

SHAKOOR AHMAD WANI

## The Changing Dynamics of the Baloch Nationalist Movement in Pakistan

*From Autonomy toward Secession*

### ABSTRACT

In recent years the Baloch national movement has undergone a sea change. The dismantling of rudimentary representative institutions by the military regime of Pakistan's president, General Pervez Musharraf, set off a process of radicalization of Baloch nationalism. The excessive reliance on a coercive state apparatus has not only alienated the moderate nationalists but also increased the popularity of a separatist creed. This article argues that aggressive resource exploitation and state repression is pushing Balochs toward secession.

**KEYWORDS:** militarization, exploitation, missing persons, kill and dump, secession

AS THE FLICKERING DECADE OF DEMOCRACY in Pakistan came to an abrupt end with a coup d'état by General Pervez Musharraf in 1999, Balochistan again became entangled in an intricate web of violence. The Pakistani state's excessive reliance on brutal force to suppress demands for better political and economic rights resurrected what was essentially a dormant Baloch nationalism. After attaining its zenith in the 1970s during the confrontation with the democratic regime led by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the Baloch national movement subsided during President Zia-ul-Haq's rule (1977–1988). Though averse to the idea of provincial autonomy, Zia made conciliatory overtures, including general amnesty to Baloch nationalist leaders and promises of economic investment.<sup>1</sup> To selected leaders he offered co-optation and inducements designed to head off another conflagration in the region.

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1. Baloch nationalists protested the coerced accession of Balochistan in 1948. After an initial revolt against the accession was forcibly put down, Balochs revolted again after the first democratically

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*Asian Survey*, Vol. 56, Number 5, pp. 807–832. ISSN 0004-4687, electronic ISSN 1533-838X. © 2016 by The Regents of the University of California. All rights reserved. Please direct all requests for permission to photocopy or reproduce article content through the University of California Press's Reprints and Permissions web page, <http://www.ucpress.edu/journals.php?p=reprints>. DOI: 10.1525/AS.2016.56.5.807.