<sup>5</sup> We code incorrect answers, “don’t know” and “no response, “as zero in the construction of both indices because we intend the indices to be positive measures of piety and knowledge respectively.

<sup>6</sup>Note that these different sectarian orientations are distributed across Pakistan’s different ethnic groups.

included the Baloch variable. The third included the Balochistan variable. The fourth included the Baloch and Balochistan variables. In addition to these independent variables, following Shafiq and Sinno (2010) we included several control variables in all four models: gender, urban/rural, sectarian commitment, marital status (single/never married, married, divorced, widowed), age group (18–29, 30–49, 50+), educational attainment (less than primary, primary (6th grade), middle (8th grade), matriculate (10th grade), higher education (above 10th grade), and income quartiles. We ran the regressions only for Muslims respondents.

### Descriptive Findings

First, we examined the distribution of sectarian commitment between Baloch and non-Baloch in Balochistan, using the Chi Squared test to evaluate the statistical significance of the distributional differences. As Table 2 demonstrates, a majority of Baloch in Balochistan (68.75%) claim to be Deobandi compared to 88.65% of non-Baloch in Balochistan. Thus while they are less likely to embrace the Deobandi sect in Balochistan compared to non-Baloch, they are much more likely than non-Baloch throughout Pakistan to espouse Deobandism (64.78% vs. 38.07% for all non-Baloch and 12.92% for Punjabis). These distributional differences are all significant at the 0.000 level. This finding is important because the vast majority of the terrorist groups operating in and from Pakistan are Deobandi, including the Afghan Taliban and the SSP.

**Table 2:**

Distribution of Sectarian Commitment

	Balochistan		Pakistan		Pakistan	
	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Punjabi
	n= 1,389	n=925	n=1,519	n=12,905	n=1,519	n=4,767
Shia	0.07%	0.11%	0.59%	4.53%	0.59%	2.62%
Sunni	30.38%	10.70%	33.38%	53.03%	33.38%	77.95%
Deobandi	68.75%	88.65%	64.78%	38.07%	64.78%	12.92%
Ahl-e-Hadith	0.79%	0.54%	1.25%	4.38%	1.25%	6.50%
	Pearson Chi2(3)= 1640.7 Pr=0.000		Pearson Chi2(3)= 424.1 Pr=0.000		Pearson Chi2(3)= 124.7 Pr=0.000	

Note: To test the statistical significance of the distributions we used Chi Squared test.

We analyzed differences in our indexed measures of piety and knowledge, using the t-test to evaluate the difference between group means (Table 3). Baloch are statistically less pious than non-Baloch whether we look at Balochistan or Pakistan generally, but they are virtually indistinguishable from Punjabis. Baloch are less knowledgeable about Islam compared to non-Baloch in Balochistan; however, they are more knowledgeable than either non-Baloch generally or Punjabis, in particular, throughout Pakistan.

**Table 3:**

Piety and Knowledge Indices

	Balochistan		Pakistan		Pakistan	
	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Pujabi
Piety Index	0.3192	0.4062	0.3174	0.3881	0.3174	0.3249
	n=1,389	n=925	n=1,519	n=12,905	n=1519	n=4767
	***		***		Not Significant at 10%	
Knowledge Index	0.6256	0.6461	0.6176	0.5813	0.6176	0.5906
	n=1,389	n=925	n=1,519	n=12,905	n=1,566	n=4,767
	**		***		***	
Note: ***, ** and * mean it's statistically significant at 1%, 5% and 10% level respectively.						

We evaluated differences political Islamist issues, using the t-test to assess the significance of the differences between group means (Table 4). Contrary to the conventional wisdom, Baloch are generally indistinguishable from other Pakistanis in Balochistan or the rest of Pakistan. As Table 4 shows, there are virtually no statistically significant or substantive differences in levels of support for liberating Kashmiris from Indian rule, protecting Muslims outside of Kashmir from Indian oppression, making Pakistan a sharia-compliant state, ridding Pakistan of apostates and hypocrites, or liberating Muslims from oppression. And Baloch, like other Pakistanis, exhibit high levels of support for these policies.

**Table 4.**

Importance Given to Various Islamist Political Issues in Pakistan

	Balochistan		Pakistan		Pakistan	
	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Punjabi
Liberating Kashmiris from Indian rule	4.4343	4.3983	4.4327	4.408	4.4327	4.3627
	n=1,377	n=924	n=1,507	n=12,790	n=1,507	n=4,737
	Not Significant at 10%		Not Significant at 10%		***	
Protecting Muslims outside of Kashmir from Hindu oppression	4.3861	4.3662	4.3893	4.284	4.3893	4.2223
	n=1,383	n=923	n=1,513	n=12,779	n=1,513	n=4,727
	Not Significant at 10%		***		***	
Making Pakistan a state that is truly sharia-compliant	4.52079	4.4367	4.5027	4.518	4.5027	4.39
	n=1,371	n=916	n=1,500	n=12,751	n=1,500	n=4,700
	**		Not Significant at 10%		***	
Ridding Pakistan of apostates and hypocrites	4.4946	4.4679	4.4672	4.42	4.4672	4.2779
	n=1,377	m=919	n=1,507	n=12,761	n=1,507	n=4,711
	Not Significant at 10%		*		***	
Liberating Muslims from oppression	4.5478	4.5066	4.5305	4.5779	4.5305	4.4735
	n=1380	n=916	n=1,510	n=12,787	n=1,510	n=4,710
	Not Significant at 10%		**		**	
Note: ***, ** and * mean it's statistically significant at 1%, 5% and 10% level respectively.						
Note 2: Higher average means more importance is given to that particular issue.						

In Tables 5a-d, we present the summary findings of respondent support for different kinds of political parties. As for other measures, we used the t-test to evaluate the statistical significance of the difference in means. There are several notable differences in political behavior. First, Baloch are much more likely to support ethnic political parties than non-Baloch (Table 5a).<sup>7</sup> Baloch are also significantly less likely than others (except Punjabis) to support either Islamist political parties (Table 5b) or right of center, non-Islamist parties (Table 5c).<sup>8</sup> Baloch exhibit statistically significant differences relative to the other groups in their tendency to support left of center parties, but the differences are small in magnitude (Table 5d).<sup>9</sup> The tendency to support ethnic parties and reject both Islamist and right of center parties are consistent with the conventional wisdom about Baloch politics.

**Table 5a:**  
Support for Ethnic Political Parties

	Balochistan		Pakistan		Pakistan	
	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Punjabi
Support for ethnic political parties	0.5705	0.1298	0.5237	0.1184	0.5237	0.0234
	n=1,276	n=863	n=1,396	n=10,959	n=1,396	n=3,670
	***		***		***	
Note: ***, ** and * mean it's statistically significant at 1%, 5% and 10% level respectively.						
Note 2: Support for ethnic political parties is a dummy variable (1 if yes, else 0)						
Note 3: Ethnic Political parties = MQM, BNP, ANP, JWP, BLA Non-Ethnic Political Parties = PPPP, PML(Q), PML(N), MMA, PTI, JUI(F), Others						

<sup>7</sup> Ethnic political parties include: the Muttehida Qaumi Movement (MQM), the Baloch National Party (BNP), the Awami National Party (ANP), the Jamhoor Watan Party (JWP), the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA). While the BLA is not a registered party under the Pakistan Independent Election Commission, many respondents still offered the PLA when asked about their preferred party (PakVoter, 2016).

<sup>8</sup> Islamist political parties include the (now defunct) Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA), the Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), various factions of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI). See “List of Political Parties”; Right of center, non-Islamist parties include the Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N), Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q), the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), and JWP. See “List of Political Parties.”

<sup>9</sup> Left of center parties included the Pakistan Peoples’ Party, the ANP and the MQM. See “List of Political Parties.”

**Table 5b:**

Support for Islamist political parties

	Balochistan		Pakistan		Pakistan	
	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Punjabi
Support for Islamist political parties	0.0329	0.2213	0.03224	0.1209	0.03224	0.02425
	n=1,276	n=863	n=1,396	n=10,959	n=1,396	n=3,670
	***		***		Not significant at 10%	
Note: ***, ** and * mean it's statistically significant at 1%, 5% and 10% level respectively.						
Note 2: Support for Islamist political parties is a dummy variable (1 if yes, else 0)						
Note3: Islamist Political parties =MMA, JUI(F) Non-Ethnic Political Parties = PPPP, PML(Q), PML(N), PTI, MQM, BNP, ANP, JWP, BLA, Others						

**Table 5c:**

Support for Right of Center Political Parties (Excluding Religious Parties)

	Balochistan		Pakistan		Pakistan	
	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Punjabi
Support for right of center parties	0.2046	0.3024	0.2192	0.4612	0.2192	0.7128
	n=1,276	n=863	n=1,396	n=10,959	n=1,396	n=3,670
	***		***		***	
Note: ***, ** and * mean it's statistically significant at 1%, 5% and 10% level respectively.						
Note 2: Support for ethnic political parties is a dummy variable (1 if yes, else 0)						
Note3: Right of center Political parties (Excluding religious parties) = PML(Q), PML(N), PTI,JWP Not right of center Parties =PPPP, ANP, MMA, JUI(F), BNP, BLA, Others, MQM						

**Table 5d:**  
Support for Left of Center Political Parties

	Balochistan		Pakistan		Pakistan	
	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Punjabi
Support for Left of center political parties	0.2853	0.2085	0.3116	0.3704	0.3116	0.2365
	n=1,276	n=863	n=1,396	n=10,959	n=1,396	n=3,670
	***		***		***	
Note: ***, ** and * mean it's statistically significant at 1%, 5% and 10% level respectively.						
Note 2: Support for left of center parties is a dummy variable (1 if yes, else 0)						
Note3: Left of center Political parties =PPPP, ANP, MQM Not left of center Parties = MMA, JUI(F), PML(Q), PML(N), PTI, BNP, JWP, BLA, Others						

Finally, we examined respondent support for the SSP and the Afghan Taliban, evaluating the significance of the difference in means using the t-test (Table 6). Baloch are more likely to support the SSP than non-Baloch in the province but less likely than others across Pakistan to do so. While the differences are significant, per t-tests, they are small in magnitude. When it comes to the Taliban, the Baloch are somewhat less likely than non-Baloch in Balochistan or the country to support the Afghan Taliban. However, when compared to Punjabis, Baloch are *more* likely to support the Afghan Taliban. We explored these results further using regression analyses.

**Table 6:**

Support for Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (SSP) and Afghan Taliban

	Balochistan		Pakistan		Pakistan	
	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Non-Baloch	Baloch	Punjabi
Support for Sipah e Sahaba, Pakistan (SSP)	2.4014	2.0345	2.0449	2.1974	2.0449	2.1527
	n=1,304	n=882	n=1,426	n=10,773	n=1,426	n=3,700
	***		***		***	
Support for Afghan Taliban	1.9188	2.5061	1.9276	1.9616	1.9276	1.8483
	n=1,343	n=903	n=1,464	n=11,281	n=1,464	n=3,829
	***		Not Significant at 10%		**	
Note 1: Higher number means more support.						
Note 2: ***, ** and * mean it's statistically significant at 1%, 5% and 10% level respectively						

**Table 7:**

Descriptive stats for DVs and IVs (Muslim Only)

	Categories	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Dependent variable</i>			
<i>(q1010a) How much do you support Sipah-e-Sahaba-e-Pakistan (SSP) and their actions?</i>	Not at all	5,621	38.74%
	A little	2,105	14.51%
	A moderate amount	2,338	16.12%
	A lot	1,146	7.90%
	A great deal	1,062	7.32%
	No answer	2,236	15.41%
Total		14,508	100%
<i>(q1012a) How much do you support Afghan Taliban and their actions?</i>	Not at all	7,129	49.10%
	A little	1,840	12.70%
	A moderate amount	2,024	14%
	A lot	934	6.40%
	A great deal	897	6.20%
	No answer	1,684	11.60%
Total		14,508	100%

**Table 7 Continued:**

Descriptive stats for DVs and IVs (Muslim Only)

<i>Ethnicity</i>	Other*	662	4.56%
	Punjabi	4,767	32.86%
	Muhajir	1,024	7.06%
	Pashtun	5,051	34.82%
	Sindhi	1,401	9.66%
	Baloch	1,519	10.47%
	No response/don't know	84	0.58%
Total		14,508	100%
<i>Gender</i>	Female*	5,994	41.32%
	Male	8,514	58.68%
Total		14,508	100%
<i>Marital Status</i>	Married	11,301	77.89%
	Divorced	30	0.21%
	Widowed	337	2.32%
	Single/never married*	2,806	19.34%
	Don't know/no answer	34	0.23%
Total		14,508	100%
<i>Level of Education</i>	Less than Primary*	5,612	38.68%
	Primary	1,734	11.95%
	Middle	1,935	13.34%
	Matriculate	2,607	17.97%
	Higher Education	2,493	17.18%
	Don't know/no response	127	0.88%
Total		14,508	100%
<i>Age Group</i>	18-29*	5,199	35.84%
	30-49	7,212	49.71%
	50+	2,076	14.31%
	Don't know/no response	21	0.14%
Total		14,508	100%

**Table 7 Continued:**

Descriptive stats for DVs and IVs (Muslim Only)

<i>Income Quartiles</i>	First quartile*	5,185	35.74%
(q1020rec4) Support for Baloch Ethnic Political parties	Not Baloch Ethnic Political Party	11,714	80.74%
	Baloch Ethnic Political Party	702	4.84%
	No answer	2,092	14.42%
Total		14,508	100%
<i>Independent variables</i>			
Baloch (Dummy variable, 1 if Balochistan, else zero)	Not Baloch*	12,905	88.95%
	Baloch	1,519	10.47%
	No response/ no answer	84	0.58%
Total		14,508	100%
Balochistan (Dummy variable, 1 if Balochistan, else zero)	Not-Balochistan*	12,191	84.03%
	Balochistan	2,317	15.97%
	No response/ no answer	0	0.00%
Total		14,508	100%
Non-Baloch x Balochistan (interaction term)	No*	13,499	93.59%
	Yes	925	6.41%
	No response/ no answer	84	0.58%
Total		14,508	100%
<i>Control Variables</i>			
Urban	Rural*	9,746	67.18%
	Urban	4,762	32.82%
Total		14,508	100%

**Table 7 Continued:**  
Descriptive stats for DVs and IVs (Muslim Only)

<i>Maslak: Type of Madrassah</i>	Shia*	601	4.14%
	Sunni	7,394	50.96%
	Deobandi	5,928	40.86%
	Ahl-hadith	585	4.03%
Total		14,508	100%
	Second quartile	3,940	27.16%
	Third quartile	1,804	12.43%
	Fourth quartile	2,766	19.07%
	Don't know/no response	813	5.60%
Total		14,508	100%

Note: \* denotes regression reference group

### Regression Analysis

Table 8 contains the OLS results for respondent support of SSP. (Table 7 presents the summary statistics for all variables in the model). We indicated the reference categories with a “\*.” In Model 1, the full model, we found no statistically significant impact from either respondent identity (Baloch vs. non-Baloch) or from living in Balochistan. In Model 2, we found a statistically significant and negative impact of Baloch identity upon support for SSP. In Model 3, we found that living in Balochistan exhibits a negative and statistically significant effect upon support for the SSP. In Model 4, which includes variables for Baloch ethnicity and residence in Balochistan, we found that that Baloch ethnicity still exhibits a negative impact upon support for the SSP. However, other variables tend to exhibit a larger effect. The most important variables across all model specifications are the sectarian variables. The most important variable is whether or not the respondent identifies as Deobandi. As noted in Table 2, most Baloch identify as Deobandi.

**Table 8:**

Regression Analysis: Support for Sipah Sahaba (Muslim only)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<b>Dependent Variable:</b>	Support for Sipah Sahaba Pakistan (SSP)			
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
<b>Independent Variables</b>				
Baloch	-0.032 (0.219)	-0.308*** (0.102)		-0.226* (0.125)
Balochistan	-0.313 (0.241)		-0.241*** (0.088)	-0.106 (0.107)
Non-Baloch X Balochistan	0.237 (0.262)			
<b>Control Variables</b>				
Male	-0.447*** (0.062)	-0.445*** (0.062)	-0.452*** (0.062)	-0.448*** (0.062)
Urban	-0.174*** (0.063)	-0.176*** (0.063)	-0.174*** (0.062)	-0.176*** (0.063)
Madrasa: Sunni	0.780*** (0.063)	0.777*** (0.064)	0.778*** (0.063)	0.779*** (0.064)
Madrasa: Deobandi	1.139*** (0.075)	1.118*** (0.073)	1.152*** (0.075)	1.139*** (0.075)
Madrasa: Ahl-hadis	0.753*** (0.129)	0.753*** (0.129)	0.758*** (0.128)	0.753*** (0.129)
Marital Status: Married	0.034 (0.046)	0.035 (0.046)	0.033 (0.046)	0.035 (0.046)
Marital Status: Divorced	0.010 (0.353)	0.000 (0.351)	0.007 (0.363)	0.008 (0.354)
Marital Status: Widowed	0.011 (0.111)	0.009 (0.111)	0.013 (0.109)	0.012 (0.111)
Education: Primary	-0.007 (0.048)	-0.003 (0.047)	-0.009 (0.047)	-0.008 (0.048)
Education: Middle	0.090* (0.049)	0.090* (0.049)	0.091* (0.049)	0.088* (0.049)
Education: Matriculate	0.088* (0.050)	0.087* (0.050)	0.095* (0.050)	0.087* (0.050)

**Table 8 Cont.:**

Regression Analysis: Support for Sipah Sahaba (Muslim only)

Education: Higher Education	-0.003 (0.054)	-0.002 (0.053)	0.001 (0.054)	-0.004 (0.054)
Age group: 30-49	-0.027 (0.038)	-0.026 (0.038)	-0.035 (0.038)	-0.029 (0.038)
Age group: 50+	-0.137*** (0.052)	-0.133** (0.052)	-0.141*** (0.052)	-0.138*** (0.052)
Income: Second quartile	0.124*** (0.037)	0.122*** (0.037)	0.123*** (0.037)	0.122*** (0.037)
Income: Third quartile	0.133** (0.052)	0.133*** (0.052)	0.140*** (0.051)	0.131** (0.052)
Income Fourth quartile	0.246*** (0.052)	0.244*** (0.051)	0.253*** (0.052)	0.245*** (0.052)
Constant	1.538*** (0.092)	1.539*** (0.092)	1.537*** (0.091)	1.545*** (0.092)
N	11601	11601	11664	11601
R-squared	.0667	.066	.0656	.0664
** p<0.10 ** p<0.05 *** p<0.01"				

Turning to support for the Afghan Taliban (Table 9), the results are similar to those for the SSP. Models 2 and 3 demonstrate that Baloch are significantly less likely to support the Afghan Taliban while Model 3 shows that living in the province is also negatively associated with supporting the group. However, as with support for the SSP, other variables are more significant in magnitude, most notably the sectarian variables generally and the Deobandi variable in particular.

**Table 9:**

Regression Analysis: Support for Afghan Taliban (Muslim only)

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<b>Dependent Variables:</b>	Support for Afghan Taliban			
	b/se	b/se	b/se	b/se
<b>Independent Variables</b>				
Baloch	0.083 (0.226)	-0.155* (0.092)		-0.433*** (0.120)
Balochistan	-0.201 (0.244)		0.094 (0.084)	0.353*** (0.107)
Non-Baloch X Balochistan	0.628** (0.263)			
<b>Control Variables</b>				
Male	-0.037 (0.060)	-0.054 (0.060)	-0.048 (0.060)	-0.041 (0.060)
Urban	-0.223*** (0.059)	-0.224*** (0.059)	-0.223*** (0.059)	-0.227*** (0.059)
Madrassa: Sunni	0.656*** (0.069)	0.660*** (0.069)	0.652*** (0.069)	0.652*** (0.070)
Madrassa: Deobandi	0.891*** (0.079)	0.956*** (0.077)	0.909*** (0.079)	0.889*** (0.080)
Madrassa: Ahl-hadis	0.649*** (0.130)	0.650*** (0.130)	0.652*** (0.129)	0.648*** (0.130)
Marital Status: Married	0.081* (0.045)	0.080* (0.045)	0.080* (0.045)	0.082* (0.045)
Marital Status: Divorced	0.069 (0.292)	0.068 (0.297)	0.048 (0.302)	0.060 (0.294)
Marital Status: Widowed	0.202* (0.118)	0.210* (0.117)	0.212* (0.117)	0.205* (0.119)
Education: Primary	-0.012 (0.046)	-0.027 (0.047)	-0.007 (0.047)	-0.014 (0.047)
Education: Middle	-0.001 (0.049)	-0.010 (0.050)	0.001 (0.049)	-0.004 (0.049)

**Table 9 Continued:**

Regression Analysis: Support for Afghan Taliban (Muslim only)

Education: Matriculate	-0.075 (0.048)	-0.075 (0.048)	-0.060 (0.048)	-0.077 (0.048)
Education: Higher Education	-0.053 (0.051)	-0.059 (0.052)	-0.041 (0.051)	-0.055 (0.052)
Age group: 30-49	-0.059 (0.038)	-0.069* (0.038)	-0.071* (0.039)	-0.062 (0.038)
Age group: 50+	-0.155*** (0.051)	-0.170*** (0.051)	-0.159*** (0.051)	-0.156*** (0.051)
Income: Second quartile	0.145*** (0.036)	0.145*** (0.037)	0.148*** (0.037)	0.142*** (0.036)
Income: Third quartile	0.152*** (0.050)	0.139*** (0.050)	0.159*** (0.050)	0.147*** (0.050)
Income Fourth quartile	0.200*** (0.052)	0.200*** (0.052)	0.207*** (0.052)	0.197*** (0.052)
Constant	1.219*** (0.087)	1.252*** (0.087)	1.219*** (0.086)	1.236*** (0.087)
N	12057	12057	12126	12057
R-squared	.0478	.0408	.0402	.0459
Note: "* p<0.10 ** p<0.05 *** p<0.01"				

### Implications of our Findings

Taken together, our descriptive statistics provide mixed evidence in support of the conventional wisdoms about Baloch religious and political beliefs and behavior. First, there are few substantive differences in levels of piety or knowledge of Islam among Baloch and non-Baloch, contrary to the conventional wisdom. Baloch are, consistent with the conventional wisdom, more likely to support ethnic political parties and less likely to support Islamist parties. However, Baloch are virtually indistinguishable from other Pakistanis in their high levels of support for political Islamist projects in Pakistan. There are few significant differences in the descriptive levels of support for either the SSP or the Afghan Taliban. Baloch are somewhat more likely than non-Baloch in Balochistan, for example, to support the SSP but less likely to

support the Afghan Taliban. Regression analyses suggest that Baloch identity and even living in Balochistan correlate negatively with support for both groups, but other factors—notably sectarian adherence—are much more important in magnitude. This points to an important trend to observe. Notably, persons who espouse the Deobandi identity are more likely than others to support both groups. Indeed, most Baloch identify with Deobandism. This likely explains the small differences between the descriptive and regression analyses of support for these two militant groups.

Overall, our analysis suggests that analysts should be less willing to view Baloch differently from other Pakistanis when it comes to religious and political beliefs and practices. It is entirely possible that prior to independence, such differences may have existed. Indeed, there must be some reason for the perduring conventional wisdoms about the distinctiveness of the Baloch. However, what these data make clear is that these differences are not evident at present with few notable exceptions.

What does this analysis say about the ongoing conflict in Balochistan? While there is evidence that Baloch are increasingly willing to embrace the political Islamist projects of the state, there is no reason to believe that this has mitigated their ethnic identity and frustration with the state's efforts to exploit the province. At the same time, there is no evidence that the state is willing to back away from its centralizing impulses or expand the benefits of CPEC and other projects in the state. If the Pakistan state is gambling that deepening support for its Islamist projects among the restive ethnic Baloch will make them more amenable to its strategic interests in Balochistan, they seem to be making a losing bet.

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