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**COUNTERINSURGENCY IN SISTAN-BALUCHISTAN:  
EVALUATING IRANIAN EFFECTIVENESS IN  
COUNTERING ETHNIC INSURGENCY**

by

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March 2020

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IRANIAN EFFECTIVENESS IN COUNTERING ETHNIC INSURGENCY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Iran supports insurgent and counterinsurgent groups across the Middle East in opposition to the United States' interests. Therefore, it is important to understand the strategy and approach of Iranian insurgency and counterinsurgency (COIN). Iran's expertise in insurgency and counterinsurgency comes from its experience battling opposition groups inside its borders. Since 1979, Iran has frequently combatted insurgencies in peripheral territories. One of Iran's most problematic regions has been the south-eastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan, where for almost 20 years Iranian security apparatuses have struggled against violent ethno-sectarian insurgency from Baluch rebel groups like Jundallah. This thesis examines Iran's COIN strategy in Sistan-Baluchistan from 2003 to 2020, and the degree to which that strategy has been successful. Initially, Iran's COIN was ineffective. However, Iran has revised its approach to the Baluch insurgency, tailoring its strategy to meet the circumstances, with better results. There are two factors that have driven the improved Iranian COIN performance against Baluch insurgents. First, the insurgency has fragmented since Jundallah's demise. Second, and more significantly, the improved COIN performance in Sistan-Baluchistan is a result of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' increasingly active and authoritative involvement in controlling the COIN campaign.

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Artesh	Armed Forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran
BLF	Baluchistan Liberation Front
BPDO	Baluch People’s Democratic Organization
COIN	Counterinsurgency
IRNA	Islamic Republic News Agency
IRGC	Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps
ISNA	Iranian Student News Agency
IUP	Islamic Unity Party
Majlis	Iranian Parliament
MOIS	Ministry of Intelligence and Security—Islamic Republic of Iran
NAJA	Law Enforcement Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran
PDKI	Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan
PJAK	Iran Kurdistan Free Life Party
SAVAK	State Security and National Intelligence Organization
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Since 2001, the United States and its allies in the Middle East have once again found their military and security forces heavily engaged in missions of counterinsurgency (COIN). In particular, with the American invasions and nation-building operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has become involved in COIN operations to a degree and depth not seen since the Vietnam war. Across the Middle East, insurgency and COIN continue to seemingly expand in relevance with regards to have also conflicts which the United States is now involved in, to include ongoing conflicts in Syria and Yemen.

Concerns of insurgency and COIN not only shape U.S. considerations, but that of its potential adversaries in the region. In particular, the Islamic Republic of Iran has in the last two decades combatted significant opposition movements inside of its own borders. In addition to nonviolent movement, such as the 2009 Green Revolution, Iran has been nearly constantly engaged with significant, violent groups on its peripheries. In Iran's Northwest, Iranian security forces combat insurgency from ethnic Kurdish groups seeking their own independent state. In the Southwest, Iran has been struggling against an insurgency from ethnically Arab separatists in Khuzestan. Finally, and most famously, in Iran's Southeastern provinces, for 20 years the Islamic Republic has combatted an ethno-sectarian insurgency among Iran's Baluch populations. Thus far, despite multiple violent insurgencies in its borderlands, the Iranian state appears to be enduring, if not defeating the insurgent threat. Given U.S. involvements in COIN in a number of conflicts throughout the Middle East, the United States ownership of a mixed record in COIN, and the impact that Iran has on the entire Middle Eastern environment, Iran's COIN deserves further academic attention and analysis.

This thesis seeks to contribute such analysis and information to the subject of Iranian Counterinsurgency through examination of Iran's response to modern Baluch insurgency. More specifically, this thesis aims to determine what Iran's COIN approach has been to Baluch insurgency in the past two decades, and to determine the degree to which that approach has been successful.

## A. OVERVIEW OF THE IRAN-INSURGENT DYNAMICS

As the topic of this thesis' inquiry concerns an area of the world, as well as a specific ethnic identity which is not commonly recognizable to the average person, it is therefore necessary to provide some brief background on the Baluch, Sistan-Baluchistan, and Baluch insurgent groups prior to articulation of the research question and its significance. As such, this section will first overview the identity of the Baluch, then provide overview of Sistan-Baluchistan province, and then finally articulate some specifics on Baluch insurgents active in Sistan-Baluchistan province.

### 1. Who Are the Baluch<sup>1</sup>

The Iranian Baluch are considered a distinct ethnicity, religion, and culture, from the ethnic Persian majority of Iran. These differences cause significant tensions between the Iranian government and the Iranian Baluch, which lies at the heart of the insurgencies in Sistan-Baluchistan. Iran's government and society is dominated by the Persian ethnicity, and a majority of the country is also Shia.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, the Baluch identify themselves, and are also discriminated against by the Iranian government, as a separate and distinct cultural and religious identity.<sup>3</sup> Though the Baluch did not have any written history until the 1800s, the Baluch, as well as many Western scholars assert that the Baluch had already established themselves as a distinct community before the estimated birth of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> The Baluch speak their own language, called Baluchi, which is separate and distinct from

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<sup>1</sup> There are multiple spellings of Baluch. Most commonly, referencing the Baluch populations of Iran, especially in Western academic circles, spell it "Baluch." Conversely, when referencing Pakistani populations, it is more common to see their noun spelled "Baloch." In this pattern, this thesis uses the same differentiation; "Baluch," "Baluchistan," etc., are used to refer to the Iranian side of the border, whereas "Baloch" and "Balochistan" are used in reference to Pakistani affairs. There are two exceptions to this usage, first in terms of direct quotation, if the source used an alternative spelling, it remains as the source spelled it. Second, if the reference is prior to the establishment of the Iranian and Pakistani territories, this thesis defaults to the "Baluch" spelling for consistency.

<sup>2</sup> Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, *Member Profile: West Balochistan, Balochistan People's Party* (Brussels: Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, August 2017), 2, <https://unpo.org/downloads/2341.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Selig S. Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations* (New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1981), 11.

the Iranian state language of Persian.<sup>5</sup> Further separating themselves from the Persian-Shia ethno-religious majority, the Baluch have a distinctly tribal culture. There are at least seventeen Baluch tribes,<sup>6</sup> each made up of several clans, with a designated leader, called a sardar.<sup>7</sup> The tribal social culture social is almost entirely dominated by conditions of marriage, descent, familial, tribe, and clan relations.<sup>8</sup> Some Baluch tribes are historically nomadic, but in more recent centuries these clans and tribes have increasingly become semi-settled agricultural communities.<sup>9</sup> A very large part of the Baluch identity is intertwined with the harsh geography of the region, which mostly oscillates between rugged mountains and “semidesert wasteland.”<sup>10</sup> Historically, this terrain has physically separated the Baluch from surrounding cultures and societies.

## 2. What Is Sistan-Baluchistan?

Sistan-Baluchistan is the South-Eastern Province of Iran where nearly all the Iranian Baluch reside. Sistan-Baluchistan borders both Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup> Geographically, the terrain of Sistan-Baluchistan is harsh, with significant portions of rugged mountain as well as barren desert.<sup>12</sup> The dearth of arable, or hospitable terrain in the province led an American geological team in 1979 to characterize Sistan-Baluchistan as “the closest thing to Mars on Earth.”<sup>13</sup> Additionally, Sistan-Baluchistan is one of the least densely populated provinces of Iran—just as the Baluch dominated province in

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<sup>5</sup> Carina Jahani, “The Balochi Language and Languages in Iranian Balochistan,” *Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 4, no. 2 (May 2013): 165, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2013.831333>.

<sup>6</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, *Member Profile*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> Brian Spooner, “The Baloch in Islamic Civilization, Western Ethnography, and World History,” *Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 4, no. 2 (October 2013): 136, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2013.831021>.

<sup>9</sup> Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, *Member Profile*, 9.

<sup>10</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> “In Depth: Sistan-Baluchistan,” Al Jazeera, October 19, 2009, <https://www.aljazeera.com/focus/2009/10/20091018135453355456.html>.

<sup>12</sup> “Inside Iran’s Most Secretive Region,” *The Diplomat*, May 16, 2011, <https://thediplomat.com/2011/05/inside-irans-most-secretive-region/>.

<sup>13</sup> *The Diplomat*.

Pakistan—with an average of 14 people per square kilometer.<sup>14</sup> Sistan-Baluchistan is also without question Iran’s poorest region, with Iran’s lowest per-capita income, near the lowest for life expectancy, and the highest infant mortality.<sup>15</sup>

Sistan-Baluchistan is notorious for the rampant criminality which reportedly pervades the province. Sistan-Baluchistan is frequently described as Iran’s most “lawless region.”<sup>16</sup> There is a wide-spread cross-border smuggling industry inside of Sistan-Baluchistan, with Iranian fuel being smuggled into Pakistan, and narcotics flowing from Pakistan and Afghanistan into Iran.<sup>17</sup> These criminal enterprises are also violent, and hostile to Iranian authorities. It is estimated that since the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran in 1979, at least 4,000 police and military personnel have been killed in Sistan-Baluchistan in relation to smuggling, the drug trade, and other criminal enterprises.<sup>18</sup>

### **3. Who Are the Modern Baluch Insurgents?**

The Baluch insurgency inside Sistan-Baluchistan consists of multiple, sometimes overlapping organizations. Some organizations are small, with less than a dozen fighters.<sup>19</sup> Others, such as Jundullah, may have been as large as 1,000 strong at their zenith.<sup>20</sup> Some organizations communicate and cooperate with one another, while others view other

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<sup>14</sup> “Population Statistics of Iran,” Knoema, January 24, 2018, <https://knoema.com/IRPS2014/population-statistics-of-iran?region=1000160-sistan-and-baluchestan>.

<sup>15</sup> The Diplomat, “Inside Iran’s Most Secretive Region.”

<sup>16</sup> Al Jazeera, “In Depth: Sistan-Baluchistan”; Robert Tait, “Iran Suicide Bombing Kills Revolutionary Guards Commanders,” *Guardian*, October 18, 2009, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/oct/18/iran-revolutionary-guard-suicide-bomb>; “Senior Police Officers among Seven Dead in Iran Plane Crash: IRNA,” Reuters, October 12, 2014, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-airplane-crash/senior-police-officers-among-seven-dead-in-iran-plane-crash-irna-idUSKCN0I107S20141012>.

<sup>17</sup> Sadegh Soury, “The Iranian Smugglers Trafficking Fuel into Pakistan,” *Wired*, November 9, 2017, <https://www.wired.com/story/fuel-smugglers-photos/>; Al Jazeera, “In Depth: Sistan-Baluchistan.”

<sup>18</sup> “Iran Hangs 16 Rebels in Reprisal for Border Deaths,” *BBC*, October 26, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24682729>.

<sup>19</sup> Sajid Hussain Baloch, “The Other Jihadis,” *Sajid H. Baloch Blog*, November 28, 2013, <https://sajidhbaloch.wordpress.com/2013/11/28/the-other-jihadis/>.

<sup>20</sup> “Iran: An Examination of Jundallah,” *Stratfor*, July 28, 2010, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/iran-examination-jundallah#/home/error>.

insurgent organizations with suspicion and hostility. The particular dynamics of these organizations, and their relations to one another, are discussed in greater detail in Chapters IV and V. Currently, this subsection will discuss the archetypal structure of Baluch insurgent organizations, as well as what this thesis will and will not classify as a Baluch insurgent organization.

Jundallah serves as the archetype for modern Baluch insurgency inside of Iran. At its inception, Jundallah was concentrated around an ethnic Baluch named Abdolmalek Rigi, and Abdolmalek Rigi remained the central figure of Jundallah until he was killed. According to Rigi, he started an anti-Iranian state militant group because the state killed his relatives and friends.<sup>21</sup> Jundallah claimed to fight for the rights of the Baluch, whom the organization claimed had for decades been marginalized and oppressed as a people because of sectarian, ethnic, and linguistic differences compared to the Iranian Persian majority.<sup>22</sup> Jundallah remained operative from 2003 to 2012. Its first attack was reportedly in 2005, when the organization assaulted a presidential security detail when President Ahmadinejad visited Sistan-Baluchistan Province.<sup>23</sup> In 2010, Iran reportedly captured, and then subsequently executed Abdolmalek Rigi.<sup>24</sup> Before he died, Abdolmalek Rigi went on Iranian television, and claimed that Jundallah was receiving support from the United States and NATO allies.<sup>25</sup> Currently, there remains no consensus on which countries, if any, actually supported Jundallah. It is also uncertain if Rigi's statement was made under coercion or threat from the Iranian government.<sup>26</sup> That said, according to documents obtained by *Foreign Policy*, it appears that if Rigi did indeed have foreign support, it likely

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<sup>21</sup> Stéphane A. Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 227.

<sup>22</sup> Dudoignon, 227.

<sup>23</sup> Stratfor, "Examination of Jundallah."

<sup>24</sup> "Iran Commander Says People 'Celebrate' Execution of Rebel Leader," IRNA, June 20, 2010, NewsBank; "'West Facing Constant Defeat in Iran'," PressTV, July 13, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20100716221828/http://www.presstv.ir/detail.aspx?id=134627&ionid=351020101>.

<sup>25</sup> Mark Perry, "False Flag," *Foreign Policy*, January 13, 2012, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2012/01/13/false-flag/>.

<sup>26</sup> Perry.

came from Israeli operative who were impersonating U.S. officials.<sup>27</sup> Following Rigi's demise, Jundallah eventually disbanded in 2012.

As discussed in the previous subsection, crime and criminal violence against Iranian authorities is common in Sistan-Baluchistan. There are also direct relations between the criminal enterprises run and operated by ethnic Baluch and the Baluch insurgency. Abdolmalek Rigi's family, for example, was known for smuggling and criminal enterprise prior to Jundallah's establishment.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, it is important for the purposes of this thesis to separate simple criminal activity from insurgent operations; analyzing both, as well as the Iranian response to these two related, but vastly different issues is simply beyond the scope of this thesis. Consequently, this thesis will only consider those organizations whose express purpose is to fight against the Iranian government on behalf of the Baluch people, and who conduct this fight in a violent manner, Baluch insurgent groups. This thesis will consider Iranian efforts and responses to these organizations COIN, where actions against other organizations and individuals will be considered law enforcement, and thus outside the scope of this thesis.

## **B. MAJOR RESEARCH QUESTION**

This thesis aims to answer two primary questions: First, what has been Iran's approach to counterinsurgency (COIN) with respect to the Sistan-Baluchistan insurgency? Second, how successful and effective have Iranian counterinsurgency efforts been in Sistan-Baluchistan, and what tactics, techniques, procedures, and initiatives have proven effective in Iran's defense against the Sistan-Baluchistan Insurgency?

## **C. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH QUESTION**

Scholarship on counterinsurgency (COIN) is centered on the Western experience. More specifically, the current body of literature on COIN mostly concentrates on the military experiences which pertain to colonial and post-colonial Western powers. The

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<sup>27</sup> Perry.

<sup>28</sup> Chris Zambelis, "The Evolution of the Ethnic Baluch Insurgency in Iran," *CTC Sentinel* 7, no. 3 (March 2014): 18, <https://ctc.usma.edu/the-evolution-of-the-ethnic-baluch-insurgency-in-iran/>.

pedigrees of the most prominent COIN theorists to illustrate this point. For Example, David Galula and Roger Trinquier were French officers in the Algerian war, David Kilcullen was a U.S. COIN advisor in Iraq and Afghanistan, and John Mackinlay served in the British Gurkha Regiments.<sup>29</sup> However, there is an entire body of insurgencies and counterinsurgencies which do not bear heavy Western fingerprints. These include the Tamil Tiger insurgency in Sri Lanka, Algeria's counterinsurgency against Islamic networks in the 1990s, Chechnyan Insurgencies against Russia, and attempted Tibetan and Uyghur insurgencies in China. Iranian counterinsurgency efforts in Baluchistan are also nearly devoid of Western influence, and by studying this topic, a valuable contribution of validation, juxtaposition, and reassessment of COIN concepts might be offered to the growing body of literature on global counterinsurgencies.

Concerning U.S. regional security, Iran has consistently functioned as an adversarial regional power to the United States since the 1979 Revolution and subsequent establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>30</sup> Recently, U.S.–Iranian tensions have escalated. The Trump administration has accused Iranian agencies of backing groups in the Middle East that both threaten and attack U.S. forces in the region and has expanded sanctions on Iran.<sup>31</sup> Iran has increased its aggressive rhetoric and threatened to expand nuclear enrichment.<sup>32</sup> Former members of the Trump Administration, such as National Security Advisor John Bolton, have advocated for regime change in Iran.<sup>33</sup> Finally, the

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<sup>29</sup> Andrew Mumford, ed., *The Theory and Practice of Irregular Warfare: Warrior-Scholarship in Counter-Insurgency* (London: Routledge, 2014), 35; David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), I; John Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago* (London: C. Hurst & Company, 2009), 1–2.

<sup>30</sup> Ray Takeyh, “Will Khomeini’s Anti-American Vision Endure?” Council on Foreign Relations, February 11, 2019, <https://www.cfr.org/article/will-khomeinis-anti-american-vision-endure>.

<sup>31</sup> David E. Sanger and Edward Wong, “New Tensions with Iran Threaten Nuclear Deal And, White House Says, U.S. Troops,” *New York Times*, May 6, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/05/06/world/middleeast/us-iran-iraq-troops-.html>.

<sup>32</sup> Rachel Martin, “Aggressive Rhetoric Ramps Up Between U.S. And Iran,” NPR, May 15, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/05/15/723466480/aggressive-rhetoric-ramps-up-between-u-s-and-iran>.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Mackey, “Here’s John Bolton Promising Regime Change in Iran by the End of 2018,” *The Intercept*, March 23, 2018, <https://theintercept.com/2018/03/23/heres-john-bolton-promising-regime-change-iran-end-2018/>.

United States and Iran conducted military strikes against one another in January 2020.<sup>34</sup> Given the United States' current commitments in the Middle East, as well as the historic and contemporary adversarial relationship between the United States and Iran, seeking to understand the insurgency and counterinsurgency interaction inside of Iran's borders can help provide a more complete analysis of Iran which may prove useful in future negotiations and interactions..

Through evaluation of Iranian COIN approaches in Baluchistan, insight can be garnered as to how Iran conducts COIN operations. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) is the primary, dominant Iranian security force in both Sistan-Baluchistan and Iran as a whole.<sup>35</sup> The IRGC is also designated by the United States as a Foreign Terrorist Organization.<sup>36</sup> Internally, Iran has frequently had to contend with insurgencies from within the Iranian Turkmen population, and from Ahwazi Arab groups in Khuzestan.<sup>37</sup> Externally, the IRGC has provided COIN support to Bashar Al-Assad in Syria,<sup>38</sup> and the IRGC's Qods force has supported insurgent movements in Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine, Afghanistan, and other Middle Eastern territories. Analysis and insight garnered by exploring this thesis topic could prove valuable in determining, and possibly neutralizing Iranian insurgency and counterinsurgency efforts in the Middle East. Through a better understanding of the Iranian COIN paradigm, it could be possible to develop approaches better aimed at deterring or diminishing the support Iran provides to violent

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<sup>34</sup> Jane Arraf, "The Aftermath of Iran's Missile Attack on an Iraqi Base Housing U.S. Troops," NPR, January 14, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/sections/pictureshow/2020/01/14/796219386/the-aftermath-of-irans-missile-attack-on-an-iraqi-base-housing-u-s-troops>.

<sup>35</sup> Ariane M. Tabatabai, "Other Side of the Iranian Coin: Iran's Counterterrorism Apparatus," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, no. 1-2 (February 23, 2018): 194.

<sup>36</sup> "Counter Terrorism Designations; IRGC Foreign Terrorist Organization Designation," U.S. Department of the Treasury, April 15, 2019, [https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20190415\\_33.aspx](https://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20190415_33.aspx).

<sup>37</sup> Tabatabai, "Other Side of the Iranian Coin," 190; Sangar Ali, "Updated: Armed Group Kills over 20 at Military Parade in Iran's Ahvaz," *Kurdistan24*, September 22, 2018, <http://www.kurdistan24.net/en/news/132fc59a-20fe-4854-b2fc-6b415c54c47c>.

<sup>38</sup> Will Fulton, Joseph Holiday, and Sam Wyer, "Iranian Strategy in Syria," *Institute for the Study of War*, May 2013, 6-7, <http://www.understandingwar.org/report/iranian-strategy-syria>.



insurgent groups such as Lebanese Hezbollah,<sup>39</sup> Hamas,<sup>40</sup> and the Houthi coalition in Yemen,<sup>41</sup> which could effectively reduce their overall capabilities and threats. Such reduction could thereby effectively reduce the severity of ongoing violent clashes such as the war in Yemen, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and might bring them closer to solution.

Though fragmented, Baluch politics, of which the insurgency in Iran is a part of, are a limited transnational issue pertinent to several Middle Eastern and South Asian nations. Pakistan has faced violent Baluch insurgencies in its South Western province of Balochistan for decades, including a current insurgency by the Baluchistan Liberation Army.<sup>42</sup> Baluch politics also spill into Afghanistan. Baluch insurgent training camps have reportedly been held inside of Afghan national territory.<sup>43</sup> Terrorist attacks related to Baluch nationalism have also occurred in Southern Afghan territory.<sup>44</sup> There are significant Baluch populations in the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Turkmenistan, as well.<sup>45</sup> Despite the presence of Baluch in different countries, there does not appear to be a unified, strong transnational Baluch independence movement. Nevertheless, study of the Baluch insurgency in Iran, and understanding of its underlying causes might also yield new or modified understandings with implication for Baluch politics elsewhere in the Middle

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<sup>39</sup> Matthew Levitt, "Hezbollah's Procurement Channels: Leveraging Criminal Networks and Partnering with Iran," *CTC Sentinel* 12, no. 3 (March 2019): 1, <https://ctc.usma.edu/hezbollahs-procurement-channels-leveraging-criminal-networks-partnering-iran/>.

<sup>40</sup> Said Khatib, "New Hamas Leader Says It Is Getting Aid Again from Iran," CNBC, August 29, 2017, <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/08/29/new-hamas-leader-says-it-is-getting-aid-again-from-iran.html>.

<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Saul, Parisa Hafezi, and Michael Georgy, "Exclusive: Iran Steps Up Support for Houthis in Yemen's War—Sources," Reuters, March 22, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-yemen-iran-houthis/exclusive-iran-steps-up-support-for-houthis-in-yemens-war-sources-idUSKBN16S22R>.

<sup>42</sup> Adeel Khan, "Baloch Ethnic Nationalism in Pakistan: From Guerrilla War to Nowhere?," *Asian Ethnicity* 4, no. 2 (June 1, 2003): 281-293; Ahmed Rashid, "Explosive Mix in Pakistan's Gas Province," BBC News, February 4, 2005, [https://web.archive.org/web/20121111122553/http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/4195933.stm](https://web.archive.org/web/20121111122553/http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/4195933.stm).

<sup>43</sup> Bari Baloch, "39 Training Camps in Afghanistan Fueling Balochistan Unrest: FC IG," *The Nation*, June 2, 2012, <https://nation.com.pk/03-Jun-2012/39-training-camps-in-afghanistan-fuelling-balochistan-unrest-fc-ig>.

<sup>44</sup> Gul Yousufzai, "Alleged Leader of Chinese Consulate Attack in Pakistan Reported Killed," Reuters, December 26, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-separatists/alleged-leader-of-chinese-consulate-attack-in-pakistan-reported-killed-idUSKCN1OP12H>.

<sup>45</sup> Paula Kokaislova, "Ethnic Identity of the Baloch People," *Central Asia and the Caucasus* 13, no. 3 (March 2012): 46, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280233271\\_Ethnic\\_Identity\\_of\\_the\\_Baloch\\_People](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280233271_Ethnic_Identity_of_the_Baloch_People).

East, and could help potentially avoid the future possibility of violent insurgency between Baluch ethnicities and state governments.

## **D. DEFINITIONS**

As this thesis focuses on insurgency and counterinsurgency, it is important to establish the specific definition of these terms. Related, terrorism and counterterrorism must also be defined because Baluch insurgent groups are commonly associated with terrorism. Finally, the relationships between terrorism and insurgency and counterterrorism and COIN must also be established.

### **1. Insurgency and Counterinsurgency**

Definitions for Insurgency and Counterinsurgency will be based off the consensus American doctrine. Other, divergent definitions also exist. However, since this proposed thesis is aimed at a U.S. defense audience, it will employ official U.S. definitions of insurgency and counterinsurgency as adopted in the U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24. Per FM 3-24, insurgency is defined as “an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority while increasing insurgent control,” and counterinsurgency, drawn from this same document will be defined in this thesis as “military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency.”<sup>46</sup>

### **2. Terrorism and Counter-Terrorism**

It is also important to define terrorism and counterterrorism for the purposes of this thesis. Baluch groups such as Jundallah and Jaish ul-Adl have been dually identified as terrorist and insurgent organizations by the Iranian government.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, the U.S. government continues to identify both Jundallah and Jaish ul-Adl as Foreign Terrorist

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<sup>46</sup> Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, FM 3-24 (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 2006), 1-1, <https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=468442>.

<sup>47</sup> Tabatabai, “Other Side of the Iranian Coin,” 183.

Organizations.<sup>48</sup> Because the Iranian government, which is the government executing COIN, and the U.S. government, which the author of this thesis serves as a uniformed service member, both consider Baluch militant insurgents terrorist groups, it is therefore also important to clarify the definitions of terrorism and counterterrorism. As with definitions of insurgency and COIN, this thesis will define terrorism and counterterrorism along U.S. DoD consensus definitions. From the *DoD Dictionary of Military Terms*, revised 2020, this thesis shall therefore consider “terrorism” as “the unlawful use of violence or threat of violence, often motivated by religious, political, or other ideological beliefs, to instill fear and coerce governments or societies in pursuit of goals that are usually political.”<sup>49</sup> Conversely, utilizing the same document as basis, this thesis considers “counterterrorism” as “Activities and operations taken to neutralize terrorists and their organizations and networks in order to render them incapable of using violence to instill fear and coerce governments or societies to achieve their goals.”<sup>50</sup>

For the purposes of this thesis, terrorism shall be considered a tool and method by which organizations can conduct insurgency, particularly due to fact that the groups which the Iranian State is conducts COIN against are at once considered both insurgent and terrorist groups. According to the objectives used for this thesis, described above insurgency and terrorism share in common that both phenomena have political objectives; they aim to change either the behavior of a government, if not the entire government itself. In addition, both insurgency and terrorism, according to their definitions, use either violence, or the threat of violence in order to compel the change they aim to enact. As the definitions above indicate, terrorism and insurgency, and by extension, therefore, COIN and counterterrorism are two, separate, distinct concepts, and cannot accurately be used

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<sup>48</sup> U.S. State Department, “In the Matter of the Review and Amendment of the Designation of Jundallah (and Other Aliases) as a Foreign Terrorist Organization Pursuant to Section 219 of the Immigration and National Act, as Amended,” *The Federal Register*, July 2, 2019, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2019/07/02/2019-14115/in-the-matter-of-the-review-and-amendment-of-the-designation-of-jundallah-and-other-aliases-as-a>.

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, January 2020), 221, <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/dictionary.pdf>.

<sup>50</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, 39.

interchangeably. However, terrorism is also a means by which insurgents aim to achieve their objective. In this sense, as Ariel Merari notes, terrorism in certain, specific cases, can be considered a “form of insurgency.”<sup>51</sup> For the terms of this thesis, because the Baluch groups which the Iranian state fights against in Sistan-Baluchistan are simultaneously insurgent and terrorist organizations, this thesis considers terrorism a method by which insurgents attempt to wage war and conflict against an established state.

## **E. LITERATURE REVIEW—COIN**

There are several, inter-related social science disciplines which comprise the necessary materials required to evaluate Iranian COIN against Baluch insurgent groups. For the purposes of this thesis, proponents of COIN theory can be divided into two general schools of thought. First, there is a group of theorists who emphasize the efficacy of coercion, punishment and repression in defeating insurgents. Second, there is a group of theorists who emphasize population-centric tactics as the most effective COIN approach, designed to influence popular support toward the counterinsurgent as a means of defeating insurgency. The relevant elements and themes from each group are detailed in the following subsections. In terms of practical reality, forming approaches to COIN are not a binary choice between two theoretical camps, but instead consists of the selective fusions between different theoretical and practical considerations, and the aggregate of these choices is ultimately what creates a COIN approach. Therefore, considerations of how fusions of these theories apply to reality immediately follows the sections which discuss COIN theory.

### **1. Coercion, Punishment, and Repression**

Coercion, punishment, and reprisal counterinsurgency strategy seeks to separate an insurgent from his support structure by offensively targeting either the population or the insurgent himself. This line of strategy emphasizes the elimination or neutralization of insurgents by directly targeting them, as well as coercive and punitive tactics designed to

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<sup>51</sup> Ariel Merari, “Terrorism as a Strategy of Insurgency,” *Terrorism and Political Violence* 5, no. 4 (December 2007): 213, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09546559308427227>.

discourage the population from supporting insurgents. This paradigm views insurgency and COIN, as David Kilcullen described in 2007, as “a variant of conventional warfare,” and tend to rely heavily on conventional military and police forces to execute COIN operations.<sup>52</sup>

One faction of coercive-repressive COIN tactics advocates indiscriminate mass repression. In indiscriminate targeting, the object is eradication of insurgents, their supporters, sympathizers, and enablers among a population. The prime directive underpinning this approach is that “the enemy is to be rooted out and killed,” and since insurgents “fight among the people then those who shelter the enemy are also enemies who are to be killed or terrorized” until the insurgency has been eliminated.<sup>53</sup> Edward Luttwak argues that the Roman and Ottoman empires successfully, consistently employed this approach.<sup>54</sup> Luttwak’s assessment of the Roman-Ottoman COIN approaches is as follows: whenever the general location of insurgents is known, “local notables can be compelled to surrender them to the authorities, under the threat of escalating punishments, all the way to mass executions.”<sup>55</sup> Per Luttwak, the insurgents will eventually be eliminated, either as a by-product of reprisals on the population, or because that population turns over the insurgent to COIN forces for fear of future punishment. Luttwak argues this approach as dually effective, capable of achieving both insurgency elimination, and future insurgency prevention, as the memory of “terrible reprisals” serve to “deter any form of resistance” among would-be insurgents.<sup>56</sup> Proponents of this approach tend to argue its efficiency, since it neither requires a specially trained COIN force, nor a large, constant military presence.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> David Kilcullen, “Two Schools of Classical Counterinsurgency,” *Small Wars Journal*, December 1, 2007, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/two-schools-of-classical-counterinsurgency>.

<sup>53</sup> Paul Dixon, “Beyond Hearts and Minds: Perspectives on Counterinsurgency,” in *The British Approach to Counterinsurgency From Malaya and Northern Ireland to Iraq and Afghanistan* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 52.

<sup>54</sup> Edward N. Luttwak, “Dead End,” *Harper’s Magazine* 314, no. 1881 (February 1, 2007): 40, ProQuest.

<sup>55</sup> Luttwak, 40.

<sup>56</sup> Luttwak, 40.

<sup>57</sup> Luttwak, 40.

Coercive-repressive COIN proponents acknowledge that political and institutional climates make some nations better suited than others to conduct COIN operations which they consider essential to success. Luttwak acknowledges the reality that the United States and most other liberal-democratic governments, accountable to public opinion, cannot sustain COIN approaches which heavily use reprisal and coercion.<sup>58</sup> However, these methods have been echoed, endorsed and employed throughout the historical annals of insurgency and counterinsurgency. During the Indonesian National Revolution, Raymond Westerling employed massive reprisal COIN on the local population, attempting to quell insurgencies by surrounding suspected insurgent sympathetic villages and territories, detaining the men, and summarily executing any suspected insurgents through “very public acts of violence.”<sup>59</sup> French Marshall Thomas Robert Bugeaud executed mass reprisal COIN against Algerian insurgents during the 1840s, targeting entire villages where insurgents drew support, and using “indiscriminate slaughter,” mass imprisonment, and enslavement to “crush” The insurgency.<sup>60</sup> Importantly, both Bugeaud<sup>61</sup> and Westerling<sup>62</sup> have been accused of war crimes by contemporary literature, but their contemporary political climates not only tolerated, but in some cases endorsed the effectiveness of their methods. Moreover, as the COIN scholar Daniel Byman notes, there is an entire body of modern, authoritarian regimes which have heavily relied on coercive-repressive COIN, and emerged victorious against the insurgencies which they were combatting.<sup>63</sup> This body

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<sup>58</sup> Luttwak, 40.

<sup>59</sup> Benjamin Welton, “Military Adventurer Raymond Westerling on How to Defeat an Insurgency,” *Social Matter*, March 20, 2018, <https://www.socialmatter.net/2018/03/12/military-adventurer-raymond-westerling-on-how-to-defeat-an-insurgency/>.

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Rid, “The Nineteenth Century Origins of Counterinsurgency Doctrine,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 5 (October 1, 2010), 732.

<sup>61</sup> Philip C. Naylor, “A History of Violence in the Early Algerian Colony,” *The International Journal of African Historical Studies* 47, no. 1 (2014): 150, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24393340>.

<sup>62</sup> Peter Romijn, “Learning on ‘the Job’: Dutch War Volunteers Entering the Indonesian War of Independence, 1945–46,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 14, no. 3-4 (2012): 331.

<sup>63</sup> Daniel Byman, “‘Death Solves All Problems’: The Authoritarian Model of Counterinsurgency,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 39, no.1 (January 2016): 62-63, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2015.1068166>.

includes post-World War II Soviet Union COIN in the Baltics, the recurrent Chinese COIN approach in Tibet , as well as modern examples such as the Syrian Civil War and Egypt.<sup>64</sup>

A second subdivision of the coercive-repressive COIN approach is discriminant elimination. Proponents of this approach rely on sound intelligence to systematically eliminate, coerce, or otherwise neutralize insurgents. Israeli historian Martin Van Creveld argues that the preferable COIN methodology uses discriminant elimination tactics, reliant on two critical elements: first, peerless, actionable intelligence, and second, a peerless, highly disciplined counterinsurgent force.<sup>65</sup> Through actionable intelligence, a disciplined COIN force can find, fix, pursue, and eventually remove insurgents from the fight, by force or attrition.<sup>66</sup> Bernard Finel’s variant of this approach offers two specific courses of action to eliminate key insurgents. First, a COIN force can restrict population movements in order to root out and eliminate insurgents.<sup>67</sup> Second, a COIN force can systematically assault insurgent strongholds with overwhelming power to erode insurgent combat effectiveness, forcing insurgents to choose between compromise, capitulation, or capture/death by COIN forces.<sup>68</sup>

Overall, tactics of coercion, punishment, and reprisal, are not popular COIN stratagem among modern academics and military doctrine. More often, a tendency towards these methods is pointed to as a significant point of failure in unsuccessful COIN operations. However, Iran does not publicize its COIN doctrine. Further, some have argued that Iran has used methods of coercion, reprisal, and repression in combatting the Baluch insurgency. Human rights groups have accused Iran of committing war crimes through mass execution and incarceration.<sup>69</sup> Iran’s narrative of the capture and eventual execution

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<sup>64</sup> Byman, 73–75.

<sup>65</sup> Martin L. Van Creveld, *The Changing Face of War: Lessons of Combat, from the Marne to Iraq* (New York: Presidio Press, 2006), 231–235.

<sup>66</sup> Van Creveld, 269.

<sup>67</sup> Bernard Finel, “A Substitute for Victory,” *Foreign Affairs*, April 7, 2010, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2010-04-08/substitute-victory>.

<sup>68</sup> Finel.

<sup>69</sup> “Iran: Dozens Unlawfully Held in City’s Prisons,” *Human Rights Watch*, January 27, 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/08/18/iran-dozens-unlawfully-held-citys-prisons>.

of the leaders of Jundallah further indicates the possibility of this approach as relevant to the Iranian COIN approach.<sup>70</sup> For these reasons, methods of coercion, punishment, and reprisal must be considered in literature review.

## 2. Population Support-Centric COIN

Support-Centric COIN had enjoyed the most widespread acceptance throughout the 20th century, and is the approach that most scholars, and governments currently endorse. Unlike coercive-repressive COIN, popular support COIN emphasizes that the center of gravity to any insurgent-counterinsurgent struggle is preponderance of popular support. Instead of using elimination, intimidation, and deterrence, popular support COIN proponents argue that victory against insurgents is only attainable when an insurgency is made irrelevant through the creation of popular support paradigms which favor the counterinsurgency over the insurgency.

David Galula, often considered one of the most influential popular support COIN theorists, argued that the battlefield of an insurgency extends far beyond the boundaries of military and police matters. Sometimes characterized as the “Clausewitz” equivalent to the study of COIN, Galula argued that insurgencies, political in nature, are fundamentally determined not by military prowess but instead are won by whichever side better controls population support.<sup>71</sup> Per Galula, population is the critical survival resource critical for both the insurgent and counterinsurgent: COIN forces need either the agreement, tacit non-opposition, or submission of a population to continue exercising political power, where the insurgent needs to isolate the population from the counterinsurgency, or win their support to grow insurgent political capital.<sup>72</sup> As John Nagl describes in his Foreword, Galula’s theory evaluates the conventional military mindset, focused exclusively on capturing and

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<sup>70</sup> Chris Zambelis, “Political Theater or Counterterrorism? Assessing Iran’s Capture of Jundallah Leader Abdelmalek Rigi,” *Terrorism Monitor* 8, no. 13 (April 2010): <https://jamestown.org/program/political-theater-or-counterterrorism-assessing-irans-capture-of-jundallah-leader-abdelmalek-rigi/>.

<sup>71</sup> Christopher Paul, et. al., “Moving Beyond Population-Centric Vs. Enemy-Centric Counterinsurgency,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 27, no. 6 (November 1, 2016): 1022; David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2006), 4.

<sup>72</sup> Galula, 4–6.



killing the enemy to achieve victory, as folly when combating insurgency.<sup>73</sup> At best, such an approach will yield only temporary victory, because “for every insurgent captured or killed, another one (or often several) will appear.”<sup>74</sup> Instead, successful COIN achieves “the permanent isolation of the insurgent from the population ... not enforced upon the population but obtained by and with” them.<sup>75</sup> Thus, a successful counterinsurgent at once needs to be a “a propogandist, a social worker, a civil engineer, a schoolteacher, a nurse, a boy scout” in addition to being militarily superior to the insurgent.<sup>76</sup>

Within the popular support-emphasis camp of COIN, one important sub-approach involves the emphasis of public affairs and narratives. Sir Robert Thompson, for example, argues that any successful COIN effort should consider a vision or narrative which overrides, negates or at the very least competes with the narrative which insurgent present to the population.<sup>77</sup> Thomas Johnson places even greater importance and emphasis on a superior counterinsurgency narrative. In *Taliban Narratives*, Johnson argues that in Afghanistan, coalition counterinsurgent forces’ failure to produce a coherent narrative competitive with that of the Taliban’s is the most significant cause of coalition failure to neutralize the insurgency.<sup>78</sup>

Some contemporary popular-support COIN theorists stress the criticality of the constant, rapid evolution and variation of insurgency. John Mackinlay, in *The Insurgent Archipelago*, states that insurgency will “evolve at the same speed as the society from which it arises.”<sup>79</sup> However, societies also “evolve at very different speeds,” which means that each insurgency is starkly unique from all insurgencies which have occurred prior to

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<sup>73</sup> Galula, viii.

<sup>74</sup> Galula, viii.

<sup>75</sup> Galula, 54.

<sup>76</sup> Galula, 62.

<sup>77</sup> Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: F. A. Praeger, 1966), 110.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas H. Johnson, *Taliban Narratives: The Use and Power of Stories in the Afghanistan Conflict* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 265–266.

<sup>79</sup> Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 223.

as well as concurrent to it.<sup>80</sup> As a result, any COIN doctrine which relies exclusively on the organization's previous experiences will prove insufficient to combat a given insurgency. Instead, successful COIN efforts need to acknowledge that initial doctrine will be incomplete and will require reassessment and adjustment following contact with the enemy in order to specifics of an insurgency.<sup>81</sup>

Though David Kilcullen agrees with Mackinlay on the fundamental uniqueness and necessity for tailoring and customization of a COIN approach, he still postulates the feasibility of a basic tactical framework for combating insurgency. In *Counterinsurgency*, Kilcullen uses systems theory to establish that all insurgencies can be conceptualized as "organic systems," composed of seven fundamental components: Nodes (Insurgents and the personnel which compose formal and informal support networks), links, boundaries ("the limit between the insurgent movement and its environment"), subsystems (logistics, propaganda, recruitment, etc.), boundary interaction (the "day-to-day events of the insurgency"), inputs (the "energy" an insurgency draws from its environment, such as people, materials, grievances, and ideology), and outputs (results from insurgent action—casualties, physical destruction, media coverage, etc.).<sup>82</sup> With this framework, successful COIN approaches must attack one, if not multiple insurgency components in order to isolate insurgencies from their environment.<sup>83</sup>

Among popular support COIN proponents, there is also debate about whether COIN should be considered a tactic or a strategy, and consequently, this determination also defines the parameters of what courses of action are viable and non-viable options for a specific COIN operation. Douglas Porch, cautioning that morality and ideology is not an absolute constant in warfare, rejects the claim that COIN is a separate warfare category,<sup>84</sup> instead arguing that "each insurgency is a contingent event in which doctrine, operations,

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<sup>80</sup> Mackinlay, 223.

<sup>81</sup> Mackinlay, 223.

<sup>82</sup> Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 192-198.

<sup>83</sup> Kilcullen, 198.

<sup>84</sup> Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 318.

and tactics must support a viable policy and strategy, not the other way around.”<sup>85</sup> Former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Dayan echoed this sentiment. For Dayan, decision on specific counterinsurgency approach were simply a matter of providing “the best solution to the problem.”<sup>86</sup> Per Dayan, ideology and morality served as two of many contingent factors which determined a COIN operation’s rules of engagement. Dependent on the political, social, and population particulars, Dayan tailored his specific COIN approach to the insurgents and the environments he faced, leading him to at times employ policies which sought to “build relationships” among populations, while also, when Dayan determined it expedient, using policies which could be described as “cruel” reprisal tactics designed to coerce populations into denying insurgent support.<sup>87</sup>

As previously noted, the popular-support COIN approach is not only prevalent in theory, but also in operational doctrine and critical analysis. Major militaries which engage in COIN emphasize population control over an enemy centric focus. For example, the U.S. COIN manual FM 3-24 identifies political power as the central concern for both sides in an insurgency, and rejects insurgent elimination as a sufficient stand-alone tactic to defeating an insurgency, instead assigning the critical mass point of any insurgent group as active and passive support from the population.<sup>88</sup> Popular support theory dominates the western thinking on COIN, since countries such as the United Kingdom, France, and Australia all ascribe population control as the key element in successfully defeating an insurgency.<sup>89</sup> Some COIN failures, such as Vietnam, are often explained by popular support proponents as a failure to prioritize popular support over other military and political

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<sup>85</sup> Porch, xii.

<sup>86</sup> Mumford, *The Theory and Practice of Irregular Warfare*, 100.

<sup>87</sup> Mumford, 100.

<sup>88</sup> Department of the Army, *Counterinsurgency*, 1-1 to 1-3

<sup>89</sup> Army of the United Kingdom, *Countering Insurgency*, BA FM 71876 (London, UK: British Ministry of Defence, October 2009), 1-8, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/16\\_11\\_09\\_army\\_manual.pdf](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/16_11_09_army_manual.pdf); Armee de Terre, *Doctrine for Counterinsurgency at the Tactical Level* (Paris: French Defense Ministry, April 2010), 12, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/documents/frenchcoindoctrine.pdf>; Australian Army, *Counterinsurgency*, LWD 3-01-1 (Sydney: Commonwealth of Australia, December 2009), 1-3, [https://www.army.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1846/f/lwd\\_3-0-1\\_counterinsurgency\\_full\\_0.pdf](https://www.army.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1846/f/lwd_3-0-1_counterinsurgency_full_0.pdf).

objectives.<sup>90</sup> More recently, a widespread lack of nuanced and complete knowledge of Afghan populations, combined with the failures to produce relevant narratives which resonated with Afghans has been cited by popular support COIN proponents as the foundational reasons why U.S. COIN in Afghanistan has been unsuccessful overall.

### **3. Blended COIN—Theory versus Reality**

COIN operations are not binary choices; COIN does not simply exist in the theoretical realm, but is also its own outright military and security discipline with practical considerations, which dictates that the means by which a nation or security organization develops and shapes the tools, techniques, and approaches it uses to combat insurgency come from all corners of COIN theory. Upon review on Joint Publication 3-24, which functions as the DoD governing document for COIN, it is evident that depending on circumstance, the DoD values both coercive-repressive and population centric approaches as viable to defeating insurgency. JP 3-24 acknowledges that “the relevant population” is “key” to successful COIN, but also acknowledges that the population may in fact not be “the center of gravity” in a struggle between insurgent and counterinsurgent.<sup>91</sup> Later, JP 3-24 acknowledges that in some cases, rather than population control, efforts which “remove” or “eliminate organized resistance in a local area” may be the most direct and effective means of COIN.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, French COIN tactical doctrine advocates that both population-centric and enemy-centric approaches need to be used for effective COIN; a successful COIN approach must both directly attack “the enemy” and their support among “the population.”<sup>93</sup> Indeed, it is reasonable to expect that in practice, in Iran as well as elsewhere, elements of both coercive-repressive COIN theory and population-centric COIN theory are employed either in tandem or as two components of a larger overall COIN approach.

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<sup>90</sup> Porch, 216.

<sup>91</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency*, JP 3-24 (Washington, DC: April 25, 2018), I-5, [https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3\\_24.pdf](https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/jp3_24.pdf).

<sup>92</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, VII-7.

<sup>93</sup> Armee de Terre, *Doctrine for Counterinsurgency*, 30.

## F. LITERATURE REVIEW—BALUCHISTAN CONTEXT

While review of COIN theory and practice is critical to analyze Iran’s approach to counterinsurgency, the particular context of Sistan-Baluchistan and the factors that fuel its counterinsurgency movement bears equal importance to the research questions.

### 1. Significant Contributors

In considering the specific history and modern environment in Sistan-Baluchistan, there are several prominent authors whose works prove critical to evaluating the dynamics between Baluch insurgent groups and the Iranian State in Sistan-Baluchistan. The weight of these works’ importance to discussion of Iranian COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan is increased given the fact that there is a distinct scarcity of academic scholarship on the Baluch outside of these few authors, particularly when one considers works available in English or from Western academic perspectives. The most significant of these authors will be discussed below.

The first noteworthy author considering Baluch issues is Selig Harrison. Harrison is considered one of the first Western authors to explore and document the cultural nuances of the Baluch, and to explore the prospects of separate, autonomous Baluch state. Upon his death in 2016, Harrison was referred to as “the scholar who introduced Balochistan to the world.”<sup>94</sup> In particular, his work *In Afghanistan’s Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations* has proven to be one of, if not the foundational pieces of scholarship concerning issues of Baluch nationalism and insurgency against both Iran and Pakistan. Overall, Harrison is considered the most frequently cited author in matters pertaining to the Baluch.<sup>95</sup> That said, there are three considerable considerations of bias which must be kept in mind when evaluating Harrison’s work. First, timing: *In Afghanistan’s Shadow: Baluch Nationalism and Soviet Temptations* was published in 1981, two years after formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran. While Harrison provides accurate documentation

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<sup>94</sup> Malik Siraj Akbar, “Selig Harrison: The American Reporter Who Introduced Balochistan to the World,” Huffington Post, January 9, 2017, [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/selig-harrison-the-american-reporter-who-introduced\\_b\\_587314c0e4b0a5e600a78c78](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/selig-harrison-the-american-reporter-who-introduced_b_587314c0e4b0a5e600a78c78).

<sup>95</sup> Akbar.

of the Iranian State and the Baluch during that timeframe, nearly three decades of development have transpired since the book was written, and the modern Iranian COIN apparatuses, as well as the modern Baluch insurgent groups are not necessarily bound by the same dynamics which Harrison describes. Second, focus: Harrison does provide comprehensive history of Baluch-Persian interactions, but the vast majority of his book, as well as his follow-on work is concentrated the struggle between the Pakistani government and Baluch groups, and rarely, if ever, mentions or focuses on Iran-Baluch interactions. Finally, bias: Harrison during his lifetime repeatedly and definitively defined himself as a proponent of increased Baluch autonomy from the states which presided over them, and at times has been described as an outright Baluch nationalist. As late as 2011, Harrison advocated for the need for the United States to “support Baluch insurgents” in Pakistan, and some of his obituaries describe him as the most “longstanding friend of Balochistan.”<sup>96</sup>

A second prominent author in the area of Baluch affairs, particularly Iranian Baluch affairs is Stéphane Dudoignon. Whereas Harrison was considered the first prominent Baluch expert, it could be argued that Dudoignon ranks among the most prominent modern scholars of the Baluch, particularly the Iranian Baluch. The level of his expertise is reflected to a certain degree in the journalism which has consulted him for analysis in explaining Baluch insurgency. Discussed in Chapter III, Dan Rather, for example, dedicated several minutes of his 30 minute exclusive expose on Jundallah to commentary from Dudoignon.<sup>97</sup> His 2017 book *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran: From Tribal to Global* provides excellent framework and deep nuanced explanations of Baluch populations inside Iran, particularly with consideration to the tribal and religious aspects of Baluch which figure prominently both into Baluch identity and how the Baluch interact with elements of the Iranian state.<sup>98</sup> Dudoignon’s works do, to some degree, focus on Iranian COIN, outlining Iran’s selective utilization of tribal elites to help maintain control

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<sup>96</sup> Akbar, “Selig Harrison”; Selig S. Harrison, “Free Baluchistan,” *The National Interest*, February 1, 2011, <https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/free-baluchistan-4799>.

<sup>97</sup> Dan Rather, “The Most Wanted Man in Iran,” December 23, 2008, Dan Rather Reports, video, 16:10.

<sup>98</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*, 250–277.

and support for certain policy in Sistan-Baluchistan.<sup>99</sup> However, the majority of his work is geared toward the historical and modern context of how Iran interacts with the Baluch tribes, and does not necessarily focus on Iran's express COIN operations since 2003. For example, in his entire 279-page book, *Jundallah*, arguably the most notorious Baluch insurgent group, is only mentioned nine times, while Jaish ul-Adl, the second-most notorious modern Baluch insurgent group, is mentioned just five times.<sup>100</sup> Though he does not focus expressly on Iranian efforts against these insurgent groups, Dudoignon's analysis cannot be discounted, and provide valuable background material by which to evaluate the efficacy of Iranian COIN against these groups.

A third noteworthy author is Ahmad Reza Taheri. Like Dudoignon, Taheri provides critical background on the Baluch and their interactions with the Iranian state. In *The Baloch in Post-Islamic Revolution Iran: A Political Study*, Taheri details the development of Baluch political and religious culture since 1979.<sup>101</sup> Taheri's work does not specifically evaluate Iranian COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan, but instead focuses on the root causes of Iranian Baluch insurgency, and also provides critical insight on how the insurgents operate and recruit in the modern era. These insights are important, particularly when evaluating to what extent, Iranian COIN has been effective or ineffective against Baluch insurgents, as well as the root causes of that effectiveness.

## **2. Baluch Cultural Context**

A cocktail of significant socio-economic, political, environmental challenges, steeped in this historical context, lay at the heart of the grievance that insurgent groups have with the Iranian state. Religiously, the overwhelming majority of the Baluch identify as Deobandi Sunni Muslims, which puts them in the minority, and often directly at odds

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<sup>99</sup> Dudoignon, 274–277.

<sup>100</sup> Dudoignon, 384–385.

<sup>101</sup> Ahmad Reza Taheri, *The Baloch in Post Islamic Revolution Iran: A Political Study* (Sindh, Pakistan: TECODH, 2012).

with, the official Shiite religion of the Islamic Republic of Iran.<sup>102</sup> Politically, though the ethnic majority in Sistan-Baluchistan, the Baluch remain nearly unrepresented in national government, and grossly underrepresented in local government, occupying just five percent of Sistan-Baluchistan regional and local government positions.<sup>103</sup> Economically, as much as 76 percent of ethnic Baluch live below the poverty line in Iran, and Sistan-Baluchistan is considered Iran's most "underdeveloped, desolate, and poor" province.<sup>104</sup> Socially, alleged heavy discrimination against the Baluch by the Iranian state also extends to education as well as employment opportunities.<sup>105</sup> Baluchistan also faces environmental challenges which have created near-existential crises for Baluch tribes. A "relentless wave of environmental disasters" plagues the region, and there is a near constant drought, decimating not only the prospects of agriculture critical to most Baluch livelihoods, but also access to a constant supply of freshwater.<sup>106</sup> In this mixture of environmental crisis, socio-economic discrimination, political exclusion and neglect which Baluch insurgent groups such as Jundallah, Harakat Ansar Iran, and Jaish ul-Adl frequently combine with their own religious ideology to justify their insurgent activities against the Iranian government.

### 3. Insurgency-Relevant Themes

Some experts present evidence that Iranian governments past and present have attempted to harness Baluch culture, vis-à-vis the selective co-opting of Baluch cultural elites, in order to temper the severity of insurgencies. Stéphane A. Dudoignon argues that positive, mutually beneficial relationships between ethnically Persian central state

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<sup>102</sup> Audun Kolstad Wiig, *Islamist Opposition in the Islamic Republic: Jundallah and the spread of extremist Deobandism in Iran*, FFI-rapport 2009/01265 (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, July 2, 2009), 20, <http://rapporter.ffi.no/rapporter/2009/01265.pdf>.

<sup>103</sup> Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, *Member Profile*, 7.

<sup>104</sup> Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization, 8; "Iranian Provinces: Sistan and Baluchistan," Iran Chamber Society, 2017, [http://www.iranchamber.com/provinces/21\\_sistan\\_baluchistan/21\\_sistan\\_baluchistan.php](http://www.iranchamber.com/provinces/21_sistan_baluchistan/21_sistan_baluchistan.php).

<sup>105</sup> Nicholas Cappuccino, "Baluch Insurgents in Iran," *The Iran Primer*, April 17, 2017, <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2017/apr/05/baluch-insurgents-iran>.

<sup>106</sup> Peter Schwartzstein, "Drought Turns Part of Iran into a New Dust Bowl," *National Geographic*, January 28, 2019, <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/2019/01/drought-climate-change-turn-iran-sistan-and-baluchestan-into-dust-bowl/>.



authorities and ethnic Baluch community leaders has been intermittently used since the late Qajar era to help quell and suppress potential regional insurgencies.<sup>107</sup> Dudoignon further argues that this type of relationship persists, function currently as the Baluch “Sarbaz nexus” that provides “critical support of the Islamic Republic,” in Sistan-Baluchistan.<sup>108</sup> Critical support from this nexus also attacked the insurgency directly, denouncing the actions of Jaish Al Adl and Jundallah as illegitimate, thereby curbing the “Islamicization of Baluch Society and cross-border Jihad.”<sup>109</sup> Ahmad Reza Taheri deepens the nuance of this emphasis, noting how the Iranian government has frequently relied upon local Baluch tribal elders to convince insurgents to return hostages and prisoners.<sup>110</sup>

Another camp of scholars emphasizes that rather than co-opting the Baluch, the Iranian state historically has feared the potential of Baluch culture to serve as a foundation for insurgency and attempted to repress it wherever possible. Selig Harrison acknowledges that Reza Shah did co-opt sardars in order to temper potential Baluch insurgencies, but depicts this arrangement as minimally existent during the Shah’s tenure, limited only to the urban Baluch areas where the Shah feared resistance.<sup>111</sup> In more rural communities, Harrison asserts that displacement and martial law were Reza Shah’s preferred tactic.<sup>112</sup> Further, Harrison argues that once Mohammed Shah Pahlavi succeeded his father, full-scale repression became the Iranian doctrine of counterinsurgency in Baluchistan, and included efforts to stifle development of ethnically Baluch intellectuals, banning of Baluch cultural practices, and prohibition of Baluchi language in public or the media.<sup>113</sup> Per Harrison, co-opting of Baluchi elites was an irrelevant aberration, and instead Shah

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<sup>107</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*, 28.

<sup>108</sup> Dudoignon, 30.

<sup>109</sup> Dudoignon, 269.

<sup>110</sup> Ahmad Reza Taheri, “The Sociopolitical Culture of Iranian Baloch Elites,” *Iranian Studies* 46, no. 6 (November 2013): 989, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00210862.2013.810079>.

<sup>111</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 93-95.

<sup>112</sup> Harrison, 94.

<sup>113</sup> Harrison, 95.

governments only maintained dominion of sovereignty and control in Baluchistan through repression enforced by consistent, heavy military presence.<sup>114</sup>

Dudoignon's assertion the Islamic Republic's historic and modern reliance on friendly Baluch elites to temper insurgency efforts also appears contested. Taj Mohammed Breseeg argues that after Ayatollah Khomeini secured his position as the Supreme Leader of Iran in the early 1980s, the Iranian state quickly disbanded all existing Baluch political parties, and eliminated nearly all ethnic Baluch from positions in the government.<sup>115</sup> Breseeg also opines that mass repression followed, with more than 4,000 Baluch arrested and an additional 3,000 fleeing over the Iran-Pakistan border in fear of further oppressive Iranian policies.<sup>116</sup> Some Baluch experts also argue that these institutionalized cultural attacks and erosion in Iranian Baluchistan still persist today. For example, Carina Jahani, in her analysis of Baluch language patterns in the region, argues that the Iranian state still views Baluchi culture as a regional threat, and continues to attack, "the lifestyle and culture" of the Baloch through "intimidation of the culturally active."<sup>117</sup>

There is also some focus among Baluch experts on geography of Iranian Baluchistan and how it may affect insurgency and COIN in the region. Firozeh Kashani-Sorbet argues that harsh terrain and climate makes Sistan-Baluchistan, even in the modern era, largely undeveloped, "unwelcoming and fallow."<sup>118</sup> Some argue that this serves as an advantage to insurgent groups, since they can use the knowledge of terrain to successfully outmaneuver Iranian government forces, as well as traverse the Iran-Pakistan border at

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<sup>114</sup> Harrison, 96.

<sup>115</sup> Taj Mohammed Breseeg, "Baloch Nationalism: it's Origins and Development" (PhD diss., University of London, 2004), 397, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/99421/Baloch-Nationalism-Its-origin-and-development>.

<sup>116</sup> Breseeg, 197.

<sup>117</sup> Jahani, "The Balochi Language and Languages in Iranian Balochistan," 165.

<sup>118</sup> Firoozeh Kashani-Sabet, "Baluchistan: Nature, Ethnicity, and Empire in Iran's Borderlands," *Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 4, no. 2 (May 2013): 202, <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2013.832027>.

will.<sup>119</sup> However, this same terrain also may have previously, and might currently, temper insurgent cohesion and unification, and instead serve to largely limit insurgent groups to local, rather than regional alliances, while also hampering coordination with Baluch nationalists and insurgent movements in Pakistan.<sup>120</sup>

The implications of Baluch social tribal context for insurgent efforts is also argued by some students as an impediment to the insurgencies. Harrison recounts the power struggle in the early 1980s between tribal chieftains for primacy and leadership of a nationalist movement as a divisive detriment to the Baluch insurgency.<sup>121</sup> Modern students of Baluch insurgency, such as Chris Zambelis, see similar divisions and fault lines, arguing that regional and tribal dynamics both impeded activity for Jundallah, and has contributed to the creation of multiple, non-unified Baluch insurgent factions which now compete and argue with one another just as much as they do with the Iranian government.<sup>122</sup>

## **G. LITERATURE REVIEW—IRANIAN CONTEXT**

This thesis aims to identify and evaluate Iran's COIN performance in Sistan-Baluchistan. As such, this thesis draws on a significant body of literature which by its design seeks to analyze and evaluate the Iranian security apparatuses in the performance of their duties. The detailed overview of the Iranian security forces involved in Sistan-Baluchistan, as well as their capabilities, is discussed in Chapter II. However, the particularly prominent contributors to this body of literature, as well as notable themes and opinions of that body, are discussed below.

### **1. Notable Contributors**

One prominent author pertaining to Iranian security apparatuses is Ariane Tabatabai. Tabatabai's most significant contribution to the body of literature on Iranian

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<sup>119</sup> Chris Zambelis, "A New Phase of Resistance and Insurgency in Iranian Baluchistan," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 7 (July 2009): 17, <https://ctc.usma.edu/a-new-phase-of-resistance-and-insurgency-in-iranian-baluchistan/>.

<sup>120</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 93.

<sup>121</sup> Harrison, 93.

<sup>122</sup> Zambelis, "Evolution of the Ethnic Baluch Insurgency," 18.

security matters is her in-depth overviews and analysis of the police, military, and paramilitary organizations which constitute the overall Iranian security apparatus. In “Other Side of the Iranian Coin: Iran’s Counterterrorism Apparatus,” for example, Tabatabai outlines the four primary security service organizations in Iran, detailing how these organizations interact and compete with one another, as well as their capabilities and operating patterns and procedures.<sup>123</sup> Discussed in Chapter II, this thesis also identifies the same four major security organizations that Tabatabai identifies as the significant organizational players conducting COIN against Baluch insurgents in Sistan-Baluchistan. Tabatabai has not written a significant body specifically focused on insurgency in Sistan-Baluchistan. However, she has made notable contributions to Iran’s specific responses to the transnational terrorist organization known as ISIS.<sup>124</sup> Given the fact that the most significant Baluch insurgent organizations are also widely regarded as terrorist organizations, however, Tabatabai’s work on ISIS does bear relevance to this thesis. This relevance is increased by the fact that both ISIS and insurgent groups such as Jaish ul-Adl and Jundallah share undertones of Sunni Islamic extremism, which ISIS also considers one a foundational tenet.<sup>125</sup>

A second noteworthy author is Chris Zambelis. A significant body of Zambelis’ work has been focused specifically on Iranian internal security issues, to include how the Iranian state has performed functions such as COIN and counterterrorism. Zambelis has also contributed frequent, significant analysis to specific Iranian COIN efforts in Sistan-Baluchistan, both during Jundallah’s era and after its demise. Importantly, in discussion of Iranian COIN, particularly in Sistan-Baluchistan, Zambelis ranks among the most prolific English-language authors; there are few scholars who have focused attention and analysis on Iran’s response and operations against Baluch insurgency to the degree that Zambelis

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<sup>123</sup> Tabatabai, “Other Side of the Iranian Coin,” 191–196.

<sup>124</sup> Dina Esfandiary and Ariane M. Tabatabai, “A Comparative Study of U.S. and Iranian Counter-ISIS Strategies,” *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 40, no. 6 (October 2016): 460, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2016.1221265>.

<sup>125</sup> Chris Zambelis, “Terror in Tehran: The Islamic State Goes to War with the Islamic Republic,” *CTC Sentinel* 10, no. 6 (June 2017): 17-18, <https://ctc.usma.edu/terror-in-tehran-the-islamic-state-goes-to-war-with-the-islamic-republic/>; Zambelis, “A New Phase of Resistance and Insurgency,” 17.

has. Some of the characterization Zambelis makes as to Iranian COIN efforts appear anecdotal, referencing his perception as an analyst who has covered Baluch events over time. As best possible, where this thesis references these perceptions, it has sought to verify their validity through independent analysis or corroboration with other scholar's assessments.

## **2. Themes of Competition and Unilateral Action**

The first prevalent pattern which emerges from reviewing available literature is that a significant portion of scholars who have written on the subject believe that there are heavy undertones of competition that drive how security organizations operate inside Iran. Authors like Said Golkar, Tabatabai, and Hossein Aryan all frame their characterizations of security organizations in Iran in relative terms, defining the abilities of organizations as fractions and derivative comparisons of other security organizations.<sup>126</sup> Scholars also seem to focus heavily on potential organizational penetration by competing security organizations. For example, a significant portion of Golkar's analysis of the Law Enforcement Forces of Iran is dedicated to exploring the degree to which the IRGC has penetrated that organization.<sup>127</sup>

Related, a significant portion of the scholars that have written on Iranian internal security services illustrate that organizations generally do not practice interagency cooperation, and instead to default to acting unilaterally without consulting their counterparts. For example, Tabatabai notes that both the Artesh and the IRGC have initiated action against ISIS, but that these two organizations have largely refrained from coordinating their actions.<sup>128</sup> Similarly, Udit Banerjea notes that both the IRGC and MOIS have robust intelligence collection and analysis capabilities, but these two organizations

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<sup>126</sup> Tabatabai, "Other Side of the Iranian Coin," 192-197; Saied Golkar, "The Evolution of Iran's Police Forces and Social Control in the Islamic Republic," *Middle East Briefs*, no. 120 (July 2018): 4, <https://www.brandeis.edu/crown/publications/middle-east-briefs/pdfs/101-200/meb120.pdf>; Hossein Aryan, "The Artesh: Iran's Marginalized and Under-Armed Conventional Military," Middle East Institute, November 15, 2011, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/artesh-irans-marginalized-and-under-armed-conventional-military>.

<sup>127</sup> Golkar, 3-5.

<sup>128</sup> Tabatabai, "Other Side of the Iranian Coin," 199.

rarely, if ever, share intelligence with one another unless compelled by a higher authority.<sup>129</sup>

### 3. Press and Media Sources

Iran, when compared with many other nations, has an incredibly large amount of domestic control over the press and media within its own borders. To compare Iran to the rest of the world, for example, Reporters Without Borders in 2019 ranked Iran 170<sup>th</sup> out of 180 total nations in terms of a “Press Freedom Index.”<sup>130</sup> By Iran’s constitutional law, “publications and the press have freedom of expression,” but this freedom is null and void in situations where freedom of the press would create or dispense information that is “detrimental to the fundamental principles of Islam or the rights of the public.”<sup>131</sup> Specifically, Iran effectively can control and censor essentially all journalism inside of its own borders. Radio and television broadcasts are controlled outright, as the government-run Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting controls both “internal and external” Iranian broadcasts.<sup>132</sup> Iran also heavily monitors citizen access to internet content, with both pervasive content restriction systems which limit citizen access and comprehensive systems of surveillance which allow Iranian security services to monitor citizen behavior online.<sup>133</sup> In terms of print media, the Iranian state also exercises near-total control, since the Iranian state either owns outright, or partially funds the majority of print media sources, and the remaining major newspapers it does not significantly fund are owned by prominent government figures. For example, the conservative newspaper *Kayhan* is owned by Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.<sup>134</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Udit Banerjea, “Revolutionary Intelligence: The Expanding Intelligence Role of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps,” *Journal of Strategic Security* 8, no.3 (Fall 2015): 93-97, <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1449&context=jss>.

<sup>130</sup> “Iran,” Reporters Without Borders, December 15, 2019, <https://rsf.org/en/iran>.

<sup>131</sup> Greg Bruno, “The Media Landscape in Iran,” Council on Foreign Relations, July 22, 2009, <https://www.cfr.org/background/under/media-landscape-iran>.

<sup>132</sup> Bruno.

<sup>133</sup> “Internet Filtering in Iran,” The Open Net Initiative, 2009, [https://opennet.net/sites/opennet.net/files/ONI\\_Iran\\_2009.pdf](https://opennet.net/sites/opennet.net/files/ONI_Iran_2009.pdf).

<sup>134</sup> Bruno, “The Media Landscape in Iran.”

The controlled, and therefore, inherently biased nature of Iran’s media and press sources is of significant value to this thesis because it yields significant data with respect to the narrative COIN elements Iran seeks to employ against Baluch insurgent groups. As discussed in the COIN Literature Review section of this chapter, narratives are a critical battlefield between insurgent and counterinsurgent. Precisely because Iran controls media and press content so heavily, the Iranian press and media content Iran either produces or allows to be produced by independent sources can provide a massive cache of data in determining narrative structures in Sistan-Baluchistan. Subsequently, this thesis employs significant news and media reporting from Iran to more completely analyze Iran’s COIN narratives. Some Iranian news sources, such as *Iran Daily*, *Tehran Times*, and Iran News are fully funded and run by the Iranian state.<sup>135</sup> Others, such as the Iranian Student News Agency (ISNA) or the Islamic Republic News Agency are either “semi-official” or privately owned and operated.<sup>136</sup> Importantly, because both types are ultimately controlled by Iran’s tight censorship restrictions, these sources equally can be mined to make determinants about the Iranian COIN narrative in Sistan-Baluchistan.

## **H. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND PROPOSITIONS**

Broadly, the outcome to date for insurgencies in Sistan-Baluchistan has been in the favor of the Iranian government. According to a RAND 2010 study of historical insurgencies, absolute victory or defeat can be presented as a series of questions: whether or not an insurgency ends, whether or not the government remains in power and “retained sovereignty” over the physical territory of the insurgency, and whether or not the government was forced to make or offer concessions to insurgents and/or forced to yield to insurgent demands.<sup>137</sup> Iran clearly retains territorial sovereignty over Sistan-Baluchistan, and to date, no convincing evidence of Iranian capitulation to insurgent demands is apparent, meaning that insurgent groups have so far failed to undermine Iranian

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<sup>135</sup> Bruno.

<sup>136</sup> Bruno.

<sup>137</sup> Christopher Paul et al., *Victory Has a Thousand Fathers: Sources of Success in Counterinsurgency* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010), 8-9. <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG964.html>.

state control. For that reason, this thesis intends to explore what factors and approaches of Iranian COIN have allowed Iran to thus far retain sovereignty and exercise state control in Sistan-Baluchistan. To examine and test these factors, this thesis advances the following propositions.

(1) Proposition 1

Iran's success thus far has been because it has not used a specifically tailored approach of COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan since 2003; instead, Iran's approach has been largely a default, general approach which Iran employs toward all internal opposition groups throughout the history of the Islamic Republic. This general approach consists of repression and reprisal toward the dissenting population, attempting to discredit the insurgents by connecting them to foreign adversaries, and directly targeting insurgents utilizing Iran's security apparatuses. Over time, this approach has discouraged a sufficient portion of the Baluch from meaningfully supporting insurgent groups.

(2) Proposition 2

A combination of co-opting key leaders of Baluch ethnicity, and targeting of specific high-level, key individuals in the insurgencies reduces insurgent groups' capacity to act and gain ground among the population. By simultaneously cultivating relationships with leaders friendly to the Iranian state and targeting elites who are less supportive, the Iranian state may have an effective dual-pronged approach to prevail over insurgents in the arena of popular support.

(3) Proposition 3

The environment in Sistan-Baluchistan is so restrictive that it allows the Iranian state to retain power despite a high level of unrest. Under this logic, the Iranian COIN effectiveness, or lack thereof, is irrelevant, because the climate in Sistan-Baluchistan is so harsh, its people so poor, and its communities so disconnected from one another that the political will among the population cannot be raised toward sustainment or support of an effective insurgency.



(4) Proposition 4

The abject failure of the insurgent, rather than a specific effective Iranian COIN approach, is what has led to Iran's current advantage over insurgents thus far. There have been three overlapping, parallel insurgencies which all operate on the same territory. This fragmentation is compounded by a dearth of funding, and a limited population that all insurgent groups must compete with one another to gain support. This disunity mitigates the threats and capabilities of insurgent activity in Baluchistan to disrupt, undermine, or challenge the Iranian state in any manner which would prove significant or sustained. Further, because of radical ideology, violent acts of terrorism, and insufficient endorsement by Baluch-Sunni clergy, insurgent groups have failed to convince the Baluch people that they are a viable alternative to the Iranian state. In this proposition, the insurgents have been defeated mostly through self-inflicted wounds and a failure to cultivate a cohesive narrative, public image, and reputation which resonates among the population.

(5) Proposition 5

Iran's COIN approach in Sistan-Baluchistan has evolved and improved over time, and the COIN improvements have outpaced the growth and adaptation of the insurgents, effectively coalescing into an Iranian state victory. Beginning in 2003, the Iranian security apparatuses have over time developed a tailored, sophisticated, and comprehensive COIN approach to Baluch insurgent groups, which rather than being a default approach, was specifically designed to attack critical insurgent centers of gravity and neutralize potential relevant insurgent advantages. These developments have been conducted at a scale and speed which the insurgents as of yet have failed to evolve beyond or overcome, effectively limiting if not reducing the efficacy of the insurgency.

## **I. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This thesis will be a case study of the insurgency in the Iranian province of Sistan-Baluchistan from 2003 to 2020. The temporal limit is to focus exclusively on the particularly violent brand of ethnic Baluch jihadist insurgency in the province which began with the establishment of Jundallah in 2003, and extends through 2020 to include groups

which are still active such as Jaish ul-Adl.<sup>138</sup> Though there are violent Baluch organizations in both Iran and Pakistan, this thesis will focus exclusively on the insurgency and counterinsurgency in Iranian territory. To date, Sistan-Baluchistan based insurgent groups have focused their efforts exclusively against the state of Iran.<sup>139</sup> Though Iran has accused the United States, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan of supporting Baluch insurgents, the Iranian state's efforts at COIN largely remain a national instead of multinational affair.<sup>140</sup> Discussed in Chapter IV, Pakistan and Iran have collaborated on specific events for Baluch insurgency in the past, with Iran applying heavy pressure for Pakistan to pursue Iranian Baluch insurgents within its own borders.<sup>141</sup> However, as will be discussed, this is just one piece, rather than a plurality or outright majority of Iran's COIN approach.

This study's objective is a determination of the specific Iranian state COIN approach to Baluch insurgent groups, and an assessment of the degree to which this approach has been effective in reducing or eliminating the relevancy of the insurgencies. To evaluate the proposition discussed above, significant attention will be paid to whether methods employed by the Iranian State concentrate on deterring the population from supporting the insurgency, and attacking, apprehending, and targeting insurgents or insurgent behaviors. In addition, further consideration will be paid to increases, decreases, and the nature of insurgent and counterinsurgent operations, media releases of each side, and economic and civil society reactions, implications, and complications of both insurgent and counterinsurgent activity. Finally, this thesis will pay specific attention to the Iranian state narrative surrounding Baluch insurgent groups and assess the implications of that

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<sup>138</sup> "BAAD—Jundallah—2003," National Consortium for The Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, February 2015, <https://www.start.umd.edu/baad/database/jundallah-2003>; Zambelis, "Evolution of the Ethnic Baluch Insurgency," 17.

<sup>139</sup> Zambelis, "A New Phase of Resistance and Insurgency," 17.

<sup>140</sup> "Are Foreign Powers Sponsoring Sunni Insurgents in Iran?" World Politics Review, April 30, 2019, <https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/27803/are-foreign-powers-sponsoring-sunni-insurgents-in-iran>.

<sup>141</sup> Muhammad Akbar Notezai, "Trouble at the Pakistan-Iran Border," The Diplomat, October 30, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/trouble-at-the-pakistan-iran-border/>.

narrative on both on a national level inside of Iran, as well as at the international, global level.

This thesis's research material will draw from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources will include books, journal articles, government writings, non-governmental organization (NGO) publications, and scholarly discourses about relevant topics to COIN, the Baluch and Sistan-Baluchistan, and Iranian security forces. Primary sources will include news posting from Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Western sources, foreign government websites, statements, and social influence materials, such as social media, press releases, postings on official insurgent or counterinsurgent organization's pages, and other pertinent sources. Research will be limited to works either originally written in English, or which can readily be translated into English.

## **J. THESIS OVERVIEW**

This thesis's composition is six chapters. The Chapter I functions as introduction, overview, and literature review. The Chapter II will provide relevant background to the current insurgency, detailing the historical and cultural contexts of the Iranian state and Baluch nationalist movements, the major organizations involved in COIN is Sistan-Baluchistan, and the significant patterns within Iranian response when responding to internal threats. The Chapter III will examine Iran's COIN approach during the tenure of Jundallah, from 2003 to 2012. The fourth chapter will focus on Iranian State counterinsurgent efforts after Jundallah's demise, from 2012 to the present. Chapters III and IV will each be subdivided into the significant event summaries for both Iranian State and insurgent activities, the specific tactics employed, and discussion of how Iran employed their approach to manage and combat the insurgency. Further subdivisions will also exist for analyses of how effective the counterinsurgent efforts were. The Chapter V will contain a comparison of each case's significant attacks and counterinsurgent events, presence and evaluation of overall resolution or de-escalation to the conflict, and effectiveness of the Iranian counterinsurgency approach; and this approach's effectiveness and contribution to Iranian sovereignty and control over Baluchistan will be analyzed. Furthermore, Chapter V will seek to explain any changes, or differences between the

performance of Iranian COIN in the era of Jundallah and the post-Jundallah era. Chapter VI, the final chapter, will conclude with a discussion of the implications of thesis findings to scholarly debates about counterinsurgency, security and politics in the Middle East relating to Iran, and overall United States foreign policy opportunities and issues as relevant to Baluch nationalism and insurgencies.

Chapter II provides relevant background material on both Baluch insurgency and the Iranian State's security organizations. First, Chapter II discusses the history of Baluch, tracing how the Baluch became a nation of their own, then later specifically focuses on insurgency and COIN efforts that have pertained to the Baluch, to include clashes with the British, Persian dynasties, the Iranian Shahs, and the Islamic Republic up until 2003. Next, Chapter II outlines the four relevant COIN organizations active in Sistan-Baluchistan: The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC), the National Law Enforcement Forces of Iran (NAJA), the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), and Iran's conventional armed forces (Artesh). Additionally, the advantages, disadvantages, and behavior of these four organizations are outlined. Finally, Chapter II discusses patterns of behavior concerning matters of internal Iranian security, and identifies significant, recurrent, and apparently default tactics, techniques and strategies which Iran uses against perceived threats to its security. First, Iran makes little no distinction between insurgent and terrorist. Second, Iran blames all insurgent and armed opposition on foreign interference. Third, Iran typically will respond to insurgent or other armed internal threats with mass arrests and largescale law enforcement action.

Chapter III examines Iranian COIN against Jundallah from 2003 to 2012. Ultimately, this examination demonstrates that Iran's COIN organizations made three crucial errors against Jundallah which ultimately led to the Baluch insurgency perpetuating beyond Jundallah's tenure. First, Iran believed that Jundallah's center of gravity lay with Jundallah leader Abdolmalek Rigi and his inner circle, and that the arrest and eventual killing of this critical leadership would represent a death knell for the insurgency. As Chapter III demonstrates, however, this characterization of Jundallah's center of gravity was incorrect, and Rigi's death not only failed to lead to the end of the insurgency, but actually resulted in a Jundallah which was more violent as well as more threatening to Iran

in the short term. Second, Iran responded to an ascendant Jundallah by cracking down on criminality and suspected insurgency in Sistan-Baluchistan, unleashing a sweeping campaign of arrests and law enforcement actions designed to assert Iranian control. However, these rule of law operations in effect backfired, since they actually failed to stop Jundallah from attacking, and also may have exacerbated unrest in the region, creating a larger constituency for the insurgency. Finally, Iran continuously sought to portray Jundallah as an American-supported puppet in order to discredit the organization. Ultimately, this tactic also backfired, since such a characterization created a larger international interest in Jundallah, and also in effect increased Jundallah's domestic reputation as a legitimate threat to Iranian control.

Chapter IV examines COIN after Jundallah's disbandment, from 2012 until the present. Where Iran largely failed at COIN against Jundallah, Chapter IV's analysis indicates an improved COIN performance in Jundallah's aftermath, which can be evaluated as ultimately successful. This successful performance is because Iran's COIN evolved during and after Jundallah's tenure and began to utilize operations and tactics designed to contain and isolate the insurgent. First, Iran embarked on an exhaustive border security program, erecting a series of physical security measures along the Iran-Pakistan border which effectively denied Baluch insurgents easy cross-border access, while also utilizing mass deportations of Pakistanis in Sistan-Baluchistan and outright border closure to reduce Iran's exposure to insurgent attacks. Second, Iran used diplomatic, economic, and military means to influence Pakistan to pursue Iranian Baluch insurgents inside their own territory, effectively opening up a second front of conflict and increasing pressure on Baluch insurgents operating against the Iranian government. Finally, where Iran's counter-narrative to Jundallah was largely predicated on Jundallah being a foreign puppet, from 2012 onwards Iran began to craft a comprehensive, coherent COIN narrative which above all other emphases, stressed the Iranian competency and improvement at COIN and security matters.

Chapter V compares the Jundallah and post-Jundallah periods and analyzes the sources for the improved COIN performance. Ultimately, there are two factors which drive the improvement of Iranian COIN against the Baluch from the end of Jundallah to the

present. First, since Jundallah's end, the Baluch insurgency has been plagued by self-inflicted wounds which are reminiscent of previous eras of Baluch nationalism and insurgency. Competition, rather coherence or coordination among insurgent groups detracts from the operational capacity of the Baluch insurgency. Sectarian and transnational themes have increasingly become part of Baluch insurgent's narratives, which have failed to resonate with the insurgent's constituency and potential supporters. Tribalism has further fractured insurgent cohesion between groups. Second, and more significantly, since the final years of Jundallah, the IRGC has assumed an increasingly active and authoritative role in combatting insurgency in Sistan-Baluchistan, and the IRGC's increased role is the single-most significant reason why Iranian COIN has improved against the Baluch. The IRGC has unmatched resources, experience, and expertise in COIN, and with absolute umbrella command and control over Sistan-Baluchistan since 2009, the IRGC has successfully woven a coherent tactical COIN approach which has driven Iran's improved COIN performance. Upon further analysis, it then becomes apparent that the IRGC's assumption of control is at least partially responsible for Jundallah's eventual collapse, as well as the conditions under which the Baluch insurgency has inflicted wounds upon itself in Jundallah's aftermath.

Chapter VI serves as the conclusion of this thesis. First, the findings of the thesis research, based on analysis conducted in Chapters II through V, are presented. Second, based on the findings, the propositions presented in Chapter I are evaluated for validity and relevance to the research question. Next, implications of the results of this thesis, as they pertain both to internal Iranian security and political matters, as well as the geopolitical climate of the entire Middle East are discussed. Finally, this thesis concludes with recommendations for future U.S. policy regarding both Iran and Counterinsurgency matters in the Middle East.

## **K. CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

The introductory chapter to this thesis presented the thesis research question, explored the literature on COIN, the Baluch, and Iranian internal security as it pertained to the research question, and posited several propositions to address the research questions.

A brief overview of Sistan-Baluchistan, the Baluch, and Baluch insurgents were presented, while the terms “insurgency,” “counterinsurgency,” “terrorism” and “counter-terrorism,” were defined as they pertained to the research. With this background and definition set accordingly, the subject of inquiry for this thesis was articulated: what has been Iran’s approach to counterinsurgency [COIN] with respect to the Sistan-Baluchistan insurgency? How successful and effective have Iranian counterinsurgency efforts been in Sistan-Baluchistan; what tactics, techniques, procedures, and initiatives have proven effective in Iran’s defense against the Sistan-Baluchistan Insurgency? A review on COIN literature concluded that while in theory there are those who argue either for population-centric or enemy-centric driven COIN, the practical reality of modern military COIN doctrine indicates that often COIN forces utilize a synthesis of the two camps to tailor their responses to insurgency, designed to create policies which ultimately both pursue insurgents while seeking to control and influence the population. The review on Baluch literature revealed the potential historical, cultural, and social sources of Baluch insurgency against Iran. The review of literature on Iranian security forces revealed a consensus opinion among scholars that Iranian security forces are heavily influenced by competition among organizations, and operate independently, rather than in cooperation with one another. This chapter presented five propositions to address the thesis subject of inquiry: 1) The Iranians have successfully combatted Baluch insurgency since 2003 by using their standardized, default responses to insurgency and other internal threats, characterized by repression, reprisal, discreditation, and leadership targeting. 2) Iran has contained Baluch insurgency by simultaneously targeting high level insurgent leadership and co-opting Baluch tribal elites 3) The environment of Sistan-Baluchistan has limited the impact and threat of the insurgency 4) The insurgents have defeated and hamstrung themselves with poor performance; these self-inflicted wounds, rather than Iranian COIN success, explains the reduction in insurgency 5) Iran’s COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan has improved over time, and the rate of this improvement has outpaced the evolution of the insurgent, yielding Iran’s success over the Baluch insurgent.

Presented in Chapter VI, the inquiry findings demonstrate that propositions 1, 2, and 3 do not sufficiently reflect the occurrences between insurgent and counterinsurgent in

Sistan-Baluchistan. Hypotheses 4 and 5 prove far more valid in examination of Iran's COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan. Against Jundallah, Iran failed to effectively neutralize insurgency. However, since Jundallah's final years, the Baluch insurgency has increasingly lost ground to Iranian COIN efforts. In short, it is a combination of insurgents' flaws, and a drastically improved Iranian COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan which have allowed Iran to emerge victorious against Baluch insurgencies from 2003-2020. The most significant root cause of these developments has been the deep involvement of the IRGC in Sistan-Baluchistan.



## **II. HISTORICAL CONTEXT, ORGANIZATIONAL BACKGROUNDS, AND IRANIAN COUNTER-OPPOSITION PATTERNS**

According to the U.S. DoD Joint Publication 3-24 *Counterinsurgency*, COIN should be considered a separate, distinct category of warfare because it focuses not on physical destruction of an enemy “militarily,” but instead hinges upon operations designed to “gain or maintain control or influence over” populations of strategic significance.<sup>142</sup> JP 3-24 identifies that successful COIN must “understand the population, anticipate insurgent actions, be comfortable among the population, and appreciate the comprehensive approach of unified action.”<sup>143</sup> Therefore, an effective counterinsurgent needs to not only understand the basic principles of COIN, but must also possess deep, thorough understandings of the insurgents, the populations among which the insurgent and the counterinsurgent compete for support, knowledge of the historical successes and failures of COIN relevant to the area, and a self-awareness of COIN organization and patterns of behavior.

As this thesis aims to understand and evaluate the Islamic Republic of Iran’s COIN approach to Baluch insurgency in the country’s southeast, it is important to understand the historical trajectory of Baluch-Iranian government interactions, the organizational makeup of contemporary Iranian COIN apparatuses, and the patterns of Iranian security behavior. Toward this end, this chapter functions as a primer of relevant historical context and background as pertaining to the Iranian government and Baluch insurgency in Sistan-Baluchistan Province. Section A of this chapter provides the relevant historical elements of Iranian COIN against the Baluch, and the relevant history of Baluch insurgency. Section B outlines the four main organizations involved in COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan. Section C of this chapter details the significant patterns and themes in Iranian State responses to internal opposition, dissent, and perceived threats.

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<sup>142</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency*, xiii.

<sup>143</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, xiii.

## A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The first section of this chapter is designed to function as a historical primer for Baluch insurgency and Iranian COIN. First, the origins of Baluch identity shall be discussed as it pertains to insurgency. Next the British and Qajar Dynastic Persian interactions (1805-1923 and 1716-1925, respectively) shall be cataloged as they pertain to conceptualizations and justifications for distinct, autonomous Iranian Baluch identity. The reign of Reza Shah Pahlavi from 1923 to 1941 is presented as arguably the era of the first true COIN operations against the Baluch in Iran. Additionally, this section provides background information on Iranian COIN during the era of Mohammed Reza Shah (1941-1979), including the successes and failures against the Baluch. Finally, background on Baluch insurgency and Iranian counterinsurgency relevant to the Islamic Republic from 1979 to 2003 is discussed.

### 1. History of the Baluch

There is significant ambiguity and uncertainty concerning the origin of the Baluch identity. Though Baluchi is an old language, it had no written form until well into the 19th century.<sup>144</sup> Per Carina Jahani, this absence of “written literary tradition” heavily contributed to porous continuity in tracing the history of the Baluch.<sup>145</sup> Ahmed and Khan note that reference to the Baluch is exceedingly “rare in ancient and historical literature.”<sup>146</sup> This characterization bears further weight, since available references to the Baluch in ancient times inherently carry an outsider’s perspective, further complicating Baluch origins with biases and preconceived notions which may not at the time have reflected the Baluch self-perception. This outside perspective further confounds Baluch origin by divergence of assessment as well. For example, some of the earliest written records of the Baluch are Arabic Texts from the 8th, 9th, and 10th centuries, and these

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<sup>144</sup> Mansej Longworth Dames, *A Text Book of the Balochi Language* (Lahore: Punjab Provincial Government, 1922), 3, <https://archive.org/details/textbookofbaloch00damerich/page/n11/mode/2up>.

<sup>145</sup> Jahani, “The Balochi Language and Languages in Iranian Balochistan,” 158.

<sup>146</sup> Manzoor Ahmed and Gulawar Khan, “The History of Baloch and Balochistan: A Critical Appraisal,” *South Asian Studies* 32, no. 1 (June 2017): 39, [http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/3\\_v32\\_1\\_17.pdf](http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/csas/PDF/3_v32_1_17.pdf).

sources having divergent identifiers and characteristics for the same people. While earlier texts identify the Baluch as “autonomous mountain communities,” later Abbasid Empire writings identify the Baluch “in association with other tribal populations in the area.”<sup>147</sup>

Instead of basing Baluch identity on disputed origin, most scholars argue that Baluch conceptualizations of identity are based more on the commonalities in Baluch culture and language. There exists no consensus on Baluch origins.<sup>148</sup> Instead, the prevailing theories share an assertion that the Baluch migrated long distances over time. Baluch tribes have assimilated and absorbed cultural and ethnic aspects over the course of their history. It is these migrations, and interactions with other cultures and ethnicities, which drive Selig Harrison to argue that the Baluch should not be considered “homogenous.”<sup>149</sup> Instead, Harrison argues, the Baluch identity is based on the cultural, historical, and linguistic elements of each tribe, which have been “remarkably” well-preserved.<sup>150</sup> Similarly, Manzoor Ahmed and Gulawar Khan argue that rather than disputing how the Baluch arrived in the territory they currently occupy and over time evolved into a group that is “heterogenous” in both “composition and characters,” delineating Baluch origin should instead be focused on the “genesis” of a Baluch “nation-state” equivalent.<sup>151</sup> Moreover, this constant interaction, absorption and partial adoption of cultures, practices and materials over time is precisely what makes the Baluch an exceptional, separate identity from any other group, especially pertaining to common ancestry.

The concept of a Baluch nation-state thus may be considered to have coalesced from the late 1400s to the 1700s. The first semblance of a Baluch nation arises during the 1480s, when the Baluch “chieftain and warrior” Mir Chakar Khan Rind successfully

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<sup>147</sup> Mahrukh Khan, “Balochistan: The Forgotten Frontier,” *Strategic Studies* XXXII–XXXIII, no. 4-1 (Mar 31, 2013): 201.

<sup>148</sup> Khan, 202–204; Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 10; Ahmed and Khan, “The History of Baloch and Balochistan,” 39.

<sup>149</sup> Harrison, 11.

<sup>150</sup> Harrison, 10.

<sup>151</sup> Ahmed and Khan, “The History of Baloch and Balochistan,” 43–45.

formed a “confederacy” of Baluch tribes.<sup>152</sup> Harrison, Ahmed, and Khan describe the alliance as a “short-lived” aberration among a historical record whose course had been dominated by “frequent internal wars” which made “political unity and harmony” all but impossible.<sup>153</sup> Nevertheless, they all acknowledge Rind’s accomplishment as a seedling of the Baluch nationalist movement.<sup>154</sup> After tribal and factional rivalries fractured Rind’s unified Baluch state, it was nearly 200 years before the next significant Baluch tribe coalescence. Mir Ahmed Khan created the Kalat Confederacy in the 1660s.<sup>155</sup> Unlike Rind’s confederacy, the Kalat Confederacy endured, and eventually expanded. Mir Ahmed unified the Saravan and Jhalawan regions under his banner, which endured well past the end of his reign.<sup>156</sup> A successor of Mir Ahmed, Mir Naseer Khan Noori, further consolidated the power of the Baluch confederacy while expanding the territory which it could claim as its own sovereign land between 1749 and 1805.,<sup>157</sup> Naseer Khan’s reign expanded the Baluch territory to modern limits, and contained advanced institutions of governance including a two-house parliament, advanced irrigation systems, and a system of political power that gave tribal chiefs the preponderance of power.<sup>158</sup>

## **2. Clashes with Imperialism and First Signs of Insurgency**

In the beginning of the 19th century, the area now known as Baluchistan became strategically relevant to global powers. As Selig Harrison describes, the Kalat Confederacy, which could have been considered a fully sovereign kingdom or state, found the prospects of its sovereignty afoul of British strategic interests. Per Harrison, the demise of the Kalat confederacy, and dissection of its sovereign territory to a multitude of other states in the 1800s was executed by Great Britain to obtain advantageous leverage over Russia in a

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<sup>152</sup> Ahmed and Khan, 45.

<sup>153</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 10.

<sup>154</sup> Harrison, 10.

<sup>155</sup> Ahmed and Khan, “The History of Baloch and Balochistan,” 45.

<sup>156</sup> Ahmed and Khan, 45.

<sup>157</sup> Ahmed and Khan, 45–47.

<sup>158</sup> Ahmed and Khan, 45–47.

“Great Game” for dominant influence in South Asia.<sup>159</sup> According to Harrison’s analysis, Britain wanted to maintain Afghanistan as a “buffer state to shield their Indian empire from Russia.”<sup>160</sup> To do so required that the British-backed Indian Empire both acquire and maintain “unimpeded military dominance in the frontier region” of Afghanistan.<sup>161</sup> Unfortunately, Afghanistan and the Indian Empire’s frontiers intersected over the Kalat confederacy of Baluchistan, which made it a target for British conquest and influence.<sup>162</sup>

Neither the British and Qajar dynasty attempts to conquer Baluchistan, nor the Baluch’s fierce and violent resistance to these incursions were without precedent. Per Harrison, the Moghul Empire waged several campaigns in the 16th and 17th centuries to conquer the Baluch, all of which were defeated by temporary alliances between tribes.<sup>163</sup> Harrison also notes frequent Baluch repulsion of Persian and Afghan invasions.<sup>164</sup> In the early 1700s, Abdullah Khan, the fourth head of the Kalat Confederacy, checked Iranian ambitions by “tribute” payments designed to prevent Iranian incursions into Western Baluch territory.<sup>165</sup> In Nasir Khan’s reign, the Kalat confederacy stopped paying tribute to Persia after 1747, and then successfully fought off attempts by Ahmad Shah Durrani’s Afghan forces to conquer Baluch territory.<sup>166</sup>

As with previous foreign incursions, Baluch responses to British and Qajar dominion were far from submissive; Britain and Persia could at best claim tenuous control over Baluch territory, and they both had to continuously fight to maintain it. Dominion over the Baluch was neither a quick nor painless achievement. According to Harrison, it took four decades of “bloody battles” before the British finally were able to conquer the

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<sup>159</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 19.

<sup>160</sup> Harrison, 19.

<sup>161</sup> Harrison, 19.

<sup>162</sup> Harrison, 19.

<sup>163</sup> Harrison, 15.

<sup>164</sup> Harrison, 17.

<sup>165</sup> Harrison, 16.

<sup>166</sup> Harrison, 17.

tribes in 1876.<sup>167</sup> Subsequently, subjugation was only achieved by co-opting tribal chiefs, which was tantamount to converting Baluchistan into a semi-autonomous region where chiefs still “enjoyed virtually complete control of their tribal affairs.”<sup>168</sup> The Qajar dynasty was forced to resort to similar levels of bloodshed in the 19th and early 20th centuries to assert their authority over Western Balochistan. The entirety of Persian-Baluch relations, according to Nasser Dashti, is a history of “bloodshed” and “antipathy.”<sup>169</sup> An 1897 revolt led by the Baluch chieftain Hussain Khan effectively asserted control over a preponderance of Western Balochistan, and even brought a large Persian army to a stalemate.<sup>170</sup> Similar to the British experience, the Persians only succeeded in quelling Hussein Khan’s revolt by co-opting him, effectively making him the “ruler of the Baloch areas under Persian sovereignty.”<sup>171</sup>

British interference during this period is responsible for the differentiation between Iranian Baluch and Pakistani Baluch identities, as well as the first de facto contemporary Baluch State. Weary of Russian aggression, and seeking to maintain British-aligned control of Baluchistan, in 1871 Britain and Persia reached an agreement which saw official control of Baluch tribal territories divided between Great Britain, Afghanistan, and Persia.<sup>172</sup> The Persian territory, referred to as Western Balochistan, constituted nearly 50 percent of Baluch tribal lands.<sup>173</sup> This territorial division created a Persian Baluch territory separate from the rest of Baluchistan. This division, and the Qajar Dynasty’s subsequent loss of control created the first modern precedent of Baluch territory separate and sovereign from any other state. After Mir Bahram Khan succeeded his father as ruler of Western Baluchistan in 1907, he began to consolidate his power.<sup>174</sup> To contain a rising autonomous

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<sup>167</sup> Harrison, 19.

<sup>168</sup> Harrison, 20.

<sup>169</sup> Naseer Dashti, *The Baloch Conflict with Iran and Pakistan: Aspects of a National Liberation Struggle* (Bloomington, IN: Trafford Publishing, 2017), 48.

<sup>170</sup> Dashti, 46.

<sup>171</sup> Dashti, 46–47.

<sup>172</sup> Dashti, 43.

<sup>173</sup> Dashti, 43.

<sup>174</sup> Dashti, 47.

Baluch force, the Persian government sent its army to suppress Khan's forces in 1910.<sup>175</sup> The army failed, and according to Naseer Dashti "retreated without accomplishing its objective."<sup>176</sup> Following Persian retreat, Western Baluchistan was effectively left to govern itself, with Mir Bahram Khan as ruler. Mir Bahram Khan gained official recognition of his authority over Western Baluchistan from the British.<sup>177</sup> This autonomous Baluch territory, consolidated under Barakzai tribe leadership, persisted "for nearly three decades" until it was brought back under Iranian control in the early 20th century.<sup>178</sup>

### **3. Reza Shah and the Birth of Iranian Baluch Insurgency**

Once Reza Shah Pahlavi took over Iran in 1923, he sought to re-establish and consolidate centralized government authority, and in so doing embarked on a campaign which brought the Baluch tribes and territories under unprecedented levels of Persian control. Reza Shah Pahlavi executed this strategy nationwide through military campaigns designed to undo previous autonomy which some regions of Iran had gained throughout his predecessors' rule. In the early 1920s, the Pahlavi Dynasty as well as its predecessor, the Qajars, used superior military might to solidify Tehran's control in outlying provincial regions such as Khuzestan, Iranian Kurdistan, and Gilan.<sup>179</sup> In late 1927, the Shah regime then moved into Baluchistan, and using a technologically superior military, crushed armed resistance that had coalesced under the Baluch chieftain Dost Mohammed.<sup>180</sup> It took the Shah's forces almost an entire year to bring the Baluch territories fully under their control, and the resistance of the Baluch was reportedly so fierce that the Shah's army had to ultimately use "air power and artillery" to defeat Dost Mohammed's forces, which at the time was unprecedented in Iran.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> Dashti, 47.

<sup>176</sup> Dashti, 47.

<sup>177</sup> Dashti, 47–48.

<sup>178</sup> Dashti, 48.

<sup>179</sup> Dashti, 50–51.

<sup>180</sup> Dashti, 51–52.

<sup>181</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 17.

Where the British and Persian forces had allowed the Baluch to maintain significant autonomy, the Iranian state under Reza Shah Pahlavi systematically dismantled manifestations of Baluch sovereignty. British domain over Baluchistan was simply concerned with gaining unimpeded access to secure lines of communication and supply into Afghanistan. Though the British at times took action against the Baluch to secure this access, so long as the British access of the “frontier areas” between Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan remained unimpeded, they effectively allowed the Baluch to govern themselves as their leaders saw fit.<sup>182</sup> Harrison notes that British administrators deliberately abstained from imposing “the administrative machinery of the Raj into the Baluch areas.”<sup>183</sup> Iranian control, by contrast, made no provision for Baluch autonomy. During his reign as the Iranian head of state from 1923 to 1941, Reza Shah Pahlavi, according to Harrison, conducted wholesale “subjugation” of Baluch tribes, using an approach designed to “break the power” of traditional Baluch elites, first through militarily defeating tribes, then co-opting these tribes into Iranian regional governance through “carrot and stick techniques.”<sup>184</sup>

Following Reza Shah’s rise to Iranian state sovereign, the first true Baluch insurgency groups emerged. According to the United States Counterinsurgency Manual, insurgency is defined as “the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region.”<sup>185</sup> One cannot seize what they already have in their possession. Until Iran took over, as argued above, there could be little to no claim of Baluch insurgents, because the Baluch retained a preponderance of self-governance over their own territory. However, they lost their autonomy under the first Shah, and the degree to which they were subjugated is thus why this thesis considers the Shah Pahlavi period the first actual era of Baluch insurgents.

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<sup>182</sup> Harrison, 19–22

<sup>183</sup> Harrison, 22.

<sup>184</sup> Harrison, 22.

<sup>185</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency*, GL-5.



Baluch insurgents during Reza Shah's tenure were numerous, but they lacked the organizational structure and trans-tribal elements of later insurgencies. Harrison notes that throughout much of Reza Shah's reign, there is "little coordinated insurgent activity" in Sistan-Baluchistan.<sup>186</sup> Nevertheless, insurgent and rebel groups were numerous and active in the province. Per Harrison, Iranian and government military officials were constantly harassed by "scattered bands of rebellious tribesmen" who initiated repeated attacks against military and government installations and maintained caches of weaponry despite Iranian decree outlawing personal possession of firearms.<sup>187</sup>

The Shah's methodology for COIN once he had conquered and fully subjugated Baluchistan relied on presence of security forces and co-opting of local elites. As Harrison mentions, Iranian control over Baluchistan was largely guaranteed by a permanent, systemic, and exhaustive presence of the Iranian army and Gendarme.<sup>188</sup> These forces allowed Reza Shah to quickly and overwhelmingly neutralize frequent attacks by armed rebels, responding in kind with "intermittent punitive expeditions."<sup>189</sup> In southern areas of Baluchistan, where less nomadic, and more sedentary tribes of Baluch resided, military occupation was the most effective tool of the Shah's COIN, and Tehran was able to "completely displace" tribal elders and replace their influence with military and Gendarme rule.<sup>190</sup> In the north, where Baluch tribes were more nomadic in nature, Reza Shah's forces made Baluch tribal elites agents of Iran's authority. Harrison notes that the tribal Sardars throughout Baluch territory were effectively bribed into cooperation and compliance.<sup>191</sup> This bribery came in two forms. First, tribal chieftains received a direct salary from the Shah as agents of the state.<sup>192</sup> Second, tribal elites were awarded executor status for "the

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<sup>186</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 94.

<sup>187</sup> Harrison, 94–95.

<sup>188</sup> Harrison, 94.

<sup>189</sup> Harrison, 94.

<sup>190</sup> Harrison, 95.

<sup>191</sup> Harrison, 95.

<sup>192</sup> Harrison, 95.

influx of development resources from Tehran, which provided ample opportunities for lucrative rake-offs.”<sup>193</sup>

The Shah’s COIN operations were successful, especially when compared to the strength of Baluch insurgency from 2003 onward, post-1979 Revolution, and during the reign of Mohammed Reza Shah. From 1928 to the Shah’s deposition from the throne in 1941, there was no named Baluch insurgency, insurrection, or nationalist movement which has made its way into significant historical record. This achievement is one which no Iranian regime since has been able to replicate. The perceived effectiveness of his methods is also reflected in their utilization to quell insurgencies from 2003 onwards. For example, as discussed in Chapter V, the expanding influence and presence of the IRGC in Sistan-Baluchistan has played a large part in combatting insurgent groups over time. This increase in IRGC presence corresponds to the Shah’s heavy deployment of the army and Gendarme, which he used to contain budding insurgent elements. Just as the Shah co-opted Baluch elites into his own governance, Dudoignon notes that currently, IRGC and the current administration have co-opted a set of Deobandi religious elites he calls the “Sarbaz Nexus” in order to counter religious sectarian ideologies of Jundallah, Jaish ul-Adl and other insurgent groups.<sup>194</sup>

#### **4. Mohammed Reza Shah: Baluch-Iranian Insurgency Comes of Age**

Compared with his father, Mohammed Reza Shah’s control over Sistan-Baluchistan was marked by significant rises in Baluch violence, insurgency, and rebellion against Iranian control. Like his father, the reign of Mohammed Reza Shah in Sistan-Baluchistan remained characterized by the heavy, frequent appearance of local armed bandits and rebels harassing military and government officials.<sup>195</sup> There were also two major insurgencies in Sistan-Baluchistan during Mohammed Reza Shah’s tenure, which covered more than half his reign over Iran. Beginning in 1944, a landowning farmer named Dad Shah, along with a network of friends and family, led an armed rebellion against

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<sup>193</sup> Harrison, 95.

<sup>194</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*, 267–270.

<sup>195</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 94.

Iranian forces for nearly fifteen years.<sup>196</sup> His rebellion was all but crushed in 1958, when following the kidnapping and murder of three Americans by Dad Shah's forces, some of the tribal elites which had been supporting or tolerating his efforts effectively set up an ambush where Dad Shah was killed.<sup>197</sup> A second major insurgency followed from roughly 1968 to 1973, with a conglomerate of insurgent and rebel organizations coalescing into the Baluch Liberation Front.<sup>198</sup> Receiving training, arms and other forms of support from Iraq, at its zenith BLF had upwards of 500 militants, and conducted frequent operations inside Sistan-Baluchistan against the Shah's forces.<sup>199</sup> However, by 1973, Iranian forces had "decimated" The BLF, and the vast majority of the groups associated with the BLF banner negotiated a ceasefire with Mohammed Shah's forces.<sup>200</sup> Pockets of insurgency persisted after the ceasefire, but they were minimal, and according to Harrison achieved few, if any victories against the Iranian state, especially since the vast majority of the BLF concentrated their efforts on insurgency in Pakistani Balochistan following the peace agreement.<sup>201</sup>

Compared with his father, Mohammed Reza Shah's policies toward security and COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan were more aggressive, invasive, and repressive. Mohammed Reza Shah, seeing a growing Baluch nationalist movement in Pakistan, feared that nationalist fervor would spill across the border and foster insurgency in his own territory.<sup>202</sup> In response, he sought to repress significant elements of Baluch identity. The Shah made the mandatory language of all education in Sistan-Baluchistan Persian, and forbade the use of Baluchi.<sup>203</sup> The regime also criminalized the production, publication,

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<sup>196</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*, 104–105.

<sup>197</sup> Dudoignon 105; "Developments of the Quarter: Comment and Chronology," *Middle East Journal* 11, no. 3 (Summer 1957): 295, [www.jstor.org/stable/4322924](http://www.jstor.org/stable/4322924).

<sup>198</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 112.

<sup>199</sup> Harrison, 107; "Balochistan Liberation Front," Mapping Militant Organizations, August 15, 2015, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/457#note1>.

<sup>200</sup> Mapping Militant Organizations.

<sup>201</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 107; Mapping Militant Organizations.

<sup>202</sup> Harrison, 103–107.

<sup>203</sup> Harrison, 95.

or possession of any document written in Baluchi, and outlawed the wearing of traditional Baluch clothing in public.<sup>204</sup> Mohammed Shah's regime further sought to minimize the political threat of the Baluch through what Harrison characterizes as "political gerrymandering," merging Sistan and Baluchistan into a single province, undercounting the Baluch population in censuses, and assigning other prominent Baluch tribal areas to the provinces of Kerman and Khorasan.<sup>205</sup>

The creation of SAVAK and its subsequent activity in Sistan-Baluchistan added further unprecedented repression against the Iranian Baluch. Created in 1957, the State Security and National Intelligence Organization, better known as SAVAK was the Iranian internal security service whose express purpose was to monitor and dismantle internal resistance to the Shah's authority.<sup>206</sup> SAVAK was "notorious" throughout Iran for its frequent use of "jailings, beatings, and torture."<sup>207</sup> As with the rest of Iran, SAVAK's activities in Sistan-Baluchistan used a heavy hand which made dissent, much less insurgency, a difficult and costly prospect. Leaders of Baluch nationalist groups and other prominent anti-Iran Baluch constantly found themselves on the run. As Harrison recounts, "relentless" SAVAK pursuit of suspected insurgents placed most insurgents in a constant state of flight, which effectively cut them off with consolidating or increasing levels of popular support.<sup>208</sup> The majority of BLF leaders were either killed or fled Iranian territory to avoid SAVAK's grasp.<sup>209</sup> Moreover, Harrison's research indicates there was "pervasive" fear among the Baluch of SAVAK.<sup>210</sup> In the interviews he conducted with Baluch in 1978, he noted that "terror-stricken silence and a degree of alarm" were ubiquitous whenever he broached subjects of insurgency or independence.<sup>211</sup>

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<sup>204</sup> Harrison, 95

<sup>205</sup> Harrison, 96.

<sup>206</sup> Ahmed S. Hashim, "The Iranian Military in Politics, Revolution, and War, Part Two," *Middle East Policy* 19, no. 3 (Fall, 2012): 67, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4967.2012.00548.x>.

<sup>207</sup> Hashim, 67.

<sup>208</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 103.

<sup>209</sup> Harrison, 108.

<sup>210</sup> Harrison, 110–111.

<sup>211</sup> Harrison, 110–111.

Though the policies of Mohammed Reza Shah repressed and contained Baluch uprisings, the cost of maintaining control was an erosion of any prospect of popular support for the regime. Whether from causation or correlation, Mohammed Reza Shah's repressive policies coincided with larger, more organized, and better-connected insurgent movements than Reza Shah experienced during his tenure. Harrison argues that Mohammed Reza Shah's efforts, though brutal, repressive and reprehensible, did succeed in driving Baluch nationalism and insurgency "underground."<sup>212</sup> Nevertheless, these methods of repression failed to defeat insurgency outright. Dudoignon argues that Mohammed Shah's use of repression in COIN created a feedback loop, one where his only recourse for maintaining order and discipline in Sistan-Baluchistan was an ever-increasing reliance of the tactics and methods of SAVAK.<sup>213</sup> As Harrison dictates, the Shah's efforts to soften repression and rebuild positive relationships with Baluch populations largely failed because of a shared collective memory of his regime's repression.<sup>214</sup> Instead, Harrison argues, the repressive COIN approach created an irreparable situation where counterinsurgents could only continue the status quo through a constant cycle of heavy-handed surveillance and punishment, which over time "prepared the ground" among the Iranian Baluch tribes for "rapid nationalist resurgence" at the first sign of loss or erosion of Iranian control.<sup>215</sup>

## **5. Islamic Revolution Era (1979-2003)**

With the overthrow of Mohammed Reza Shah and subsequent establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, there was initially positive outlooks that the Baluch would regain significant rights and autonomies under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini. Regionally, when the Shah's government fell, so did the heavy security and surveillance presence in Baluchistan, which allowed the Baluch, as Harrison notes, "for the first time in half a century," to engage in political activity, identity expression and cultural celebration.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>212</sup> Harrison, 103–111.

<sup>213</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*, 106.

<sup>214</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 108–109.

<sup>215</sup> Harrison, 112.

<sup>216</sup> Harrison, 112.

This vacuum of governance paved the way for an unprecedented level of self-representation and determination for the Baluch in Sistan-Baluchistan. Baluch insurgent groups began to gain strength and managed to attain smaller victories over the remnants of the Shah's government. The Iranian Baluch expressly began to "reassert their own power" by ousting Persian and other government officials from their offices.<sup>217</sup> There are frequent references from 1979 to 1981 of armed Baluch groups forcibly disarming and disbanding the remaining Army and Gendarme units in the province.<sup>218</sup> The Baluch pressured the local provisional governor to appoint Baluch to positions of authority within the government, to include the Governor General.<sup>219</sup> Finally, the prospects for inclusion of the Baluch as equal citizens under Iranian law seemed high. Shortly after Khomeini assumed power, leaders of the Islamic Unity Party, at the time considered to be "the principal spokesman for Baluch interests," met with Khomeini to discuss Baluch and Sunni inclusion in the new state.<sup>220</sup> Reportedly, the IUP delegation received verbal promises from Khomeini that the Baluch, via the IUP would be able to choose their own people for positions of authority in Sistan-Baluchistan, and that Sunnis and Shiites would be treated "on a par."<sup>221</sup>

This positive outlook, however, was short-lived, and conditions underpinning the grievances which function as critical foundation for Baluch insurgency soon returned. Despite Khomeini's assurances, the constitution for Islamic Republic contained no provision for Sunni equality, nor did it provide any recourse for ethnic Baluch to determine who would govern Sistan-Baluchistan.<sup>222</sup> Instead, Baluch rights and autonomy under the constitution echoed the reigns of the Shahs. Persian remained the mandatory language of education and government affairs, Baluch publications remained heavily restricted, and all provisional government decisions, to include both those of policy and appointment, were

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<sup>217</sup> Taheri, *Baloch in Post Islamic Revolution Iran*, 251–253.

<sup>218</sup> Taheri, 251–253

<sup>219</sup> Taheri, 251–253.

<sup>220</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 113.

<sup>221</sup> Harrison, 115.

<sup>222</sup> Taheri, *Baloch in Post Islamic Revolution Iran*, 254–255.

subject to Tehran's "veto."<sup>223</sup> Outrage and resentment over these issues quickly exploded into violence. By January 1980, riots and violent clashes between ethnic Baluch and the Ayatollah Khomeini-loyalist Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) were a frequent occurrence in Sistan-Baluchistan.<sup>224</sup> Baluch rioters burned ballot boxes, sacked the Governor-General's compound and took him hostage.<sup>225</sup> In total, violence between the IRGC and locals killed 24 and injured 80 more, and it was only after Tehran had declared a state of emergency, deployed armored military divisions to urban areas, and flooded the province with IRGC patrols that violence finally subsided.<sup>226</sup> The period of lighter military supervision and Baluch self-autonomy was over, and in its place emerged a heavy military and security-driven governance which mirrored Mohammed Reza Shah's handling of Sistan-Baluchistan.

The unrest from constitutional exclusion gave way to the first Baluch insurgencies the Islamic Republic faced. The largest organization was the Baluchistan People's Democratic Organization [BPDO].<sup>227</sup> Comprised largely of disaffected IUP membership, the BPDO was reportedly behind the preponderance of the riots, protests, and attacks across Sistan-Baluchistan and the general unrest in December 1979.<sup>228</sup> The BPDO continued such attacks, with the group allegedly inciting riots, protests, and daily attacks on the IRGC and other government forces well into 1980.<sup>229</sup> In addition, several other large Baluch insurgent groups began to act against the Iranian government following the 1979 riots. Remnants of the BLF, active mostly during Mohammed Reza Shah's reign, coalesced and began to attack the IRGC, while new groups, such as the Baluch Pesh Merga and Vahdat Baluch conducted insurgent activity against Iranian state targets.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 115.

<sup>224</sup> Harrison, 116.

<sup>225</sup> Harrison, 116.

<sup>226</sup> Harrison, 116.

<sup>227</sup> Taheri, *Baloch in Post Islamic Revolution Iran*, 266.

<sup>228</sup> Taheri, 266.

<sup>229</sup> Taheri, 266.

<sup>230</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 118–119.

From 1980 onward, the Islamic Republic pursued a COIN approach that bears striking similarity to that of Mohammed Reza Shah. SAVAK, mainly seen as a tool of the Shah's repression, was dismantled with the deposition of the Shah. However, the IRGC almost immediately took SAVAK's place, and "assumed primary responsibility for the internal security functions of the old SAVAK organization."<sup>231</sup> Concerning matters in Sistan-Baluchistan, it appears that the Islamic Republic has assumed near-identical policies when compared with those of its predecessor. Though it temporarily in 1979 allowed for Baluch self-determination and permitted Baluch to occupy high offices in the provincial government, these allowances were reversed within six months, and Persians have occupied these positions ever since that time.<sup>232</sup> Subsequently, following the 1979 unrest, Tehran banned all Baluch publications outright, and criminalized groups which support Baluch autonomy or nationalism inside Iran.<sup>233</sup>

At a tactical and operational level, Iran's approach toward insurgent groups appears nearly indistinguishable from that of SAVAK. SAVAK pursued policies of aggressive persecution against anyone involved with the BLF. Against the BPDO and other insurgent groups, the IRGC has the same approach. Between December 1979 and 1983, the IRGC imprisoned an estimated 4000 Baluch on suspicion of association with separatist and insurgent movements, with another 3000 fleeing Iranian territory for safe haven Pakistan and elsewhere.<sup>234</sup> Executions of dissenters and insurgents, according to Taheri, have also been frequent.<sup>235</sup> Finally, to curb lawlessness, the Islamic Republic has embarked on a continuous expansion of military installations in Sistan-Baluchistan, going as far as to install military bases on the main highways, costing "billions of rials" to ensure that the security and military apparatuses can be felt throughout the entire region.<sup>236</sup>

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<sup>231</sup> Carl Anthony Wege, "Iranian Intelligence Organizations," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 10, no.3 (spring 1997): 288, DOI: 10.1080/08850609708435351.

<sup>232</sup> Taheri, *Baloch in Post Islamic Revolution Iran*, 115.

<sup>233</sup> Taheri, 119.

<sup>234</sup> Taheri, 272.

<sup>235</sup> Taheri, 272.

<sup>236</sup> Taheri, 275.



Overall, the Islamic Republic’s COIN approach from 1979 to 2003 appears mostly successful at containing, if not marginalizing Baluch insurgency inside Iran’s borders. There are significant, legitimate concerns that the Iranian state has and continues to commit human rights abuses and outright atrocities against the Iranian Baluch in the names of COIN and security. Despite these concerns, and a high level of underlying grievance between the Baluch and the Persian-dominated government, insurgent movements from 1979 to 2003 failed to achieve any significant support of victory against the Iranian state. The most these groups have been able to achieve, at best is what Harrison describes as trying to “make it hot” for Tehran to continue governance in Sistan-Baluchistan.<sup>237</sup> However as Ahmad Reza Taheri notes, in reality, until 2003 insurgent groups failed to gain any semblance of autonomy or independence from Tehran, and did not achieve any significant improvement for Baluch rights or conditions during their tenure.<sup>238</sup>

## **B. PROFILE OF MODERN IRANIAN COIN: AGENCIES, CAPABILITIES, AND THEIR INTERACTIONS**

Before evaluating the Iranian approach to Jundallah and subsequent insurgent organizations, it is important to understand the critical arms of Iranian authority by which the state has responded to Baluch insurgency from 2003 onwards. Four main security organizations play a role in Iran’s COIN operations in Sistan-Baluchistan. These four organizations, in ascending order of involvement and capabilities are: the conventional military (Artesh), the Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), Iran’s Law Enforcement Force (NAJA), and finally the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).

### **1. Artesh**

The first security organization active in Iranian COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan is the Iranian conventional military, better known as the Artesh.<sup>239</sup> The Artesh is the largest

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<sup>237</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 118.

<sup>238</sup> Taheri, *Baloch in Post Islamic Revolution Iran*, 268–273.

<sup>239</sup> Tabatabai, “Other Side of the Iranian Coin,” 192.

military force in Iran, with an estimated 400,000 personnel in 2019.<sup>240</sup> However, of the four organizations listed, the Artesh is the organization which is least equipped to deal with insurgent threats. A conventional military force, the Artesh is primarily oriented toward territorial defense, and repulsion of invaders.<sup>241</sup> As a result, it is the force with the least effective organization to combat insurgency. Per Hossein Aryan, the 1979 Artesh was largely the surviving “remnant of the Shah’s Military.”<sup>242</sup> Following the 1979 revolution, the Artesh’s leadership and areas of expertise suffered significant diminishment, as the organization was “ravaged, intimidated, and gutted to the core in a series of purges.”<sup>243</sup> Although the Artesh is now a fully trusted and empowered military in the Islamic Republic, it remains second in standing to the IRGC. This applies both to funding and operational influence. The Artesh’s budget pales in comparison to the IRGC and other forces, and the Artesh’s equipment and technology is described as “obsolescent and low-quality” when compared with that at the disposal of other forces.<sup>244</sup>

## **2. The Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS)**

As its name suggests, the MOIS’s primary contribution to Iranian COIN against Baluch insurgency has been in the area of intelligence and surveillance. According to the Iranian constitution, MOIS is to act as the primary gatherer and producer of both internal and external intelligence for Iran, and use this intelligence in order to identify and respond to “conspiracy, subversion, espionage, sabotage, and sedition.”<sup>245</sup> As a 2012 Library of Congress report notes, Iranian Baluch are subject to constant surveillance by the MOIS due to concerns over separatism and insurgency.<sup>246</sup> Through open source monitoring,

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<sup>240</sup> United States Institute of Peace, “Iran’s Military Might,” Iran Primer, July 8, 2019, <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2019/jul/03/irans-military-might>.

<sup>241</sup> United States Institute of Peace.

<sup>242</sup> Aryan, “The Artesh.”

<sup>243</sup> Aryan.

<sup>244</sup> United States Institute of Peace, “Iran’s Military Might.”

<sup>245</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, *Iran’s Ministry of Intelligence and Security: A Profile* (Washington, DC: Federal Research Division, December 2012): 3, <https://fas.org/irp/world/iran/mois-loc.pdf>.

<sup>246</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, 9.

surveillance, informants, undercover agents, and other collection methods, MOIS's primary function with respect to Baluch insurgencies has been to build bodies of information which profile the character, nature and intent of insurgent groups like Jundallah.<sup>247</sup> MOIS is also suspected of heavily tracking the movements and patterns of key membership of Baluch insurgent groups.<sup>248</sup>

A second significant contribution that the MOIS brings to Iranian COIN is information operations, particularly concerned with persuasion of narratives. The largest branch of the MOIS is reportedly its Department of Disinformation.<sup>249</sup> According to U.S. congressional research, this department is effectively able to "manipulate the media" inside of Iran to disseminate information designed to satisfy state interests and narratives.<sup>250</sup> Furthermore, research indicates that the MOIS influences Iranian efforts to control and suppress media sources it deems counter-productive to state interests.<sup>251</sup> In addition to shaping the overall narrative through information released on insurgent and counterinsurgent activities, MOIS control of information and its effect on narratives can produce windfalls in psychological warfare. One example of this control is the MOIS narrative developed around the capture of Jundallah leader Abdolmalek Rigi in late 2010, where the MOIS narrative of the operation, as well as the purported broadcast of Rigi's admission of U.S. involvement in Jundallah was heavily covered by internal and external Iranian media sources.<sup>252</sup>

Though the MOIS has at times conducted significant, critical operations for COIN the majority of their sustained capability lies as a supportive function. At times, the MOIS has initiated capture and kill missions against Baluch dissidents. Preceding the purported MOIS apprehension of Abdolmalek Rigi, U.S. congressional reports confirm that the

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<sup>247</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, 9.

<sup>248</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, 9.

<sup>249</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, 35.

<sup>250</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, 31.

<sup>251</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, 31.

<sup>252</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, 47.

MOIS was behind assassinations of at least 4 prominent Baluch dissidents in the 1990s.<sup>253</sup> Overall, however, the MOIS lacks the personnel required to maintain the physical presence necessary for sustained COIN operations. Of the four discussed, MOIS is the only organization which does not have a significant conscription force, and instead ends up rejecting two thirds of its applicants.<sup>254</sup> MOIS is also the smallest force discussed, with as few as 30,000 personnel.<sup>255</sup> As a result, with the exception of a few aberrations, MOIS's primary, critical contributions to Iranian COIN remain in the realms of information, surveillance and intelligence.

### **3. Law Enforcement Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran (NAJA)**

Another organization which has been prominent with respect to Iranian COIN against the Baluch has been the Law Enforcement Force of the Islamic Republic of Iran, better known as NAJA.<sup>256</sup> As a component of Interior Ministry, NAJA is the conventional national police force, and functions as an umbrella organization which covers the multitude of what one would expect from normal law enforcement. Under its umbrella are suborganizations designated to combat specific crime and enforce sections of law, to include criminal intelligence, antiterrorism, metropolitan police forces, and counter drug-organizations.<sup>257</sup> The NAJA is estimated to have 300,000 personnel nationwide, approximately half of which are conscripts fulfilling a mandatory two years of service.<sup>258</sup> In addition, due to its wide range of missions, and a mix of professional and conscript forces, NAJA's level of expertise, both in armed combat as well as functional components of COIN such as counterterror or security planning are widely unpredictable. While there are forces who are specially trained, such as NOPO, who owns counterterror and hostage

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<sup>253</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, 50–51.

<sup>254</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, 24.

<sup>255</sup> U.S. Library of Congress, 24.

<sup>256</sup> Esfandiary and Tabatabai, "A Comparative Study of U.S. and Iranian Counter-ISIS Strategies," 460.

<sup>257</sup> Esfandiary and Tabatabai, 460.

<sup>258</sup> Golkar, "Evolution of Iran's Police Forces," 4.

rescue missions on a national level, there are also local conscripts who receive little to no training whatsoever.<sup>259</sup>

Increasingly, NAJA has become an organization which executes, supports, and augments the functions and goals of the IRGC. Among the organizations involved in COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan, NAJA is the youngest, having only gained an official national charter in 1991.<sup>260</sup> Increasingly, former prominent members of the IRGC and Basij leadership have been appointed to key NAJA leadership positions. An IRGC veteran, General Reza Seifolahi, became NAJA's chief executive in 1992, and since then the organization has increasingly seen NAJA's upper and middle tier leadership dominated by former IRGC personnel.<sup>261</sup> Entry-level recruitment directly from the membership of the Basij has increasingly made influence of the Revolutionary Guards equally pervasive throughout the lower ranks.<sup>262</sup> As Said Golkar presents, this dominance by Revolutionary Guard leadership in NAJA has effectively created a secondary organization to directly carry out the will of Ayatollah Khamenei, the first being the IRGC.<sup>263</sup>

NAJA has successfully been able to stand on its own to counter both insurgent and other dissent groups inside of Iran. NAJA has been increasing its presence throughout Iran, more than doubling the number of police stations between 2000 and 2003.<sup>264</sup> NAJA forces have also increasingly been used as a force to counter and suppress government opposition throughout the nation, particularly in urban settings. NAJA forces were employed by the Iranian state to suppress student-led anti-government protests and riots during 1999 and 2003, and to contain similar protests from professional organizations between 2001 and 2005.<sup>265</sup> Furthermore, following the Green Movement protests in 2009, NAJA expanded

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<sup>259</sup> Golkar, 5.

<sup>260</sup> Golkar, 2.

<sup>261</sup> Golkar, 3.

<sup>262</sup> Golkar, 3.

<sup>263</sup> Golkar, 3.

<sup>264</sup> Golkar, 3.

<sup>265</sup> Golkar, 3–4.

technologically, focused on modernizing intelligence and cyberwarfare capabilities.<sup>266</sup> Increasingly, NAJA continues to be employed toward containing and quelling internal dissent, as has been the case with their heavy involvement in suppression of the massive 2009 and 2010 protests across Iran.<sup>267</sup> NAJA also seems able to solve threats from internal dissent without assistance; per Golkar, the 2017-2018 protests were handled by NAJA almost exclusively, with little to no assistance from Revolutionary Guards, a marked change from the 1995 protests that NAJA was all but helpless to contain.<sup>268</sup>

Importantly, the Iranian Border Guard Force falls under NAJA jurisdiction.<sup>269</sup> Border Guards have been the insurgent's most frequently targeted authority figures, and their assigned jurisdictions along border outposts as well as at official Iran-Pakistan border crossings have often made them the front line first responders against insurgent activity. In terms of personnel and training, the Border Guards have likely borne greater loss and damage inflicted due to the inherent nature of their forces. As Golkar notes, NAJA force training and proficiency tends to be best in urban areas which are located far from the frontier.<sup>270</sup> By contrast, more rural areas especially those with forces consist largely of conscripts, often suffer from "unprofessionalism."<sup>271</sup> Because of the geography and population composition of Sistan-Baluchistan, the forces on the border are often the less well-equipped to deal with insurgents, particularly because they are often conscripts with little to no training, and in remote areas with slower response times for support. The Iranian state in recent years has attempted to compensate for this shortfall in training and personnel talent through improvement of infrastructure and electronic surveillance as well as increased budgetary allowances for the Border Guards, but their vulnerability to attack

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<sup>266</sup> Golkar, 3–4.

<sup>267</sup> Golkar, 7.

<sup>268</sup> Golkar, 7–8.

<sup>269</sup> Esfandiari and Tabatabai, "A Comparative Study of U.S. and Iranian Counter-ISIS Strategies," 460.

<sup>270</sup> Golkar, "The Evolution of Iran's Police Forces," 8.

<sup>271</sup> Golkar, 8.

remains and thus they have been a frequent point of focus for insurgent attacks throughout the period this thesis studies.<sup>272</sup>

#### 4. The Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC)

The IRGC constitutes the most powerful, and in most considerations, most formidable COIN force involved in the Sistan-Baluchistan. Per Afshon Ostovar, the IRGC's influence and role in Iran transcends that of a simple government or military organization, but must be seen as powerful force in the "political, economic, strategic and sociocultural arena."<sup>273</sup> Unlike the other organizations, the IRGC is not solely concerned with defending Iran, but instead ensuring the continued survival and prosperity of the nation's "theocratic system."<sup>274</sup> Official IRGC numbers are estimated around 125,000 total personnel.<sup>275</sup> However, that estimate discounts the Basij, the "millions" strong, IRGC-controlled volunteer organization inside Iran.<sup>276</sup> The IRGC control and use of the Basij bears significant weight in matters of COIN and security, particularly since the IRGC has utilized the Basij during crises to maintain security and suppress dissent activities, as they did during the Green Movement protests in 2009.<sup>277</sup> Based on news reporting, it is evident that the IRGC has also mobilized and employed the Basij as an augmentation of their own efforts both against Jundallah as well as its successor groups.<sup>278</sup>

A large part of the IRGC's power as a COIN apparatus comes from its self-contained absolute advantages in capabilities; the IRGC can unilaterally perform the functions and services provided by other Iranian organizations with little to no support.

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<sup>272</sup> "Iran to Modernize Border Surveillance Technology," BBC Monitoring Middle East, Apr 16, 2014, ProQuest; "Over 70m Dollars Allocated to Iranian Border Guard Command," BBC Monitoring Central Asia, Jul 27, 2011, ProQuest.

<sup>273</sup> Afshon Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam: Religion, Politics, and Iran's Revolutionary Guards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 5.

<sup>274</sup> Ostovar, 5.

<sup>275</sup> United States Institute of Peace, "Iran's Military Might."

<sup>276</sup> Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 5–6.

<sup>277</sup> Ostovar, 6.

<sup>278</sup> "Iran Police Say Four Jondollah Rebels Killed in 4 June Operation," ISNA, June 7, 2012, NewsBank; "Iranian Forces Kill 10 Terrorists in East, West," *Iran Daily*, June 13, 2016, NewsBank.

The IRGC has had its own, free-standing intelligence service since 1997, which has steadily grown to the extent that by 2009 IRGC intelligence functions either equaled or surpassed that of the MOIS in nearly every qualitative and quantitative method of evaluation.<sup>279</sup> As discussed above, the IRGC effectively controls NAJA, but separate from them, per Afshon Ostovar, could, and for that matter does mobilize the Basij to perform parallel functions.<sup>280</sup> Finally, the IRGC dwarfs the Artesh in considerations of access to equipment and technology, funding, and general talent within its ranks.<sup>281</sup>

The IRGC has unparalleled access to nonconventional resources relevant to COIN that no other organization can truly compete with. The IRGC has significant sway and access to swarths of nearly every industrial “sector” inside of Iran, and has nearly boundless revenue streams independent of government oversight and budgetary concerns.<sup>282</sup> The IRGC’s special political standing and reputation relative to Ayatollah Khomeini further places it in a unique position in that it has a direct line of communication to the absolute arbiter for all Iranian affairs.<sup>283</sup> As will be discussed in depth in Chapter V, the cocktail of the IRGC’s advantages, if utilized properly, have the potential to significantly alter a COIN operation to a government’s benefit.

### **C. GENERAL COIN TRENDS: HOW IRAN ASSERTS ITSELF AGAINST DISSIDENTS**

The Baluch insurgency is one among many internal challenges which Iran faces inside of its own territory. At least twice in the last two decades, Iran has been forced to contend with general nationwide unrest and antipathy against the government. From 2009 to 2010, there was an upsurge in general protests, rioting and unrest across Iran amid

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<sup>279</sup> Banerjea, “Revolutionary Intelligence,” 93–97.

<sup>280</sup> Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 6.

<sup>281</sup> Ali Alfoneh, “Eternal Rivals? The Artesh and the IRGC,” Middle East Institute, November 15, 2011, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/eternal-rivals-artesh-and-irgc>.

<sup>282</sup> Frederic Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran: Assessing the Domestic Roles of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009), 55; M. Mahtab Alam Rizvi, “Evaluating the Political and Economic Role of the IRGC,” *Strategic Analysis* 36, no. 4 (July 2012): 590, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2012.689528>.

<sup>283</sup> Rizvi, 590–592.



allegations of election result illegitimacy.<sup>284</sup> More recently, nationwide protests against the government have occurred in 2017, 2019, and 2020.<sup>285</sup> The Baluch also cannot claim that they are the sole ethnic or territorial-based opposition group seeking to fight the Iranian government. In its Northwestern territories, the Iranian government frequently battles with Kurdish separatist and insurgent groups.<sup>286</sup> In the Southwest, Iranian forces have struggled against ethnically Arab separatists in Khuzestan.<sup>287</sup> Finally, Iran has also been targeted by Islamic fundamental terror groups, such as ISIS, who mirror the same Sunni-Shia sectarian dynamics frequently espoused by Baluch insurgents.<sup>288</sup>

Since Baluch Insurgency in Sistan-Baluchistan represents just one of many opposition and insurgent movements that Iran faces, it is therefore possible, as well as relevant to discuss enduring themes and patterns in Iran's response to insurgent, opposition, and separatist groups nationwide. For consideration of Iranian COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan, there are three enduring, relevant patterns prevalent throughout Iran's response to internal threats, discussed in this section.

### **1. No Distinction between Terrorism and Insurgency**

Reviewing Iran's responses to armed and violent opposition groups, it is evident that state apparatuses rarely, if ever, distinguishes terrorism from insurgency. Throughout the Islamic Republic's history, it has experienced significant clashes between government and militant forces, and the nature and composition of these groups has led to them widely being labeled as "insurgents" vice terrorists by the outside world. For example, in Iran's

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<sup>284</sup> Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "Iran Opposition Green Movement Calls For Renewed Street Protests," *Guardian*, February 8, 2011, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2011/feb/08/iran-opposition-green-movement-tehran-protest>.

<sup>285</sup> Amir Azimi, "Why Iran Plane Disasters Protests Mark Most Serious Test Yet," *BBC News*, January 18, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-51147191>.

<sup>286</sup> Paul Bucala and Shayan Enferadi, "Iran's Kurdish Insurgency," *Critical Threats*, September 26, 2016, <https://www.criticalthreats.org/analysis/irans-kurdish-insurgency>.

<sup>287</sup> Adil Alsalmi, "Liberation of Ahwaz Movement Leader: The Deceive Storm Restored Faith to our Hearts," *Asharq Al Awsat*, March 20, 2016, <https://eng-archive.aawsat.com/adil-alsalmi/news-middle-east/liberation-of-ahwaz-movement-leader-the-deceive-strom-restored-faith-to-our-hearts>.

<sup>288</sup> Pariza Hafezi, "Iran Attackers Fought for Islamic State in Syria, Iraq: Ministry," *Reuters*, June 8, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-security-idUSKBN18Z1H2>.

northern provinces, there has been frequent clashes between government forces and Kurdish separatists, consisting of organizations such as the Democratic Party of Iranian Kurdistan (PDKI), and the Iran-Kurdistan Free Life Party (PJAK), and these groups have often been labeled by non-Iranian analysts as “insurgents.”<sup>289</sup> Similarly, in 2009 the Brookings Institute labeled the Islamic-Marxist group Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MEK) as an “insurgency” organization which if supported by the U.S. might undermine Iran’s rule of law.<sup>290</sup> As Ariane Tabatabai discusses, these same groups are frequently labeled inside of Iran as “terrorist” vice insurgent organizations.<sup>291</sup> Per Tabatabai, Iran’s labeling of these groups as terrorists is the norm, not the exception, as Iran liberally applies the terrorist label to both armed dissidents and separatist groups as a means “to neutralize” or otherwise portray groups which it sees as threatening to its own advantages.<sup>292</sup>

Iran’s reticence to distinguish between insurgent and terrorist is understandable, since acknowledgement of a domestic insurgency could be construed as an admission of ineptitude and inflation of insurgent reputation. As Mark Stewart and John Mueller noted in 2009, the labels of insurgent and terrorist violence lie on the same spectrum, with the difference between their designations being based on frequency and severity of action.<sup>293</sup> Acts of violence by militants are generally considered to be terrorism until they reach a sufficient threshold of becoming “sustained and extensive in an area,” after which they are labeled as insurgency.<sup>294</sup> Terrorism carries with it an inherent association of being “the weapon of the weak,” because it poses no actual threat to state control, and instead can only intermittently “inflict damage.”<sup>295</sup> By contrast, attacks by those labeled as insurgents

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<sup>289</sup> Bucala and Enferadi, “Iran’s Kurdish Insurgency.”

<sup>290</sup> Kenneth Pollack et al., *Which Path to Persia? Options for a New American Strategy Toward Iran*, Analysis Paper Number 20, June 2009 (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, June 2009), 113, [https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/06\\_iran\\_strategy.pdf](https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/06_iran_strategy.pdf)

<sup>291</sup> Tabatabai, “Other Side of the Iranian Coin,” 184, 197.

<sup>292</sup> Tabatabai, 183.

<sup>293</sup> John Mueller and Mark Stewart, “Conflating Terrorism and Insurgency,” *Lawfare*, February 28, 2016, <https://www.lawfareblog.com/conflating-terrorism-and-insurgency>.

<sup>294</sup> Mueller and Stewart.

<sup>295</sup> Mueller and Stewart.

are regarded as a “harbinger” of impending civil conflict which either challenges or deposes state authority in a given territory.<sup>296</sup> With this consideration, it is not surprising that one of the trademarks of Iranian COIN is the liberal labeling of potential insurgent groups as terrorists.

## **2. Ascription of Foreign Influence**

As part of its default response to opposition of any significance, insurgent, terrorist, or otherwise, Iran will typically accuse opposition groups of having links to the United States or other foreign adversaries to discredit the organization. According to Maïke Warnaar, the Islamic Republic’s rise and continued survival is continuously framed in Iranian narratives as “resistance” and defiance of foreign powers, who for centuries have interfered with and attempted to control Iranian affairs.<sup>297</sup> As part of this narrative, Iran has frequently accused any organized internal dissent of either being manipulated or directly supported by Western powers, who they portray as using these groups to reverse the Islamic Republic’s progress and reestablish Western influence.<sup>298</sup> According to Warnaar, the greater the threat an opposition movement poses to the Iranian status quo, the greater the effort will be to associate that opposition movement with Western influence. Such was the case during the nationwide unrest in the aftermath of the 2009 elections, when the Iranian state launched an exhaustive narrative which sought to dismiss nationwide unrest as simply a “product of Western interference.”<sup>299</sup> As Daniel Byman notes, this discreditation by association tactic is commonly used against more violent acts of opposition, to include acts of terrorism and insurgency.<sup>300</sup> As an example, in response to a terrorist attack which killed 25 people in the Southwestern Iranian city of Ahvaz in 2018, President Rouhani’s rhetoric included accusations that the terrorist group who committed

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<sup>296</sup> Mueller and Stewart.

<sup>297</sup> Maïke Warnaar, “So Many Similarities: Linking Domestic Dissent to Foreign Threat in Iran” (working paper, Knowledge Program Civil Society in West Asia, March 2011), 8, <https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/bitstream/handle/1887/32220/WP%2020%20Warnaar.pdf?sequence=1>.

<sup>298</sup> Warnaar, 7–10.

<sup>299</sup> Warnaar, 1.

<sup>300</sup> Daniel L. Byman “Iran’s Terrorism Problem,” The Brookings Institution, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/markaz/2013/11/21/irans-terrorism-problem/>.

the attack was supported by the United States.<sup>301</sup> In addition to U.S. associations, the Iranian state has attempted to discredit groups by associating them with other perceived foreign enemies, to include Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the U.A.E.<sup>302</sup>

### **3. Mass Arrest and Law Enforcement Action Relative to Dissent**

Against most dissidents and opposition movements Iran will utilize apprehensions, arrests, imprisonments, and public executions as a means of asserting its own authority. Mass arrests, especially in anticipation of or responding to widespread unrest are common in Iran. During the 2009 protests, Iran admitted arresting at least 4,000 people, and during widespread protests in 2018 the Iranian state arrested at least 3,700 more protestors.<sup>303</sup> Mass arrest is particularly common during areas of heightened tension in Iran's frontier, particularly in areas containing underlying ethnic or sectarian tensions between Iran's Shiite Persian majority and minority groups. For example, in Khuzestan, where there have been previous insurgencies, uprisings, and separatist movements, there are frequent reports of mass arrests, executions, and various other police action, often without clear-cut evidence that those arrested were responsible for a specific act of violence or crime.<sup>304</sup> This response of swift law enforcement is also seen against overtly militant and violent groups. Following the Islamic State's June 2017 terror attack in Tehran, the Iranian government announced numerous raids, arrests, and killings of purported terrorists, some directly linked with the attack while others had no such clear-cut causality.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>301</sup> Kaamil Ahmed, "Iran's Opposition and Foreign Links: What's the Reality?," Middle East Eye, September 25, 2018, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/irans-opposition-and-foreign-links-whats-reality>.

<sup>302</sup> Ahmed.

<sup>303</sup> John Gambrell, "Iran Lawmaker Says some 3,700 Arrested Amid Protests, Unrest," KSL, January 9, 2018, <https://www.ksl.com/article/46233237/iran-lawmaker-says-3700-arrested-in-days-of-protest-unrest>.

<sup>304</sup> Bozorgmehr Sharafedin, "In Southern Province, Arabs Report, Crackdown as Regional Tension Simmers," Reuters, May 3, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-iran-rights-arrests/in-southern-province-irans-arabs-report-crackdown-as-regional-tension-simmers-idUSKBN1I41I5>; "Iranian Security Committed Field Executions Against Ahwazi Protesters," Ahwaz Human Rights Organization, November 27, 2019, <https://ahwazhumanrights.org/en/sections/12/iranian-security-committed-field-executions-against-ahwazi-protesters>; "Iran Arrests 150 Ahwazi Arab Volunteer Relief Workers," Ahwaz Human Rights Organization, May 1, 2019, <https://ahwazhumanrights.org/en/sections/12/iran-arrests-150-ahwazi-arab-volunteer-relief-workers>.

<sup>305</sup> Zambelis, "Terror in Tehran," 17–18.

There are two main reasons that Iran uses widespread law enforcement activity in such an open, public manner as response to perceived threats to the government's authority. First, by engaging in mass detainment, sweeping law enforcement raids, imprisonments, and executions, the Iranian state likely aims to contain the threat against it. Under this logic, by comprehensively removing dissidents and key leaders from the rest of society, they can forestall the center of gravity with respect to an opposition movement, and either cripple or dismantle their capability entirely. Moreover, these acts can produce a psychological effect, reducing the incentive in would-be supporters of a given movement to lend their assistance or direct participation to the movement. Historically, mass arrests, imprisonments, and executions have been utilized effectively in this manner. One example of mass arrests changing the paradigm of a COIN-insurgency struggle occurred in Brazil between the Brazilian Army and the Ação Libertadora Nacional, where national mass arrests led to the eventual removal of a critical core of the insurgent elements, and resulted in intelligence which led to the apprehension of their leader.<sup>306</sup> Secondly, the public display of these operations are themselves an assertive self-portrayal of a government in control. Chris Zambelis' analysis of Iran's response to the Tehran ISIS attack must therefore be seen as a comprehensive effort to reinforce the perception of the Iranian rule of law after its credibility was potentially damaged or undermined due to a terrorist attack. The string of arrests, counterterrorism operations, and raids announced in the wake of the terrorist attacks create a narrative that the Islamic State attack amounts to nothing more than "firecrackers," a lot of noise and disturbance but bearing no indication or signal that the Iranian government has somehow weakened.<sup>307</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

This chapter has served as a primer to trace the relevant background and history of the current Iran-Baluch insurgency environment. First, it has traced the origins of Baluch national identity, relevant Baluch history, and previous developments and approaches of

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<sup>306</sup> F.A. Godfrey, "The Latin American Experience: The Tuparamos, Campaign in Uruguay, 1963-1973," in *Counter Insurgency: Lessons from History*, ed. Ian F.W. Beckett (Barnsley, South Yorkshire, England: Pen & Sword 1998), 123.

<sup>307</sup> Zambelis, "Terror in Tehran," 19.

Iranian COIN against the Baluch. Second, the security organizations responsible for the rule of law, as well as COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan, were described. Finally, the overarching patterns of response Iran utilizes to combat internal dissent and threat were outlined to establish a baseline reflexive response for the Iranian state.

As the next chapter will demonstrate, the Iranian response to Jundallah fell far short of effectively countering insurgency precisely because it was largely a default plan, which failed to tailor its COIN approach to the particulars of the population it was trying to influence, and the organizations it was attempting to dismantle.

### III. THE JUNDALLAH ERA: 2003-2012

The ethnic Baluch insurgent group Jundallah arguably ranks among the most formidable, as well as most violent insurgencies the Islamic Republic has faced in the last 40 years. Founded by Abdolmalek Rigi in 2002, Jundallah fought a violent insurgency against the Iranian government until 2012. Through a campaign of bombings, shootings, and kidnappings, conservative estimates indicate that Jundallah killed more than 150 Iranians and injured 300 more.<sup>308</sup> Jundallah's attacks even succeeded at times in claiming the lives of senior IRGC staff, to include brigadier generals.<sup>309</sup> The insurgent threat was deemed so large and significant that the IRGC had assumed full, absolute command authority over all police and security matters, and counterinsurgency in Sistan-Baluchistan as of 2009, which it still retains.<sup>310</sup> After nearly 10 years of fighting, the IRGC and other Iranian security forces successfully facilitated the dismantling of Jundallah.

Since Jundallah's former membership continues to fight against the Iranian state, and the underlying dynamics which gave Jundallah such popularity and notoriety remain, the Iranian COIN efforts against Jundallah cannot be considered a success. Though Jundallah is now defunct, Baluch insurgency continues into the modern day. When Jundallah disbanded, Jaish ul-Adl rose from the ashes of Jundallah and continues to wage an ethnic Baluch insurgency against Iran. Additionally, the underlying grievances among the Baluch which made Jundallah so attractive to aspiring insurgents remain. As Chris Zambelis describes, Jundallah framed its battle with the Iranian government as opposition fighting against Iran's "deliberate policy of subjugation, discrimination, and repression" of

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<sup>308</sup> Patrick Goodenough, "Iran Executes Insurgent Leader, Accused of Ties with American Intelligence," CNSMonitor, June 20, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20141119160033/http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/iran-executes-insurgent-leader-accused-ties-american-intelligence>.

<sup>309</sup> Booz-Allen Persia House, "Jundallah/Iranian Press Round," Politico, September 2009, [https://www.politico.com/pdf/PPM136\\_microsoft\\_word\\_-\\_boozallenpesiahousejundallahanalysis\\_\\_2\\_.pdf](https://www.politico.com/pdf/PPM136_microsoft_word_-_boozallenpesiahousejundallahanalysis__2_.pdf); Bill Roggio, "Jundallah Kills Senior Iranian Revolutionary Guards Commanders," *Long Wars Journal* (blog), October 18, 2019, [https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/10/jundallah\\_kills\\_seni.php](https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2009/10/jundallah_kills_seni.php).

<sup>310</sup> Hossein Aryan, "Blaming Outsiders Won't Solve Iran's Baluchistan Problem," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, July 20, 2010, [https://www.rferl.org/a/Blaming\\_Outsiders\\_Wont\\_Solve\\_Irans\\_Baluchistan\\_Problem/2104613.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/Blaming_Outsiders_Wont_Solve_Irans_Baluchistan_Problem/2104613.html).

the Baluch, based on “ethno-sectarian and linguistic” lines.<sup>311</sup> In particular, Jundallah in its later years emphasized the Baluch’s Sunni identity, and the Baluch marginalization at the hand of the Shiite-dominated state, as central to the Jundallah identity.<sup>312</sup> As Audun Kolstad Wiig notes, the sectarian tension in Sistan-Baluchistan has a depth and history which pre-dates Jundallah. Since 1979, Iran has “embarked on an aggressive Shi’a advocacy campaign in all spheres of the society,” and as a result, among the Baluch, as predominantly Deobandi Sunni, strong “anti-Shi’a sentiment” has grown “among the Iranian Baluch.”<sup>313</sup> This sentiment did not end with the dismantling of Jundallah, and Sunni Jihadist extremism remains a consistent undertone in Jundallah’s successor organizations.

This chapter will examine three critical elements of Iran’s COIN efforts against Jundallah. The first section of the chapter outlines the specific decapitation COIN approach Iran took toward Jundallah, and the reasons why it failed to forestall the insurgency. The second section examines the methods by which Iran asserted its own rule of law against Jundallah from 2002 to 2012, and why this assertion of authority failed. The third section examines the Iranian narrative against Jundallah and explains how Iran’s repeated accusations of a U.S. connection to Jundallah backfired and allowed Jundallah to become stronger.

#### **A. KILLING ABDOLMALEK RIGI: DECAPITATION COIN**

Iran’s first serious error against Jundallah was that it overestimated the value and endurance of the organization’s origin as a familial, tribal, Rigi-centric vendetta against the government, and then assumed that removal of Abdolmalek Rigi and his inner circle would provide the quietus for the Baluch insurgency. Based on those assumptions, the Iran adopted an enemy-centric, decapitation COIN approach, which it assessed would be sufficient in quelling Baluch insurgency. However, analysis reveals that Jundallah was widely unpopular among Iranian Baluch tribal constructs. Instead, Jundallah increasingly

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<sup>311</sup> Zambelis, “A New Phase of Resistance and Insurgency,” 18.

<sup>312</sup> Wiig, *Islamist Opposition in the Islamic Republic*, 30.

<sup>313</sup> Wiig, 20.



drew its strength from a multitude of cross-border networks, and this dynamic became the most critical element in Jundallah's identity. Iran's failure to correctly identify and attack Jundallah's center of gravity rendered the enemy-centric, decapitation approach to their COIN approach ineffective, and allowed Jundallah to persist and evolve after the death of Abdolmalek Rigi.

### **1. Iranian Perception of Abdolmalek Rigi as Jundallah's Center of Gravity**

The Iranian state, throughout its encounters with Jundallah demonstrates a consistent perception of Jundallah as critically centered on Abdolmalek Rigi and his associates. Zambelis highlights that the Iranian state's assessment of Jundallah, and its perceived concentration around Abdolmalek Rigi yielded the estimate that Jundallah's reach ended with Rigi's personal and criminal relationships.<sup>314</sup> Zambelis' argument is supported by the fact that state-run Iranian news agencies such as *Tehran Times*, *Iran Daily*, and Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) often referred to Jundallah with epithets such as "terrorist clan," "the Rigi Group," and "the Rigi terrorist group."<sup>315</sup> Such characterizations endured through Jundallah's tenure as an active insurgency, and beyond. Qods force propaganda, for example, continues to refer to Jundallah as "the Rigi Group" in 2014,<sup>316</sup> and in 2018 *Tehran Times* continued to portray Jundallah as the limited brainchild of Abdolmalek Rigi.<sup>317</sup>

The Iranian state acted on the assessment of Jundallah as the product of Abdolmalek Rigi and adopted an enemy centric decapitation approach as a significant element of their COIN approach. Ariane Tabatabai notes that Iran's default tactic for countering armed dissident groups, is direct extermination, seeking to kill, capture, or otherwise render the

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<sup>314</sup> Zambelis, "Evolution of the Ethnic Baluch Insurgency," 18.

<sup>315</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>316</sup> "Paper Says Pakistani Premier's Visit to Iran 'Can Pave Way for New Era'," *Qods*, May 10, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>317</sup> "Policeman, Known as Living Martyr, Dies After 10 Years in Coma," *Tehran Times*, November 9, 2018, NewsBank.

threatening elements of anti-government movements.<sup>318</sup> Zambelis notes that an enemy centric approach has also been the default counter to Baluch nationalist movements, both before and after the 1979 revolution.<sup>319</sup> What differentiates the Iranian state's enemy-centric approach toward Jundallah is heavy emphasis on specifically targeting Jundallah's critical leadership. In COIN theory, this approach is referred to as "decapitation."<sup>320</sup> Iran's concentration of efforts on Abdolmalek Rigi's tribal and other connections in defeating Jundallah is clear. Zambelis and Stratfor's analyses of Jundallah both confirm this approach. The majority of those killed and imprisoned on charges related to Jundallah have the surname Rigi.<sup>321</sup> Furthermore, the capture and kill raids against Jundallah have commonly targeted those with known ties to Abdolmalek Rigi or his family.<sup>322</sup>

It is evident that the Iranian assessment that Abdolmalek Rigi's removal would all but defeat Jundallah endured through Rigi's death. Alirezah Ronaghi, reporting on Iran's assessment of a post-Rigi Jundallah, expressed his "doubt in continuing" operational capacity after Rigi was in Iranian custody.<sup>323</sup> After Abdolmalek Rigi's arrest, Iranian Intelligence Minister Heidar Moslehi saw Rigi's apprehension as a critical strike against Jundallah, calling it the "great success and great victory."<sup>324</sup> The actions taken by the Sistan-Baluchistan provincial government in the wake of Rigi's arrest further demonstrate the perception that Jundallah threat was over. Sistan-Baluchistan Governor General Ali Mohammad Azad offered and granted clemency to hundreds of Jundallah fighters following Rigi's arrest, while other officials released statements of "full security" being

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<sup>318</sup> Tabatabai, "Other Side of the Iranian Coin," 198–199.

<sup>319</sup> Zambelis, "Evolution of the Ethnic Baluch Insurgency," 18.

<sup>320</sup> Patrick B. Johnston, "Does Decapitation Work? Assessing the Effectiveness of Leadership Targeting in Counterinsurgency Campaigns," *International Security* 36, no. 4 (March 2012): 47–79, [https://doi.org/10.1162/isec\\_a\\_00076](https://doi.org/10.1162/isec_a_00076).

<sup>321</sup> Zambelis, "Evolution of the Ethnic Baluch Insurgency," 18.

<sup>322</sup> Stratfor, "Examination of Jundallah."

<sup>323</sup> Alireza Ronaghi, "Iran Hangs Sunni Group Leader," *Al Jazeera*, June 20, 2010, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2010/06/201062034410244183.html>.

<sup>324</sup> "Iran Arrests Terrorist Ringleader Abdolmalek Rigi," *Tehran Times*, February 24, 2010, NewsBank.

restored to Sistan-Baluchistan.<sup>325</sup> Similarly, after Abdolmalek Rigi's execution, the IRGC commander for Sistan-Baluchistan remarked that "the arrest and execution of this vicious [person] plays a significant role in the security issues of the province ... and creating unity among Sunnis and Shi'is."<sup>326</sup>

## 2. Fault in Iranian Perceptions of Rigi Pertaining to Jundallah

To characterize Jundallah or Abdolmalek Rigi as a tribally associated insurgency is incomplete. Rigi and Jundallah were both demonstrably unpopular among the Rigi tribe, as well as the other major Baluch tribes in Iran. The Rigi tribal leadership is expressly pro-government. High-ranking Baluch Rigi elders and chiefs have frequently cooperated with the Iranian government, especially toward enhancing local security, in major cities such as Saravan, Sarbaz, and Zahedan, the very same cities which Jundallah frequently attacked.<sup>327</sup> Rigi tribal leadership's support for the Iranian State remained constant throughout the existence of Jundallah. Per Stéphane Dudoignon, Bashir-Ahmad Rigi, the head of the Rigi tribe, is regarded as having the highest degree of "loyalty to Guide Khamenei," making him "one of the rare Iranian Baluch political tribunes."<sup>328</sup> The Rigi tribe's official stance is also explicitly anti-Jundallah. In response to Abdolmalek Rigi's death in 2010, Bashir-Ahmad Rigi stated: "We thank God that the Rigi tribe was cleansed of such a disgrace by Rigi's execution."<sup>329</sup> Furthermore, there is a dearth of evidence to indicate that Jundallah enjoyed significant support from any of the other major Baluch tribes. Per Stratfor, other Baluch tribal leaders, to include the Marri, Narouie, Shahnavaizi, Gamshadzai and Shahbakhsh consistently, condemned and acted against Jundallah.<sup>330</sup>

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<sup>325</sup> "Jundallah Defectors Granted Immunity," Iran News, April 25, 2010, NewsBank; "Full Security in Sistan-Baluchistan," Iran News, February 24, 2010, NewsBank.

<sup>326</sup> IRNA, "Iran Commander Says People 'Celebrate' Execution of Rebel Leader"; PressTV, "West Facing Constant Defeat in Iran."

<sup>327</sup> Taheri, "Sociopolitical Culture," 979; Chris Zambelis, "Back with a Vengeance: The Baloch Insurgency in Iran," *Terrorism Monitor* 9, no.2 (January 14, 2011), <https://jamestown.org/program/back-with-a-vengeance-the-baloch-insurgency-in-iran/>.

<sup>328</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*, 114.

<sup>329</sup> "Execution, Fate of All Criminals: Head of Rigi Tribe," Ahlubayt News Agency, December 2, 2010, <https://en.abna24.com/service/iran/archive/0000/00/00/192742/story.html>.

<sup>330</sup> Stratfor, "Examination of Jundallah."

Jundallah was actually an organization with membership and operational capacity grounded in pre-existing as well as cross-border networks. Dudoignon notes that even in its infancy, Jundallah is not contained to the Rigi tribe, and includes significant numbers of non-Rigi, such Isma'ilzayi and Naruyi tribe members who were criminal associates of Rigi through "the international smuggling and abduction trade."<sup>331</sup> Rigi himself is largely a product of Pakistan. Rigi's secondary education primarily consists of years spent at madrassas in the Pakistani cities of Binnori and Karachi.<sup>332</sup> Abdolmalek Rigi was also an associate of the Pakistani chapter of Tablighi Jamaat, a global Deobandi movement whose membership includes some with links to terrorist attacks worldwide.<sup>333</sup> Furthermore, per Audun Kolstad Wiig, as of 2006, Jundallah was networking with and receiving direct support from both insurgent groups in Iran, and cross-border organizations.<sup>334</sup> Iranian Ahwaz insurgent organizations have released messages conveying praise for and solidarity with Jundallah.<sup>335</sup> Per Wiig, until 2008 Jundallah's primary bomb maker was likely Kurdish, Jundallah has received training from Afghan and Pakistani insurgent organizations in both Waziristan and Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Area, and used explosives in a manner consistent with Afghan and Pakistani insurgents.<sup>336</sup> Wiig's analysis further indicates that whatever validity the "family affair" characterization of Jundallah initially possessed rapidly evaporated, particularly as the group began to identify itself more with Islamic Fundamentalism.<sup>337</sup> By 2009, Jundallah's center of gravity no longer stood solely on the shoulders of Abdolmalek Rigi and his inner circle, which meant that targeting and removing Rigi had no guarantee of defeating Jundallah's insurgency.<sup>338</sup>

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<sup>331</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*, 228.

<sup>332</sup> Dudoignon, 229.

<sup>333</sup> Wiig, *Islamist Opposition in the Islamic Republic*, 25; Fred Burton and Scott Stewart, "Tablighi Jamaat: An Indirect Line to Terrorism," Stratfor, January 23, 2008, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/tablighi-jamaat-indirect-line-terrorism>.

<sup>334</sup> Wiig, 26.

<sup>335</sup> Wiig, 25–26.

<sup>336</sup> Wiig, 25–26.

<sup>337</sup> Wiig, 30.

<sup>338</sup> Wiig, 30.

### 3. The Post-Rigi Reality: Baluch Insurgency Continues

The arrest and execution of Abdolmalek Rigi did not immediately end Jundallah. Instead, Jundallah became a more sophisticated, and threatening entity after June 2010. Considering casualty rates, Jundallah's worst attacks occurred after Abdolmalek Rigi's death. The July 2010 Zahedan bombings had 300 casualties, eclipsing the 2009 Pishin bombing (at the time Jundallah's worst attack) by almost 100 people.<sup>339</sup> Zahedan was also just the second instance of Jundallah using suicide bombings.<sup>340</sup> The July 2010 Zahedan bombings mark the first time Jundallah used dual quick successive blasts to maximize injuries, reflecting previously unseen evolutions in sophistication.<sup>341</sup> Jundallah again proved their undaunted virility as an insurgency in December 2010, when four bombers attacked a ceremony in Chahbahar, killing 39 and injuring at least 100.<sup>342</sup> This attack was Jundallah's third most lethal, killing just four less than the 2009 Pishin bombing.<sup>343</sup> Jundallah effectively remained an insurgency for at least two years following Rigi's death. Iranian media reported numerous clashes between Iranian Border Guards, the IRGC, and Jundallah operatives into 2012.<sup>344</sup> Jundallah carried out another bombing in October of 2012.<sup>345</sup> Additionally, Jundallah remained politically relevant. In 2012, Pakistani defense Minister Chaudry Ahmed Mukhtar, seeking to improve relations with Iran, and clearly of

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<sup>339</sup> William Yong and Robert F. Worth, "Toll Rises From Twin Suicide Bombings at Iranian Mosque," *New York Times*, July 26, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/17/world/middleeast/17tehran.html>; Michael Slackman, "Iran Guard Commanders Are Killed in Bombings," *New York Times*, October 18, 2009, <https://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/19/world/middleeast/19iran.html?mtrref=www.google.com&gwh=455104A0067C0FD7BBE55D2938438C1A&gwt=pay&assetType=REGI WALL>.

<sup>340</sup> Aryan, "Blaming Outsiders."

<sup>341</sup> Yong and Worth, "Toll Rises from Twin Suicide Bombings at Iranian Mosque."

<sup>342</sup> "Suicide Bombers Kills 38 Near Iran Shiite Mosque," Al Arabiya News Network, December 15, 2010, <https://web.archive.org/web/20101217051840/http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2010/12/15/129680.html>.

<sup>343</sup> Slackman, "Iran Guard Commanders Are Killed in Bombings."

<sup>344</sup> ISNA, "Iran Police Say Four Jondollah Rebels Killed in 4 June Operation."

<sup>345</sup> "Suicide Bomber Kills Two in SE Iran," *Tehran Times*, October 19, 2012, NewsBank.

the opinion that the organization was alive and well, publicly declared his nation's refusal to allow Jundallah to establish a base of operations against Iran.<sup>346</sup>

Jundallah's disbandment can be considered a defeat of an insurgent organization in name only, since the post Jundallah reality is that the insurgent groups that became prominent following Jundallah's end remain direct products and descendants of their predecessor. Jaish ul-Adl, the dominant Baluch insurgent group in Sistan-Baluchistan, is often considered the "successor" to Jundallah, with one of Jaish ul-Adl's leaders being a previous Jundallah leader.<sup>347</sup> There are other, less active groups which are also direct products of Jundallah. A less well-known Baluch insurgent group, Harakat Ansar Iran, sourced its core membership from Jundallah remnants.<sup>348</sup> Similarly, some more marginal groups have formed splinter cells from Jundallah remnants. For example, Jaish al-Nasr is headed by Abdul Sattar Rigi, Abdolmalek Rigi's cousin.<sup>349</sup>

## **B. JUNDALLAH, IRAN, AND ASSERTING THE RULE OF LAW**

Iran's second critical error against Jundallah was its attempt to emphasize control, competency and authority of rule by responding to Jundallah attacks with exhaustive law enforcement and counterterror action. Rather than reinforcing state legitimacy, these actions largely backfired, making the Iranian state seem desperate and less competent. The fallout from these actions subsequently exacerbated the degree and pervasiveness of Baluch grievances against the Iranian State.

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<sup>346</sup> "We Will Not Allow Jundallah to Use Pakistan Soil: Defense Chief," *Tehran Times*, April 21, 2012, NewsBank.

<sup>347</sup> "Jaish.ul-Adl' Publishes Images of Abducted Iranian Soldiers," *Asharq al-Awsat*, October 23, 2018, <https://aawsat.com/english/home/article/1435501/jaish-ul-adl-publishes-images-abducted-iranian-soldiers>; Shezad Baloch, "Jailed Abroad: Jundallah Commander Arrested in Quetta," *Express Tribune*, March 1, 2015, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/845999/jailed-abroad-jundallah-commander-arrested-in-quetta/>.

<sup>348</sup> Aaron Merat, "Iran Calls For Return of Abducted Border Guards Held in Pakistan," *The Telegraph*, March 28, 2014, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/middleeast/iran/10729946/Iran-calls-for-return-of-abducted-border-guards-held-in-Pakistan.html>.

<sup>349</sup> "Iranian Terrorist in Pakistan's Custody," *Dawn*, May 2, 2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1179449>.

This section will discuss the dynamics of Iran’s swift justice approach in response to Jundallah’s attacks, and why this approach actually made things worse. Initially, Jundallah’s attacks, served to undermine the Iranian rule of law in Sistan-Baluchistan, thereby undermining state legitimacy. Iran countered Jundallah undermining of its authority with scores of arrests, convictions, and killings of suspected Jundallah operatives designed to emphasize state authority and control over the region. However, Iran’s emphasis of its own authority failed to achieve the intended result for two reasons. First, the Iranian state does not necessarily hold a hegemony on authority in the eyes of the Baluch tribes. Second, Jundallah’s capability to continue attacks despite the swift justice responses detracted from the effectiveness of the Iranian tactic, and the effect of Jundallah’s persistent attacks amplified by state overestimations of the effectiveness of their own efforts against Jundallah. Additionally, Iran’s swift justice approach likely worsened underlying conditions which made insurgency an attractive option to disaffected Baluch. For these reasons, Iran’s use of rule of law operations as a weapon for COIN backfired against Jundallah.

### **1. Jundallah’s Threat to Iranian Authority and State Response**

Jundallah’s violent activities threatened to undermine the public perception of Iran’s authority in Sistan-Baluchistan. In COIN theory, perceptions of legitimacy, rule of law, and security are often considered critical fields of an insurgent-counterinsurgent battle. David Kilcullen argues that victor between insurgent and counterinsurgent will be the side that succeeds in “establishing a system of control” which maintains public perception of “order and a sense of security where they sleep.”<sup>350</sup> Tabatabai’s analysis indicates that the Iranian state considers perception of control critical to COIN, since Iran’s approach toward insurgent and opposition groups frequently involves policy designed to “project an image of the state as ... in control.”<sup>351</sup> Unchecked, Jundallah’s attacks thus threatened to undermine the Islamic Republic’s rule of law, and by extension, legitimacy of the government. Per Kilcullen, preserving state rule of law against a violent insurgency rests

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<sup>350</sup> Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 152.

<sup>351</sup> Tabatabai, “Other Side of the Iranian Coin,” 198–199.

on the concepts of reprisal and consequence; when preventing violence against the population and government is impossible, what remains critical is for each act of violence by the insurgency to be publicly addressed with consequence and reprisals for those responsible.<sup>352</sup>

As a means of reinforcing positive perceptions of the Iranian rule of law, Iranian COIN against Jundallah sought to project an image of swift justice, responding to Jundallah operations with rapid arrests, convictions and killings. With every major Jundallah attack, the Iranian state's response involved large-scale police action, including arrests en masse, raids against suspected Jundallah members, and executions. For example, following Jundallah's February 2007 bombing, within three days Iranian security forces claimed apprehension of the attack's mastermind and key perpetrators, and arrested an additional 65 insurgents.<sup>353</sup> Within five days, the Ministry of Justice convicted and publicly executed the alleged leader of the attack.<sup>354</sup> Similarly, in the first five days after the May 2009 Zahedan bombing, Iranian state agencies arrested 20, and publicly executed three alleged Jundallah members, and arrested 15 additional alleged operatives within a month.<sup>355</sup> Iranian emphasis on rule of law via swift justice appears to be a standard response to Jundallah attacks. Except for the March 2006 Tasooki massacre, every Jundallah attack that resulted in more than 10 casualties had corresponding arrests and executions within two weeks.<sup>356</sup>

## **2. Baluch Perceptions of Iranian Rule of Law**

From the perspectives of the Iranian Baluch, the state has neither monopoly nor hegemony on legitimacy in Sistan-Baluchistan and is at best an intermittent presence in the

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<sup>352</sup> Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 153–154.

<sup>353</sup> "Terrorist Bombing in Zahedan," *Tehran Times*, February 15, 2007, NewsBank; "Local TV Airs Zahedan Bomber's Confession," *Tehran Times*, February 17, 2007, NewsBank.

<sup>354</sup> Nasser Karimi, "Iran Executes Bomber at Site of Attack Where 11 Revolutionary Guards Were Killed," Associated Press International, February 19, 2007, Nexis Uni.

<sup>355</sup> Karimi, "Iran Hangs Two Convicted Rebels in Restive Southeast: Report," Agence France Presse, June 6, 2009, Nexis Uni; Ali Akbar Dareini, "Iran Hangs 13 Members of Rebel Sunni Muslim Group," Associated Press International, July 14, 2009, Nexis Uni.

<sup>356</sup> See Appendix B.



lives of most non-elite Baluch; this contributed to a muted effect for Iran's swift justice approach. Ganesh Sitaraman comments that traditionally COIN "rule of law operations" hyper-focus on "criminal justice," vis-à-vis "police, prosecutors, and prisons."<sup>357</sup> Based on Iranian security force responses to Jundallah attacks, it can be asserted that Iran fits this profile. However, FM 3-24 notes that excessive focus on the asserting rule of law risks critical ignorance of the other key features in establishing governmental legitimacy. Successful rule of law operations should not limit themselves to the process of apprehending and punishing insurgents, but also must consider the cultural, institutional and economic influences on a population and how these factors cause populations to view and interact with the government.<sup>358</sup> Sitaraman notes that rule of law COIN operations in Afghanistan failed because they did not account for the relevant semi-state or non-state institutions of authority such as the *Shirga* and *Jirga*.<sup>359</sup> This nexus between rule of law operations and cultural considerations is relevant to the Iranian Baluch. Cultural considerations reveal that the state is one among several elements of authority in Sistan-Baluchistan. Per Ahmad Reza Taheri, the Iranian government is at best on equal, competitive footing with local religious and tribal authorities when considering perspectives of non-elite Iranian Baluch.<sup>360</sup> Moreover, the majority of the Baluch only infrequently interact with conventional elements of the state authority, instead preferring to avoid them outright unless "compelling or pressing circumstances" exist.<sup>361</sup> Iran's interactions with Baluch in Sistan-Baluchistan indicates state awareness of their own lack of hegemonic dominion on authority with the local population. As Dudoignon notes, Iranian governments past and present have a history of harnessing and employing Baluch cultural and religious elites to maintain order and security.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>357</sup> Ganesh Sitaraman, "The Rule of Law and the New Counterinsurgency Field Manual," *Small Wars Journal*, last modified July 2, 2014, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-rule-of-law-and-the-new-counterinsurgency-field-manual>.

<sup>358</sup> Department of the Army, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*, FM 3-24 (Washington, DC: 2014), 13-14, <https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf>.

<sup>359</sup> Sitaraman, "The Rule of Law."

<sup>360</sup> Taheri, "Sociopolitical Culture," 993-94.

<sup>361</sup> Taheri, 993-994.

<sup>362</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*, 15, 23-24.

### 3. Failure to Reduce Jundallah Activity

The facts that Iranian reprisal and law enforcement efforts likely captured or killed few strategically significant members of Jundallah, and that Iranian reprisal efforts failed to prevent, or reduce Jundallah's operational capacity also undercut the efficacy of Iran's swift justice approach. In review of available Iranian state media reports, the Islamic Republic either arrested, killed or executed at least 219 suspected Jundallah members between January 2006 and January 2008.<sup>363</sup> During that period, Jundallah spokesmen declared their own strength as upwards of 1,000 fighters, while analysis of Jundallah's actual insurgent force estimated their strength as far less, as small as a "few hundred militants."<sup>364</sup> Were all those arrested, killed, or imprisoned by Iran during this period actually members of Jundallah, the organization would have lost at least one quarter, but possibly more than one half of its fighting force. It seems likely that many of those which the state captured or killed had little, if any significant relation to Jundallah. Amnesty International, other Non-Governmental Organizations, and the European Union have called for stays of execution on those convicted in Jundallah attacks on grounds of potentially unfair, excessively swift trials.<sup>365</sup> Evidence of confessions coerced through torture and blackmail further impugns the guilt of those convicted.<sup>366</sup> Jundallah also disputed their involvement with those convicted. For example, Jundallah denied that anyone executed in connection with the May 2009 Zahedan bombing was an organization

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<sup>363</sup> See Appendix C.

<sup>364</sup> Stratfor, "Examination of Jundallah."

<sup>365</sup> Amnesty International, *Iran: Fear of Reprisal Against Baluch Population Following Suicide Attack in Pishin by Armed Group*, MDE 13/112/2009 (London: Amnesty International, October 20, 2009): 1-2, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/48000/mde131122009en.pdf>; Amnesty International, *Iran: Ethnic Minorities Facing New Wave of Human Rights Violations*, MDE 13/020/2007 (London: Amnesty International, February 26, 2007): 1, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/64000/mde130202007en.pdf>; "Social Activist Yaghoub Mehrnehad Executed," Center for Human Rights in Iran, August 4, 2008 <https://www.iranhumanrights.org/2008/08/social-activist-yaghoub-mehrnehad-executed/>; E. Ostapenko, "EU Urges Iran to Abolish Death Penalty," Trend News Agency, July 18, 2009, <https://en.trend.az/azerbaijan/politics/1507444.html>.

<sup>366</sup> Amnesty International, *Iran: Human Rights Abuses against the Baluchi Minority*, MDE 13/104/2007 (London: Amnesty International 2007), 35–36, <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/68000/mde131042007en.pdf>.

operative, and stated that only one of the executed had any association with the group.<sup>367</sup> Responding to Iran's "summary detentions and executions" of alleged insurgents in June 2009, Jundallah again denied involvement with executed by the state.<sup>368</sup> The weight of these doubts as to the effectiveness of Iranian assertion of authority becomes compounded when one considers that the mass arrests, executions, and reprisal actions carried out by the Iranian state fail to forestall Jundallah over time. Despite the consistency of Iranian state response, year over year Jundallah continued to execute successful attacks.

The tendency for Iranian state apparatuses to overestimate their own progress against Jundallah further detracted from assertions of state authority. Per Martin Mykelbust and Tom Ordeman, "Control of Information" and "Effective Information Operations" are critical modern COIN requirements, especially considering the need for operational ability to "immediately dispel insurgent accusations or claims of victory."<sup>369</sup> Through repeated premature claims of victory, however, Iranian COIN against Jundallah sustained self-inflicted wounds when Jundallah's persistent attacks debunked the "claims of victory."<sup>370</sup> In April 2006, the state funded *Kayhan* newspaper reported that Abdolmalek Rigi had been killed during a raid.<sup>371</sup> In May 2008, the Iranian Interior Minister declared that Pakistan had captured Abdolmalek and Abdolhamid Rigi, and their extradition to Iran was imminent.<sup>372</sup> In December 2008, NAJA deputy police commander Ahmad Reza Radan claimed a "deadly blow" had been delivered to Jundallah when simultaneous raids reportedly killed a critical mass of its inner circle.<sup>373</sup> As discussed earlier in this chapter,

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<sup>367</sup> Borzou Daragahi, "Days After Bombing, Iran Executes three," *Star-Ledger*, May 31, 2009, Nexis Uni.

<sup>368</sup> Wiig, *Islamist Opposition in the Islamic Republic*, 36.

<sup>369</sup> Martin Myklebust and Tom Ordeman, "Six Requirements for Success in Modern Counterinsurgency," *Small Wars Journal*, last modified July 25, 2013, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/six-requirements-for-success-in-modern-counterinsurgency>.

<sup>370</sup> Myklebust and Ordeman.

<sup>371</sup> "Leader and 11 Members of Militant Group Killed," *Gulf News*, April 7, 2006, <https://gulfnews.com/world/mena/leader-and-11-members-of-militant-group-killed-1.232015>.

<sup>372</sup> "Pakistan to Hand Over Members of Rebel Group to Iran—TV," IRNA, May 31, 2008, NewsBank.

<sup>373</sup> "Police Delivers Deadly Blow to Jundallah: Security Official," *Tehran Times*, December 23, 2008, <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/185307/Police-delivers-deadly-blow-to-Jundallah-security-official>.

the arrest and subsequent execution of Abdolmalek Rigi drew scores of Iranian government officials hailing the “ensuing collapse” of Jundallah, and the restoration of “full-security” to Sistan-Baluchistan.<sup>374</sup> In all of the cases listed, Jundallah in fact was not defeated, or diminished in any significant way. The Tasooki Massacre was only weeks after the 2006 *Kayhan* report.<sup>375</sup> Abdolmalek Rigi was not extradited to Iran in 2008.<sup>376</sup> Jundallah executed a bombing in Saravan six days after Radan’s comments.<sup>377</sup> Finally, the 2010 Zahedan bombings were less than a month after Rigi was executed.<sup>378</sup>

#### **4. Exacerbation of Baluch Grievances with the Iranian State**

The Iranian waves of arrests and executions risked further exacerbation of the conditions for the Iranian Baluch, fueling higher prospects for support and participation in the insurgency. Chris Zambelis notes the “persistent grievances,” most notably a strong Baluch perception of a history heavy persecution of the Baluch by Iran, shade the relationship between the Baluch and the Iranian government.<sup>379</sup> Thus, the scores of arrests, convictions, and killings of ethnic Baluch in response to Jundallah likely triggered an increase in anti-state sentiment among the Baluch, exacerbating what FM 3-24 identifies as the “underlying grievances” that can be the “root cause” of an insurgency.<sup>380</sup> Increasing sources of tensions between the Baluch and the state benefitted Jundallah’s projection of its identity and purpose. Per Abdolmalek Rigi, Jundallah was established in response to Iranian government forces killing his family.<sup>381</sup> Highlighting these same perceived injustices, Jundallah consistently claimed that it was fighting for the rights, safety, and lives of the Iranian Baluch, and often refers to itself as The People’s Resistance Movement of

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<sup>374</sup> Iran News, “Full Security in Sistan-Baluchistan.”

<sup>375</sup> “Iran to Execute 14 Convicted in 2006 Terror Attack,” CNN, July 13, 2009, <http://edition.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/meast/07/13/iran.execution/index.html>.

<sup>376</sup> *Tehran Times*, “Iran Arrests Terrorist Ringleader Abdolmalek Rigi.”

<sup>377</sup> Nazila Fathi, “Rare Suicide Bombing in Iran Kills 4,” *New York Times*, December 30, 2008, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/12/30/world/middleeast/30iran.html>.

<sup>378</sup> Yong and Worth, “Toll Rises from Twin Suicide Bombings at Iranian Mosque.”

<sup>379</sup> Zambelis, “Back with a Vengeance.”

<sup>380</sup> Department of the Army, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*, iii–1.

<sup>381</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*, 227.

Iran after 2006.<sup>382</sup> Exacerbation of grievances toward the Iranian government, combined with Jundallah's narrative of its own identity, thus makes it more appealing to potential insurgents and networks of local support. As Dudoignon indicates, supporters of Jundallah in Pakistan and Iran regarded them as "Robin Hoods ... defenders of the interests of the local population."<sup>383</sup> Zambelis' analysis of the Baluch insurgency directly identifies the harsh treatment of Baluch by the Iranian government as a lifeline for insurgency because it increases prospects of aggrieved Baluch accepting "violent resistance ... as a political choice."<sup>384</sup>

### C. DISCREDITATION AND REPUTATION ELEVATION

Iranian messaging concerning Jundallah played heavily upon discrediting the organization as an American or foreign government puppet, but by doing so Iran actually strengthened Jundallah. The Iranian state consistently argues that the United States sponsors and directs opposition to the Islamic Republic, and Jundallah, as an organization which stands against the state, was consistently subjected to this characterization.<sup>385</sup> The unpredictability of a narrative's effectiveness when exposed to a globalized media and a worldwide audience is a well-established aspect of COIN theory. The attempts to discredit Jundallah through association with the United States yielded unprecedented levels of international exposure for the insurgency. This exposure gave Jundallah access to critical avenues of support among the Baluch diaspora worldwide. Exposure further sparked increased prospects of U.S. support for Jundallah. Finally, this international exposure enhanced Jundallah's local and regional credibility, contributing to their effective strength within Sistan-Baluchistan. Considering these developments, the Iranian narrative of a U.S. backed Jundallah benefitted Jundallah more than it did the Iranian state.

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<sup>382</sup> Yong and Worth, "Toll Rises from Twin Suicide Bombings at Iranian Mosque"; Dudoignon, 227.

<sup>383</sup> Rather, "The Most Wanted Man in Iran," 16:10.

<sup>384</sup> Zambelis, "A New Phase of Resistance and Insurgency," 18.

<sup>385</sup> Mehdi Khalaji, *U.S. Support for the Iranian Opposition*, Policy #1258 (Washington, DC: The Washington Institute, July 9, 2007), <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/u.s.-support-for-the-iranian-opposition>.

## 1. National Versus Global Dynamics in COIN Narratives

In considering the Iranian state's narrative characterizations of Jundallah, it is important to discuss the well-established risk that COIN narratives, once exposed to international audiences and global digital media, can prove counter-productive to a COIN approach. David Kilcullen comments that all modern insurgency and COIN must contend with a "globalized audience," and the "omnipresence of a globalized media."<sup>386</sup> John Mackinlay also argues that exposure to "multiple populations and mass communications" have shifted the center of gravity in an insurgent-counterinsurgent struggle of narratives from "the national to the international level."<sup>387</sup> As this shift grows into a "torrent of information," it becomes difficult for the counterinsurgent to control, with narratives often failing to proceed as the counterinsurgent originally intended.<sup>388</sup> By contrast, insurgency relies upon media coverage to champion their cause. Per Zoe Tan "mass communication" must simultaneously be regarded as "means for stimulating change ... contributing to the climate of terrorism reality, and disseminating information in response to terrorist situations."<sup>389</sup> Similarly, Mihail Orzeata notes that media exposure serves as a critical means for opposition groups "to communicate with the public and to promote their goals."<sup>390</sup> It is for this reason that Mackinlay concludes that a "deluge" of attention insurgencies receive often unfolds to the insurgent's benefit.<sup>391</sup> Influxes of international media attention highlight "the visibility of insurgent actions in the eyes of their supporters," allowing "the insurgents to develop into a global movement and mobilize more individuals and communities to their side."<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 40.

<sup>387</sup> Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 96.

<sup>388</sup> Mackinlay, 96.

<sup>389</sup> Zoe C.W. Tan, "The Role of Media in Insurgent Terrorism: Issues and Perspectives," *Gazette* 44, no. 3 (December 1989): 210, <https://doi.org/10.1177/001654928904400303>.

<sup>390</sup> Mihail Orzeata, "Mass Media—An Ally Or an Enemy in The Struggle Against Terrorism?," *International Journal of Communication Research* 6, no. 2 (April, 2016): 137-138, ProQuest.

<sup>391</sup> Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 96–98.

<sup>392</sup> Mackinlay, 97–98.

## 2. Unintended Exposure of U.S.–Jundallah Association

It is important to note that Jundallah’s early existence coincided with a period of elevated antagonism between the United States and Iran, which likely combined with Iran’s allegations of a U.S.–Jundallah connection to create higher international media interest for Jundallah. In his 2002 State of the Union Address, U.S. President George W. Bush labeled Iran as part of the “Axis of Evil.”<sup>393</sup> As Maria Ryan argues, however, Bush’s designation of Iran was largely seen as a “manufactured” line of reasoning for the United States to engage in more aggressive behavior toward the Islamic Republic.<sup>394</sup> After the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq, significant portions of the press and academia viewed the invasion as “the opening scene” of Bush Administration plans to depose Iranian leadership by force.<sup>395</sup> Amidst increasing tensions, anonymous leaks to the press of internal Bush Administration documents from January 2006 onwards further demonstrated a possible U.S. plan to invade Iran. The United States asked Turkey about using airbases to stage strikes against Iran, deployed minesweepers to the Persian Gulf, and stationed two aircraft carriers within striking distance of Iran.<sup>396</sup> Furthermore, Vice-President Cheney repeatedly stated that “all options were on the table” with respect to Iran.<sup>397</sup> There were also reports that U.S. military and intelligence organizations were reportedly creating plans for massive airstrikes, as well as possible collusion with opposition groups inside Iran.<sup>398</sup>

With purported U.S. plans to overthrow the Iran’s leadership, Jundallah benefitted from unprecedented levels of exposure due to global media investigation of the group in exploration of purported U.S.–Jundallah connections. In February 2007, London’s *Sunday Telegraph* investigated Iranian allegations of U.S. support for Baluch and other opposition

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<sup>393</sup> Maria Ryan, “Inventing the ‘Axis of Evil’: The Myth and Reality of U.S. Intelligence and Policy-Making After 9/11,” *Intelligence and National Security* 17, no. 4 (December 1, 2002): 55.

<sup>394</sup> Ryan, 55.

<sup>395</sup> David Hastings Dunn, “‘Real Men Want to Go to Tehran:’ Bush, Pre-emption, and the Iranian Nuclear Challenge,” *International Affairs*, 83, no.1 (January 2007): 19.

<sup>396</sup> Dunn, 20–21.

<sup>397</sup> Dunn, 20.

<sup>398</sup> Seymour M. Hersh, “The Iran Plans,” *The New Yorker*, April 10, 2006, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2006/04/17/the-iran-plans>.

groups inside of Iran, claiming to have CIA and U.S. Department of State testimony employees that corroborated Iranian allegations, with specific mention of Jundallah.<sup>399</sup> *Telegraph* highlighted this allegation the following week by with editorial responses to the original article.<sup>400</sup> *Telegraph* reporting in effect gave Jundallah exposure and promotion to the estimated 900,000 *Telegraph* readers in 2007.<sup>401</sup> However, that exposure pales in comparison to that which Jundallah received a few months later. In April, ABC News corroborated *Telegraph's* reporting, citing Pakistani and U.S. intelligence sources.<sup>402</sup> Within days, the ABC News story had attracted worldwide attention, being reiterated and investigated by other media conglomerates, including Press Trust of India, and the BBC.<sup>403</sup> As Jundallah operations continued, media outlets produced more content that profiled Jundallah, specifically investigating whether or not they were receiving U.S. support. This includes content from larger organizations, such as *the New Yorker*, NPR, Foreign Policy, and Frontline.<sup>404</sup> It also includes smaller, more partisan outlets such as

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<sup>399</sup> William Lowther and Colin Freeman, "US Funds Terror Groups to Sow Chaos in Iran," *The Telegraph*, February 25, 2007, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1543798/US-funds-terror-groups-to-sow-chaos-in-Iran.html#>.

<sup>400</sup> "Iran's Arabs Want Rights, Not Foreign Might," *Sunday Telegraph*, March 4, 2007, Nexis Uni.

<sup>401</sup> "Circulation of The Daily Telegraph in the United Kingdom (UK) from 1st half 2003 to 2nd half 2016," Statista, September 17, 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/288275/circulation-trend-of-the-daily-telegraph-newspaper-uk/>.

<sup>402</sup> Muhammad Sahimi, "Who Supports Jundallah?," Frontline, last modified October 30, 2009, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/tehranbureau/2009/10/jundallah.html>.

<sup>403</sup> "US Officials Backing Anti-Iran Pak Militant Group: Report," The Press Trust of India, April 4, 2007, Nexis Uni; "Pakistan Rejects U.S. Report its Aiding Militants Across Border into Iran." BBC Monitoring South Asia, April 5, 2007, ProQuest.

<sup>404</sup> Sahimi, "Who Supports Jundallah?"; Seymour M. Hersh, "Preparing the Battlefield: The Bush Administration Steps Up Its Secret Moves Against Iran," *The New Yorker*, June 29, 2008, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2008/07/07/preparing-the-battlefield>; Neal Conan, "Insurgent Group Jundallah Worries Iranians," October 26, 2009, in *Talk of the Nation*, produced by NPR, podcast, transcript, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=114178606>; Jamsheed K. Choksy, "Iran's Enemy is Not America's Friend," Foreign Policy, October 20, 2009, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/10/20/irans-enemy-is-not-americas-friend/>.



*Infowars, The Daily Beast, The Christian Science Monitor, and Mint Press News.*<sup>405</sup> Interest in the purported connection partially drove Dan Rather, one of the most prominent and renowned journalists worldwide, to produce a thirty-minute segment on Jundallah, which featured face-to-face interviews with Abdolmalek Rigi.<sup>406</sup>

Iran's characterization of Jundallah as a U.S. States puppet was consistent and forceful, and remained an unwavering constant of the Iranian COIN narrative even when evidence emerged which demonstrated that the characterization was unsubstantiated. By January 2006, just one month after Jundallah's first confirmed attack, the Iranian Ministry of the Interior was leveling unsubstantiated charges of American support for Jundallah.<sup>407</sup> When London's *Telegraph* and ABC News published articles alleging that Iranian claims of a connection were true, Iranian state-run media treated these stories as de facto admissions of U.S. support for Jundallah.<sup>408</sup> However, there was significant reason to doubt the reporting as factual. Seymour Hersh, the journalist who authored a critical *New Yorker* piece which allegedly corroborated the U.S.–Jundallah link, had previously been accused of reporting unconfirmed information, and was accused of the same with Jundallah.<sup>409</sup> Additionally, Alexis Debat, an ABC News journalist whose sources had

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<sup>405</sup> Kurt Nimmo, "Former Pakistan General: U.S. Supports Jundallah Terrorists in Iran," *Infowars*, last modified July 10, 2008, <https://www.infowars.com/former-pakistan-general-us-supports-jundallah-terrorists-in-iran/#>; Reza Aslan, "Is the U.S. Still Funding Jundallah?," *Daily Beast*, December 15, 2010, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/iran-suicide-bombing-is-the-us-still-funding-jundallah>; Eoin O'Carroll, "US Backing Secret War Against Iran?," *The Christian Science Monitor*, April 5, 2007, <https://www.csmonitor.com/2007/0405/p99s01-duts.html>; Aram Mirzaei, "Jundallah: the US-Backed Salafi Terrorists in Iran," *Mint Press News*, April 8<sup>th</sup> 2019, <https://www.mintpressnews.com/the-us-backed-salafi-terrorists-operating-in-iran/257081/>.

<sup>406</sup> Rather, "The Most Wanted Man in Iran."

<sup>407</sup> Nazila Fathi, "Car Bomb in Iran Destroys a Bus Carrying Revolutionary Guards," *New York Times*, February 15, 2007, [https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/15/world/middleeast/15tehran.html?\\_r=2&oref=slogin](https://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/15/world/middleeast/15tehran.html?_r=2&oref=slogin); "Kidnapped Soldiers Held by Sunni Militants," *Iran News*, January 8, 2006, NewsBank.

<sup>408</sup> Ardeshir Ommani, "U.S. Support for Terrorism Targeting Iran," *Tehran Times*, April 24, 2007, NewsBank; "U.S. Terrorism," *Iran News*, February 19, 2007, NewsBank.

<sup>409</sup> Amir Taheri, "Many Sources But No Meat," *Telegraph*, September 22, 2004, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/3624163/Many-sources-but-no-meat.html>; Blake Housnell, "A Word of Caution about Seymour Hersh's Latest," *Foreign Policy*, June 30, 2008, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2008/06/30/a-word-of-caution-about-seymour-hersh-s-latest/>; Laura Rozen, "Subject to Debate: Did ABC Know About Its Sourcing Problem?," *Mother Jones*, September 14, 2007, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2007/09/subject-debat-did-abc-know-about-its-experts-sourcing-problem/>.

reportedly confirmed Hersh's reporting and been used for the original ABC News blog post, was fired for lying about credentials and sources just months after the original story was published.<sup>410</sup> In addition, the Pakistani government, U.S. officials, and Abdolmalek Rigi himself repeatedly refuted the connection.<sup>411</sup> Nevertheless, Iran continued to treat a connection between the United States and Jundallah as universally accepted fact. Iranian government officials reasserted U.S.–Jundallah links following attacks in October 2009, July 2010, and December 2010.<sup>412</sup> Iran further emphasized this narrative by airing confessions of U.S. support to Jundallah by both Abdolhamid and Abdolmalek Rigi after their arrests.<sup>413</sup> Iran also asserted this narrative diplomatically, with President Ahmadinejad requesting UN reprimand the United States for its support of Jundallah in April 2010.<sup>414</sup>

### **3. Effects of Additional Exposure**

The attention Jundallah ultimately received as a result of Iran's insistence on a U.S.–Jundallah connection increased insurgency exposure to a Baluch diaspora potentially sympathetic to its cause, providing critical avenues of sustainment that it otherwise would have been hard-pressed to obtain. In 2006, a RAND COIN study concluded that “outside governments or diaspora groups” can provide the political, economic, and other means of support which prove the difference between an insurgency remaining a “weak rebel group,”

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<sup>410</sup> Rozen.

<sup>411</sup> Housnell, “A Word of Caution about Seymour Hersh's Latest”; Rather, “The Most Wanted Man in Iran.” 20:26.

<sup>412</sup> “IRGC Chief: U.S., Britain, Pakistan Behind Sunday's Terrorist Act,” Iran News, October 20, 2009, NewsBank; “IRGC Commander Blames U.S., Israel for Zahedan Blasts,” Iran News, July 17, 2010, NewsBank; “U.S.–Guided Terror Management in Iran—And Elsewhere,” *Tehran Times*, January 9, 2011, NewsBank.

<sup>413</sup> “Iran Rebel, on Death Row, Says U.S. Supported Group,” RadioFreeEurope RadioLiberty, August 25, 2009, [https://www.rferl.org/a/Iran\\_Rebel\\_On\\_Death\\_Row\\_Says\\_US\\_Supported\\_Group/1807468.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/Iran_Rebel_On_Death_Row_Says_US_Supported_Group/1807468.html); Mike Shuster, “Mystery Surrounds Arrest of Iran's Most Wanted Man,” NPR, March 5, 2010, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=124332362>; “Iran Jundallah Leader Claims U.S. Military Support,” BBC News, February 26, 2010, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8537567.stm>.

<sup>414</sup> Colum Lynch, “Ahmadinejad's Letter to Ban Ki-moon,” *Foreign Policy*, April 23, 2010, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2010/04/13/ahmadinejads-letter-to-ban-ki-moon/>.

and becoming “more successful.”<sup>415</sup> Analysis indicates that Jundallah sustained itself by donations and support on the international stage. Inside the Persian Gulf, the increased media attention served to advertise for Jundallah in prominent Sunni countries, where Jundallah was able to draw funding from Baluch individuals and communities in Kuwait, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>416</sup> Outside the Middle East, increased attention also helped spur further funding and support. Significant Baluch populations exist in countries such as the United States, Europe, Scandinavia, and Australia, and individuals in these populations were assessed as funding and support sources for Jundallah.<sup>417</sup> Through the widespread, mainstream exposure of Jundallah vis-a-vis international media, bolstered by exploration of a connection between Western powers and the insurgency, Jundallah essentially acquired free advertising and facetime to rally additional support among prospective supporters.

Regardless of whether foreign nations were actually supporting Jundallah prior to 2007, the attention the organization received in worldwide media coincided with sustainment, if not increases in U.S. government interest in possibly supporting Jundallah and the Baluch. Less than a month after Hersh’s article was published, President George W. Bush gave the CIA written endorsement for limited operations fostering regime change in Iran, including provision of limited support to insurgents.<sup>418</sup> Congress subsequently authorized an expansion of U.S. covert support to Iranian dissent organizations, which according to media sources included Jundallah.<sup>419</sup> Politically, international attention took the near-unknown cause of Baluch nationalism and made it an issue of special interest. In 2012, Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, held congressional hearings exploring the possibility of U.S. support for an independent

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<sup>415</sup> Daniel Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, MR-1405-OTI (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2001), 6, <https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/www/external/congress/terrorism/phase2/insurgent.pdf>.

<sup>416</sup> Conan, “Insurgent Group Jundallah Worries Iranians.”

<sup>417</sup> “Baloch Diaspora to Form HR Body in London,” Dawn, August 22, 2008 <https://www.dawn.com/news/317684>; Rather, “The Most Wanted Man in Iran,” 21:00.

<sup>418</sup> Tim Shipman, “Bush Sanctions ‘Black Ops’ Against Iran,” *Telegraph*, May 27, 2007, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/1552784/Bush-sanctions-black-ops-against-Iran.html>.

<sup>419</sup> Hersh, “Preparing the Battlefield.”

Baluch state.<sup>420</sup> Rohrabacher also introduced legislation for direct U.S. support to Baluch insurgencies against Iran in 2013.<sup>421</sup>

Domestically, Jundallah's increased profile from international media attention correlated with increases in its strength and notoriety. Per Nicholas Johnston, an insurgent group's "perceived legitimacy" rises and falls with the group's reputation; the more formidable an insurgent group is perceived "in the eyes of society," The more successful it will be in expanding its network of support at local levels.<sup>422</sup> As attacks by Jundallah continued, Iran continued to denounce the organization as a U.S. puppet to both discredit Jundallah and provide an explanation as to why the Iranian state failed to defeat the organization. However, a consequence of Iran's narrative was reinforcement of Jundallah's legitimacy. The narrative simultaneously betrayed Iran's continuing failure to forestall the organization and created accidental propaganda which implied Jundallah's strength by association to a world power. Per Audun Kolstad Wiig, other armed opposition groups in Iran consistently offered endorsement and praise for Jundallah's accomplishments against the state.<sup>423</sup> Wiig notes that when formed, Jundallah was just 30 members strong , but by 2009 had grown to a strength of at least 600.<sup>424</sup> Jundallah's constant absorption of "myriad of small armed opposition groups operating in Baluchistan" fueled this growth.<sup>425</sup> Wiig's analysis also shows that Jundallah membership had grown beyond Sistan-Baluchistan as of 2008, and according to Abdolmalek Rigi's own assessment, this increased support and

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<sup>420</sup> Eddie Walsh, "Should the U.S. Support an Independent Balochistan?," Al Jazeera, March 3, 2012, <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/02/201222112203196390.html>.

<sup>421</sup> Somaz Elmi-Sarabi, "Congressman Urges U.S. to Foment Ethnic Tension in Iran," National Iranian American Council, last modified April 6, 2013, <https://www.niacouncil.org/congressman-urges-u-s-to-foment-ethnic-tension-in-iran/>.

<sup>422</sup> Nicholas Johnston, "Legitimacy as Political Capital in Insurgency," *Small Wars Journal*, January 12, 2018, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/legitimacy-political-capital-insurgency>.

<sup>423</sup> Wiig, *Islamist Opposition in the Islamic Republic*, 27.

<sup>424</sup> Wiig, 27.

<sup>425</sup> Wiig 23.

membership was fueling an ambition, as well as a capability to conduct attacks in Tehran and other areas of Iran, if necessary.<sup>426</sup>

#### **D. CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

As demonstrated in this chapter, Iran's COIN efforts against Jundallah carried at least three critical failures. First, Iran focused on decapitation tactics, expecting that killing and capturing the critical leadership nexus and family of Abdolmalek Rigi would prove enough to defeat Jundallah. However, Iran's assessment of Jundallah's center of gravity was incorrect and outdated, and Iran failed to accurately identify the organization's operational and organizational constructs, which allowed the insurgency to thrive well beyond Abdolmalek Rigi's lifespan. Second, Iran employed reprisal and rule of law operations in the wake of Jundallah as an assertion of their own competency and authority over the province. Again, this emphasis failed to accurately account for ground truth. Iran's COIN ignored established COIN precepts and cultural nuances of the Baluch tribes, which gave Jundallah increased opportunity to defy the Iranian state. This also expanded the magnitude of grievance which underpinned support for the insurgency. Finally, Iran repeatedly reinforced its standard counter to internal opposition by dismissing Jundallah as a U.S.-supported puppet. Regardless of how much validity there was to this claim, Iran's repeated assertion of a U.S.–Jundallah connection contributed to an explosion of exposure for Jundallah on the international stage. This connected the organization to additional avenues of support from government and non-state organizations and helped foster an enhanced credibility and reputation at the local and regional level.

These three mistakes hamstrung the prospects of Iran's COIN from defeating the Baluch insurgency that Jundallah revived in 2002. Moreover, these mistakes failed to stop insurgency beyond Jundallah's end. Jaish-ul Adl may be considered the child of Jundallah. Its founding members consist of former Jundallah operatives, and one of Jaish ul-Adl's leader was a confirmed Jundallah member. As Jundallah's organizational successor, Jaish

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<sup>426</sup> Wiig, 27; "Leader of the Jundallah Movement Fighting against Iran Abd Al-Malek Al-Rigi: We Plan to Carry Our Attack into Tehran," Middle East Media Research Institute TV Monitor Project, August 7, 2008, <https://www.memri.org/tv/leader-junduallah-movement-fighting-against-iran-abd-al-malek-al-rigi-we-plan-carry-our-attack/transcript>

ul-Adl has killed and injured scores of Iranians from 2012 to the present. Furthermore, Jaish ul-Adl appears more internationally connected, more fundamentalists, and initially, just as threatening to Iran's control over Sistan-Baluchistan. Iran's COIN approach to Jaish ul-Adl, and its effectiveness shall be discussed in the next chapter.

#### IV. THE POST-JUNDALLAH ERA: JAISH UL-ADL AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF IRANIAN COIN

The period following Jundallah's demise involved significant changes to Iranian COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan. After Jundallah, multiple insurgent organizations emerged which claimed to champion causes of the Iranian Baluch. Most groups appear to be smaller in scale, mounting handfuls, if any, noteworthy attacks against Iranian COIN and security apparatuses. However, one group, Jaish ul-Adl, stands overwhelmingly as the largest and most threatening insurgency to Iranian rule of law in the province. Jaish ul-Adl's membership is mostly remnants and associates of Jundallah, to include Jaish ul-Adl's leader, Salahuddin Farooqi, as well as Abdol Sattar Rigi, Abdolmalek Rigi's cousin.<sup>427</sup> By some estimates, Jaish ul-Adl is stronger than Jundallah, and therefore worse for Iranian COIN. These estimates draw on the purported activity level of Jaish ul-Adl. Some analysts assert that Jaish ul-Adl has conducted more than 200 attacks inside of Iran since 2012.<sup>428</sup> Compared with at best the several dozen major attacks Jundallah conducted, 200 attacks over a seven-year period appears to outpace Jundallah's operational tempo nearly tenfold.

Jaish ul-Adl's threat and performance as an insurgency appears far less colossal when evaluated in a more qualitative manner. In terms of lethality, Jaish ul-Adl has killed or kidnapped upwards of 150 Iranians.<sup>429</sup> When one considers that Jundallah accomplished similar levels of fatality with only a fraction of attacks, it undercuts the significance of Jaish ul-Adl's number, and indicates that Iranian forces more often than not have been able to prevent Jaish ul-Adl inflicting mass casualties. Considering rates of nonlethal injury, Jaish ul-Adl's record also pales in comparison to the 300 injuries from Jundallah attacks.<sup>430</sup> The identities of Jaish ul-Adl's victims provide further testament to improved

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<sup>427</sup> Shezad Baloch, "A Tale of Two Rigis: Iran Seeks Extradition of Jaish al-Nasr Chief," *Express Tribune*, March 9, 2015, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/850172/a-tale-of-two-rigis-iran-seeks-extradition-of-jaish-al-nasr-chief/>; Shaul Shay, "Iran Blames US, Israel for Suicide Attack on IRGC," *Israel Defense*, February 17, 2019, <https://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/37476>.

<sup>428</sup> Shay.

<sup>429</sup> Shay.

<sup>430</sup> Goodenough, "Iran Executes Insurgent Leader."

Iranian COIN performance. While Jundallah regularly targeted bystanders and non-government civilians, the overwhelming majority of the dead and injured by Jaish ul-Adl have been either IRGC or NAJA border guards. This indicates that security apparatuses are functioning as intended, functioning as bulwarks against Jaish ul-Adl attacking or gaining access to populations of Sistan-Baluchistan. In comparison of their most deadly attacks, Jaish ul-Adl further proves to be a shadow of their predecessor. To date, Jaish ul-Adl's deadliest attack was the February 2019 IRGC bus bombing that killed 27.<sup>431</sup> Jundallah committed at least three attacks which were far more fatal: the 2009 Pishin bombing, the July 2010 Zahedan bombings, and the December 2010 Chabahar bombings.<sup>432</sup>

The Iranian government's approach to COIN against Baluch insurgents following Jundallah's demise has improved dramatically, marking significant alterations of course away from Iran's mistakes against Jundallah. Instead of pursuing enemy-centric decapitation, Iran adopted a population-centric COIN approach designed to physically isolate and expel insurgents from the population through exhaustive, overlapping measures of border security. Where Iran sought to produce operational information that stressed its dominance and reprisal capabilities against Jundallah, Iran successfully manipulated Pakistan into creating a second governmental pressure on Jaish ul-Adl and other insurgent. Finally, where Iran's counter messaging against Jundallah was overwhelmingly underpinned by placement of blame for Jundallah's success on U.S. involvement, since 2012 Iran has crafted a comprehensive narrative marked by optimism, proactiveness, and improvement, designed to create the perception that Iran is not only succeeding against Baluch insurgents, but also improving security inside of Sistan-Baluchistan.

This chapter will discuss the particulars of Iranian COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan following Jundallah's demise. The following section describes how both insurgent and

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<sup>431</sup> Amy Held, "Nearly 2 Dozen Iranian Revolutionary Guards Reportedly Killed in Bomb Attack," NPR, February 13, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/02/13/694352657/nearly-two-dozen-iranian-revolutionary-guards-reportedly-killed-in-bomb-attack>.

<sup>432</sup> Slackman, "Iran Guard Commanders Are Killed in Bombings"; "Iranians Mourn 27 Killed in Suicide Attacks," CNN, July 18, 2010, <https://www.cnn.com/2010/WORLD/meast/07/17/iran.blasts/index.html>; James Reynolds, "Iran Suicide Bombing: Chabahar Mosque Hit by Attack," BBC, December 15, 2010, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-11997679>.



counterinsurgent are products of Jundallah. Next, this chapter details the particulars of Iran's border security operations, focusing on physical and personnel barriers, deportations, and border closures. The fourth section of highlights Iran's successful use of diplomatic, economic, and military leverage to produce increased Pakistani security force efforts against Baluch insurgency. Finally, this chapter discusses Iran's improved COIN narrative, where Iran portrayed itself as optimistic, proactive, and successful at counterinsurgency, demonstrated by emphasis on offensive raids, the Jaish ul-Adl hostage crises, framing of Jaish ul-Adl attacks, and Iran's portrayal of both Pakistan and itself in combatting Jaish ul-Adl and other Baluch insurgent groups.

#### **A. CHILDREN OF JUNDALLAH**

Iranian COIN in the post-Jundallah era is also a product of Iran's experiences with Jundallah. While facing adversaries who could be considered the insurgent descendants of Jundallah, Iran's modification and adaptation to combat Baluch insurgency from 2012 to the present has been shaped by Jundallah. Indeed, all the elements of Iran's approach to Jaish ul-Adl and other Baluch insurgent groups following Jundallah's collapse draw their roots, if not their actual genesis, from the era of Jundallah. For example, the Iranian border wall, discussed in the border security section of this chapter, began construction as early as 2000.<sup>433</sup> Some Pakistani incursions, discussed as a critical enhancement of Iranian COIN in this chapter also occurred during the Jundallah era. Pakistani security forces raided Jundallah hideouts in 2007 to rescue hostages taken earlier that year.<sup>434</sup> Finally, Pakistan's ineptitude at managing its border, which became an integral part of the Iranian COIN narrative post-Jundallah, was a recurring element of the narrative against Jundallah.<sup>435</sup>

Though many of the developments discussed in this chapter were already underway within Iranian COIN prior to Jundallah's demise, they did not fully materialize as primary arms of weaponry used by the Iranian state until after Jundallah's disbandment in 2012,

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<sup>433</sup> Philip Fiske, "Border Patrol with Iran's Drugbusters," BBC, May 19, 2000, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from\\_our\\_own\\_correspondent/755532.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/755532.stm).

<sup>434</sup> Saleem Shahid, "Iranian Hostages Freed After Clash with Militants," Dawn, August 21, 2007. <https://www.dawn.com/news/262289/iranian-hostages-freed-after-clash-with-militants>.

<sup>435</sup> Aryan, "Blaming Outsiders."

and thus should be considered part of Iranian COIN operations after Jundallah, and not before. The Iranian border wall, for example, did not reach any semblance of completion until at least 2012.<sup>436</sup> With consideration to Pakistani aggression toward Baluch-Iranian insurgency, though it did exist during Jundallah's tenure, the frequency, scope, and magnitude of Pakistani actions only expanded as Iran increased pressure for Pakistani action after Jundallah's demise and the subsequent emergence of Jaish ul-Adl. Finally, as will be discussed in this chapter, though Iran blamed Jundallah for continued insurgent attacks, that blame remained largely negative, and was not incorporated into a coherent COIN narrative that stressed the optimistic, proactive, and persistent projection of Iranian forces against Baluch insurgents as it has been since 2012.

## **B. ENHANCED BORDER SECURITY**

One defining element that differentiates the Iranian government's response to Jundallah and its approach to Jaish-ul-Adl involves increased measures of border security. During Jundallah's tenure, the Iran-Pakistan border remained essentially unsecured. David Kilcullen, in some of his opening remarks in *Counterinsurgency*, notes that one of the fundamental dynamics of coin is that "while guerillas are fluid, populations are fixed," and that an insurgent's ultimate "source of power" lies in the insurgents "connectivity" with a "local population in a given area."<sup>437</sup> It is precisely this connection which Baluch insurgents sought to exploit, and their means to do so lay in the porous border between Iran and Pakistan. Per Zahid Ali Khan, when compared with its other land borders Iran traditionally has spent significantly less time and effort restricting the Iran-Pakistan border, both constrained by and relying upon the harsh terrain that defines the border to discourage and restrict prospects of border crossings.<sup>438</sup> However, Iran's existing deterrence methods proved insufficient to preventing guerilla "fluidity;" until Jundallah's demise, Baluch

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<sup>436</sup> Associated Foreign Press, "Iran to Seal Eastern Borders by 2015," Dawn, July 2, 2011, <https://www.dawn.com/news/641120>; Saira Basit, "Explaining the Impact of Militancy on Iran-Pakistan Relations," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 29, no. 5-6 (June 2018): 1046, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2018.1546362>).

<sup>437</sup> Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 7.

<sup>438</sup> Zahid Ali Khan, "Balochistan Factor in Pak-Iran Relations: Opportunities and Constraints," *South Asian Studies* 27, no. 1 (January 2012): 123, ProQuest.

insurgents were able to straddle the Iran-Pakistan border, crossing into Iran when necessary to conduct operations, while retreating unopposed into the safety of Pakistan once Iran moved to respond.

Following Jundallah's demise, however, Iran sought to sever Baluch insurgent's capacity to traverse in and out of Iranian territory by fundamentally altering border control dynamics. Specifically, Iran utilized a population-centric approach of population control COIN, seeking to sanitize Sistan-Baluchistan from insurgent access by restricting cross-border movement. Toward this end, Iran adopted measures of border and immigration control in Sistan-Baluchistan which constricted previously near-unfettered access to border crossings that Baluch insurgents enjoyed, significantly limiting insurgent capabilities to attack and undermine the authority of the Iranian government. First, Iran improved its physical and personnel security apparatuses at the border, severely constraining the physical feasibility of crossing from Pakistan. Second, Iran embarked to expel from Iran all those with non-legal residence status in the Sistan-Baluchistan province. Finally, Iran completely shut down all cross-border traffic immediately following attacks, as well as pre-emptively doing so during occasions of strategic value and opportunity to insurgent groups, which severely restricted insurgent capacity to make an impact of attack.

### **1. COIN Theory on Porous Borders**

Porous international borders can provide a massive boon to an insurgency's prospects of success. Daniel Byman, et. al highlighted in their 2006 *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements* that "safe havens," particularly those "across international boundaries, are essential to insurgent movements because they can serve as a base of operations from which insurgents can plan and execute attacks with little to no fear of counter-targeting from the government which they are fighting against."<sup>439</sup> Byman, et. al list multiple cases where insurgent access to "cross-border sanctuaries" were the critical factor in an insurgency's "effectiveness."<sup>440</sup> They also argue that access to insurgent safe haven is only relevant if insurgents can transit to and from areas vulnerable to attack,

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<sup>439</sup> Byman et al., *Trends in Outside Support for Insurgent Movements*, 3.

<sup>440</sup> Byman et al., 3.

because “when rebels can trans/it through neighboring states (either through the connivance of an allied government or because of its weakness), it becomes far harder for their adversaries to defeat them.”<sup>441</sup> Seth G. Jones argues that extraterritorial safe havens increase the prospects and frequency of violence in an insurgency, yielding greater death and injury rates within affected populations.<sup>442</sup> Per Jones, since 1800, 70 percent of successful insurgencies possessed significant access to cross-border safe havens and other elements of external support, and groups with little to no external support, to include safe havens, only had a 28 percent success rate.<sup>443</sup>

Insurgent access to safe havens, and the capacity to travel across the border indiscriminately, is relevant to the geopolitics of Iranian Baluch insurgencies. The geography of Sistan-Baluchistan lends itself well to insurgent exploitation of the border. The Iran-Pakistan border is 900 kilometers, and the border extends through both mountain ranges and desert, making them hard to cross, but even more difficult to monitor without a force of significant personnel.<sup>444</sup> Ranking within the bottom 20 percent of population density in Iranian provinces, Sistan-Baluchistan has just 14 people per square kilometer.<sup>445</sup> These combined factors, undisturbed, create a higher prospect for insurgents being able to cross the Iran-Pakistan border with little to no concern of detection or repulsion. The efficacy and threat of this route is also illustrated by its heavy utilization by transnational criminal networks, specifically those linked to illicit drugs. Per John Calabrese, this mix of harsh terrain, low population density and the ease of crossing without detection, is the critical reason that the Iran-Pakistan and Iran-Afghanistan borders have been utilized to ship heroin produced in Afghanistan to Europe and other destinations.<sup>446</sup> Finally, the

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<sup>441</sup> Byman et al., 4.

<sup>442</sup> Seth G. Jones, *The Insurgent Sanctuary in Pakistan*, Report No. 180911 (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 2018), 3-4. [https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180911\\_Insurgent\\_Sanctuary\\_0.pdf?Di93wTOJ\\_ZpqMO38OTutzRXqaub.4.Dw](https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180911_Insurgent_Sanctuary_0.pdf?Di93wTOJ_ZpqMO38OTutzRXqaub.4.Dw).

<sup>443</sup> Jones, 3.

<sup>444</sup> Basit, “Explaining the Impact of Militancy on Iran-Pakistan Relations,” 1042.

<sup>445</sup> Knoema, “Population Statistics of Iran.”

<sup>446</sup> John Calabrese, “Iran’s War on Drugs: Holding the Line?,” Middle East Institute, December 1, 2007, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/irans-war-drugs-holding-line>.

cross-border aspects of Baluch insurgency have been confirmed as a factor in both Iranian and Pakistani-based Baluch insurgencies. Pakistani Baloch insurgents have used Iranian territory to avoid post-attack reprisal from Pakistan, while Iran frequently accused Pakistan of failing to capture Jundallah.<sup>447</sup>

## 2. Border Construction

Installing overlapping elements of physical security around areas of insurgent operations has proven to be a viable tool toward defeating insurgency. The most prominent example of physical barrier constructions reducing and preventing cross-border insurgent movements is the French use of Morice Line during the Algerian Revolution during the 1950s and 1960s. As U.S. Army Major Timothy Bairstow describes, the French faced a violent insurgency in Algeria which sought to counteract insurgents' military and technological inferiority by seeking easily accessible lines of supply, bases of operation, and safe havens outside of Algeria's borders.<sup>448</sup> The French response the Front de Libération Nationale insurgency was construction of an exhaustive, overlapping, and heavily manned physical barrier. Completed in 1957, The Morice Line was a series of physical barriers and deterrents constructed along Algeria's borders with Tunisia and Morocco, and designed to severely constrict the FLN's capacity to traverse in and out of Algeria at will.<sup>449</sup> With lethal deterrents, tens of thousands of personnel monitoring and defending the line, and an exhaustive swarth of military surveillance, intelligence, and fire support at its disposal, the Morice Line is considered to be the single-most significant aspect of France's COIN during the Algerian revolution, endorsed by COIN theorist heavyweights such as David Galula.<sup>450</sup> The positive impact of what Alexander Alderson

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<sup>447</sup> Aryan, "Blaming Outsiders"; Shahabuddin Shahab, "Pakistan Asks Iran to Act on Militants Behind Baluchistan Killings," Reuters, April 20, 2019, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-iran/pakistan-asks-iran-to-act-on-militants-behind-baluchistan-killings-idUSKCN1RW0EQ>.

<sup>448</sup> Timothy M. Bairstow, "Border Interdiction in Counterinsurgency: A Look at Algeria, Rhodesia, and Iraq" (master's thesis, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2016), 10, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a471103.pdf>.

<sup>449</sup> Bairstow, 27–29.

<sup>450</sup> Bairstow, 27–32; Austin Long, on "Other War": *Lessons from Five Decades of RAND Counterinsurgency Research*, MG-482-OSD (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2006), 69–71, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG482.html>.

characterizes as a “well-resourced obstacle” is also witnessed by the attempts to replicate the Morice Line’s effect in subsequent COIN efforts.<sup>451</sup> Although eventually abandoned as a failure, “The McNamara Line” was a well-funded, high priority effort initiated by the U.S. DoD to restrict the Vietcong’s capacity for cross-border entry and exit from South Vietnam.<sup>452</sup> Rhodesian forces, battling two distinct insurgencies simultaneously, utilized a physical barrier and deterrent approach called *Cordon Sanitaire* to constrict insurgent movements into and out of Rhodesian territory from 1965 to 1980.<sup>453</sup> In a contemporary context, a significant body of COIN experts have argued for establishments of well-staffed physical barriers as a means improve COIN performance against insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan.<sup>454</sup>

Iran’s border security plan also relies on its own version of a Morice-style barrier to constrain Jaish-ul-Adl and associated Baluch insurgent groups. Per Major Bairstow’s assessment, one of the reasons the Morice Line was effective against the Algerian insurgency was that the French spared little expense and resource in construction, reinforcement, and surveillance of a physical border.<sup>455</sup> Similarly, Iran has allocated significant efforts and resources toward producing an effective physical barrier. Iran began comprehensive construction of the Iran-Pakistan border wall in 2007, and by the time Jaish-ul-Adl was established in 2012, an Iranian-built, three foot thick, ten foot high physical barrier separated Sistan-Baluchistan from Pakistani Balochistan everywhere except Zahedan.<sup>456</sup> Iran completed the border wall, including around Zahedan in 2015.<sup>457</sup> The Morice Line had overlapping physical elements surrounding an eight foot electrified fence,

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<sup>451</sup> Alexander Alderson, “Iraq and Its Borders: The Role of Barriers in Counter-Insurgency,” *RUSI Journal* 153, no. 2 (April 2008): 20, ProQuest.

<sup>452</sup> Alderson, 20; Long, on “*Other War*,” 49–51.

<sup>453</sup> Alderson, 20.

<sup>454</sup> Bairstow, “Border Interdiction in Counterinsurgency,” 26–35; Alderson, 21–22; Kersti Larsdotter, “Regional Support for Afghan Insurgents: Challenges for Counterinsurgency Theory and Doctrine,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37, no. 1 (February 26, 2014): 153–156, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2013.878656>.

<sup>455</sup> Bairstow, 26–35.

<sup>456</sup> Associated Foreign Press, “Iran to Seal Eastern Borders by 2015.”

<sup>457</sup> Basit, “Explaining the Impact of Militancy on Iran-Pakistan Relations,” 1046.

while the Iranian barrier system in Sistan-Baluchistan consists of ten foot wall supplemented by a series of “linked embankments and ditches ... walls, berms, dry moats, and other fortifications.”<sup>458</sup> Just as surveillance support helped to bolster the efficacy of the Morice line, Iran has installed air and ground surveillance radars along the Iran-Pakistan border.<sup>459</sup> Aerial unmanned surveillance is also a component of border security, since the NAJA employ Mohajer unmanned aerial drones along the Sistan-Baluchistan Western border.<sup>460</sup>

Insurgent attack patterns indicate that robust, layered physical defense has at least partially reduced Jaish-ul-Adl’s attack capabilities. Jaish ul-Adl has carried out just six attacks which have successfully penetrated more than five miles from the Iran-Pakistan border: The February 2019 attack on a Nik Shahr Basij post, the February 2019 Khash-Zahedan road bus bombing, the January 2019 Zahedan bombing, the December 2018 Chabahar bombing, the February 2014 Jakigour border Guard kidnappings, and the December 2013 Saravan bombing.<sup>461</sup> Moreover, since Iran finished construction of physical barriers on the Iran-Pakistan border wall in 2015, only four Jaish-ul-Adl attacks have occurred more than five miles inside Iranian territory. These attacks excluded, the preponderance of Jaish ul-Adl’s engagement with Iranian forces have occurred at the border, if not just inside of it. These attacks can be subdivided into three categories. First, Jaish ul-Adl has targeted Iranian border guard outposts, located within several thousand yards of the Iran-Pakistan border. The October 2018 border guard kidnapping is an example of these operations.<sup>462</sup> A second category of attacks are the clashes between Iranian forces and Jaish ul-Adl which have Border traffic checkpoints. The April 2017

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<sup>458</sup> Martin W. Lewis, “The Iran-Pakistan Border Barrier,” *GeoCurrents*, May 13, 2011, <http://www.geocurrents.info/geopolitics/the-iran-pakistan-border-barrier>; Bairstow, “Border Interdiction in Counterinsurgency,” 28–30.

<sup>459</sup> Bairstow, 30; Vishwanath Patil, “Iran Installs Locally-Made Radar Along Border With Pakistan,” *DefenseWorld.Net*, January 21, 2019, [https://www.defenseworld.net/news/24116/Iran\\_Installs\\_Locally\\_made\\_Radar\\_Along\\_Border\\_with\\_Pakistan#.Xg0v10dKhPY](https://www.defenseworld.net/news/24116/Iran_Installs_Locally_made_Radar_Along_Border_with_Pakistan#.Xg0v10dKhPY).

<sup>460</sup> Babak Takhavai, “Control 2, the Backbone of The Iranian UAV,” *BBC Persia*, June 27, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/persian/iran-40405835>.

<sup>461</sup> See Appendix D.

<sup>462</sup> al-Awsat, “Jaish-ul-Adl’ Publishes Images of Abducted Iranian Soldiers.”

Mirjaveh ambush is an example of this type of attack.<sup>463</sup> Finally, a significant number of attacks by Jaish ul-Adl have failed to even penetrate Iranian territory, and instead were directed at border outposts and IRGC facilities from within Pakistan. Examples of these attacks include April and June 2018 clashes between Jaish ul Adl and Iranian forces.<sup>464</sup>

### 3. Relocation

Though unpopular, and unacceptable in many political climates, there is evidence that forced population migrations in certain circumstances prove an effective COIN tool to constrain insurgency. Per Daniel Byman's study of COIN in non-democratic regimes, population relocation has historically proven to be a measure which limited insurgent threats over longer periods of time, while also proving more effective than more violent repression.<sup>465</sup> Specifically, Byman's reviews of Russian COIN in the 1940s Caucasus region and Burmese COIN demonstrates that so long as the population groups which contain insurgents and their supporters are correctly identified, deportation can be an amplifying or decisive factor which neutralizes, or even defeats insurgency.<sup>466</sup> Per Byman, deportation holds tactical value because it directly attacks the insurgent's ability to blend back into an indigenous population once threatens, extends their lines of operation and communications to potential battlefields, and cripples their ability to react effectively and in a timely manner.<sup>467</sup> Spyridon Plakoudas makes a similar argument for the efficacy of Greek COIN efforts against communist insurgents in the 1940s. He argues that the Greek monarchy "profiled" the identity groups of insurgents and their supporters, then conducted "involuntary transfers" that physically separated these groups from the territory where the

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<sup>463</sup> Reuters, "Militants Kill 10 Iranian Border Guards in Attack on Frontier With Pakistan," *Guardian*, April 26, 2017, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/apr/26/militants-kill-ten-iranian-border-guards-in-attack-on-frontier-with-pakistan>.

<sup>464</sup> "Iranian Forces Foil Terrorist Attack in Border Town," *Iran Daily*, April 17, 2018, NewsBank; "Three Terrorists, Three Iranian Forces Killed in Border Clash," *Iran Daily*, June 26, 2018, NewsBank.

<sup>465</sup> Byman, "Death Solves All Problems," 78.

<sup>466</sup> Byman, 78.

<sup>467</sup> Byman, 78.



insurgency was taking place.<sup>468</sup> Plakoudas concludes that “under very specific circumstances,” The Greek COIN success with population relocation could be replicated.<sup>469</sup>

The Iranian government in Sistan-Baluchistan employed population relocation as part of an operation to forcibly remove the possibility of illegal Pakistanis contributing to Baluch insurgency. Per Zahid Ali Khan, the Baluch in both Pakistan and Iran do not recognize their counterparts on the other side of the border as a distinct culture or ethnicity from their own; under normal conditions, the Baluch frequently engage in cross border travel for religious, social, and economic reasons.<sup>470</sup> Iran’s normal policy for the Pakistani Baluch recognizes and accounts for this aspect of Baluch culture. Prior to recent upticks in Baluch insurgency, the Iranian visa systems had institutionalized processes for “Rahadar,” where Baluch living in Pakistani border regions, would be permitted to enter Iran so long as they could demonstrate a reasonable family, business, or religious reason for the visit.<sup>471</sup> Zahid Ali Khan’s assessment indicates this process was tenable for the majority of Pakistani Baluch.<sup>472</sup> Since 2012, however, Iranian has massively increased deportations of Pakistani citizens found unlawfully residing in Sistan-Baluchistan. Though complete estimates from Pakistan’s Federal Investigation Agency are not available for 2013, 2017, and 2019, based on available information, since 2012, Iran has deported at least 113,000 people from Sistan-Baluchistan to Pakistan via the Taftan border crossing.<sup>473</sup>

#### **4. Border Closures**

The Iranian state frequently shut down cross-border traffic entirely because of the Baluch insurgency. Basit mentions that since 2009, the Iranian security apparatus has reacted to Baluch insurgent attacks by closing the Taftan-Mirjaveh border gate, which is

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<sup>468</sup> Spyridon Plakoudas, “Population Transfers in Counterinsurgency: a Recipe for Success?,” *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, 27, no. 4 (July 2016): 695, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2016.1189542>.

<sup>469</sup> Plakoudas, 695.

<sup>470</sup> Khan, “Balochistan Factor in Pak-Iran Relations,” 123–125.

<sup>471</sup> Khan, 124.

<sup>472</sup> Khan, 124.

<sup>473</sup> See Appendix E.

the sole Iranian-Pakistani land crossing between the two countries.<sup>474</sup> However, beginning in the period after Jundallah’s disbandment, border crossing closures increased in both frequency and length. Based on the information that this research has been able to obtain, in 2018 and 2019, Iran secured border crossing at Taftan-Mirjaveh for at least 30 of 104 total weeks, in effect shutting down the vast majority of conventional cross border traffic between Iran and Pakistan for more than a quarter of the time.<sup>475</sup> Iran has also preemptively shut down border crossings to prevent insurgents access to high visibility targets. For example, research indicates that the Iranian state suspended all border admissions from Pakistan during the religious periods during Ashura and Arba’een in 2017, 2018, and 2019 based on security concerns.<sup>476</sup> These closures were initially enacted not as a reaction to Jaish-ul-Adl operations, but instead as a preventative measure to deny potential Jaish-ul-Adl insurgents based in Pakistan from crossing into Iran and carrying out attacks.

Building on strong border integrity, Iran’s border closures serve as an effective leverage tool toward population centric COIN. As Austin Long summarizes, the ability of counterinsurgents to “seal” borders at will proves “very useful” in COIN operations.<sup>477</sup> Building off of strong border security, the ability to constrict, and if necessary, completely cut off cross-border traffic to deny the insurgent access to the environment. This is historically demonstrated by French COIN efforts during the Algerian insurgency, who would secure all cross border traffic in response to Algerian insurgent activity, enforced by the Morice Line.<sup>478</sup> Particularly as border security presence increased, and the physical barriers that Iran erected on the Pakistan-Iran border grew, shutting down Taftan effectively sealed the Iran-Pakistan border to cross-border travel. Reactively, in cases where Iran quickly shut down Taftan following major attacks, a triage and damage control effect emerged; closures created pressure on insurgents still in country, and allowed the Iranian security and police apparatuses to close in, arrest, and hold accountable insurgents

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<sup>474</sup> Basit, “Explaining the Impact of Militancy on Iran-Pakistan Relations,” 1047–1048.

<sup>475</sup> See Appendix F.

<sup>476</sup> See Appendix F.

<sup>477</sup> Long, on “*Other War*,” xi.

<sup>478</sup> Long, 49.

still in their territory. Proactively, when the Iranian State shuts down Taftan in advance of Shia or other national commemorations, it effectively denies access to these attractive psychological targets for the Baluch insurgency because it reduces, mitigates or neutralizes the insurgent capacity to conduct attacks.

### **C. PAKISTAN ACTION AS COIN AUGMENTATION**

As previously discussed, the combination of cross-border safe havens and insurgent groups' unfettered capability to traverse borders has often proven a fatal combination for COIN operations. The previous section of this chapter highlighted how Iranian COIN efforts against Jaish ul-Adl sought to attack insurgent access to Iranian territory. However, Iranian COIN also embarked on operations designed to diminish the safe havens Jaish ul-Adl enjoyed in Pakistani territory. Iran used diplomatic, economic, and military engagement to persuade Pakistan to increase aggression and pursuit of Jaish ul-Adl and other Iran Baluch insurgent groups. Combined with increased measures of border security which constricted previous unfettered access to Sistan-Baluchistan, this created two-sided pressure and Baluch insurgent groups which operated in Iran.

It is apparent that over time, Pakistan has acted in Balochistan at the behest of and benefit toward Iranian COIN efforts. First, Pakistan has increased surveillance and intelligence activities against Jaish ul-Adl, and furthermore has shared the information and products of these efforts with their Iranian counterparts. An example of this occurred in February 2014, where Pakistan provided Iran with the location of Jaish ul-Adl hostages, and similar intelligence sharing, and hostage updates Pakistan provided to Iran in 2018.<sup>479</sup> Second, Pakistan has attacked Jaish ul-Adl directly, like when Pakistani security forces raided Jaish ul-Adl strongholds in March 2014 to rescue five abducted Iranians.<sup>480</sup> Third, Pakistani forces have arrested critical Iranian Baluch insurgent leadership, such as Abdul

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<sup>479</sup> "Iran Says Ready to Fight Terror on Pakistani Soil," *Iran Daily*, November 17, 2018, NewsBank; "Pakistan Locates Jaish-Ul-Adl Hideout," *Iran Daily*, February 25, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>480</sup> "Pakistan Ambassador to Brief MPs on Abducted Guards," *Iran Daily*, March 16, 2014, NewsBank.

Salam Rigi, the former Jundallah leader.<sup>481</sup> Pakistan has also offered to extradite Baluch insurgents, as was the case with Abdul Sattar Rigi in 2015.<sup>482</sup> Finally, Iranian pressure has pushed Pakistan to begin its own border construction along the Sistan-Baluchistan-Balochistan provincial border, which could multiply Iran's border security effectiveness.<sup>483</sup>

This section discusses the diplomatic, economic, and military leverage Iran used against Pakistan to achieve greater levels of Pakistani aggressive action toward Iranian Baluch insurgents. Diplomatically, Iran initiated frequent summits with Pakistan, and created bilateral organizations with specific focus on countering Baluch militancy. Economically, Iran targeted Pakistan's oil dependency and cross-border trade reliance as a means of persuasion. Militarily, Iran demonstrated a willingness to violate Pakistani territorial sovereignty in pursuit of Jaish ul-Adl, while leveraging military activity as positive reinforcement and encouragement of Pakistani cooperation with Iranian COIN.

## 1. Diplomacy

Diplomatically, Iran frequently engaged with Pakistan to secure their intervention against Jaish ul-Adl. As early as February 2014, Iran was deliberately engaging with Pakistan through the foreign ministry and MOIS to constrain, pursue, and target Jaish ul-Adl within Pakistani territory.<sup>484</sup> These diplomatic efforts have taken two forms. First, bilateral meetings, the use of which is illustrated below through their instrumentality to resolving hostage crises. Second, Iran has created and reinforced permanent bilateral institutions between Pakistan and Iran.

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<sup>481</sup> Muhammad Akbar Notezai, "Can ISIS Gain a Foothold in Balochistan?," *The Diplomat*, January 7, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/01/can-isis-gain-a-foothold-in-balochistan/>; Baloch, "A Tale of Two Rigs."

<sup>482</sup> "Pakistan-Iran Relations: Complex Dynamics," *CommandEleven*, May 3, 2017, <https://www.commandeleven.com/pakistan/pakistan-iran-relations-complex-dynamics/>; "Terrorist Abdul Sattar Rigi Held," *The Nation*, May 1, 2015, <https://nation.com.pk/01-May-2015/terrorist-abdul-sattar-rigi-held>.

<sup>483</sup> "Pakistan Begins Fencing Border With Iran," *Iran Daily*, May 11, 2019, NewsBank; "Pakistan to Fence Border With Iran," *YeniSafak*, March 20, 2019, <https://www.yenisafak.com/en/world/pakistan-to-fence-border-with-iran-3477000>.

<sup>484</sup> Merat, "Iran Calls For Return of Abducted Border Guards Held in Pakistan"; "MP Calls For Diplomatic Solution to Free Iran Abducted Border Guards," *ISNA*, February 22, 2014, NewsBank.

Iran used high level diplomatic exchanges to influence Pakistani behavior during both Jaish ul-Adl hostage crises. In response to Jaish ul-Adl's 2014 border guard abductions in Jakigour, at least 12 face-to-face diplomatic meetings occurred which either focused on freeing the Iranian hostages, improving bilateral counterinsurgency, or counterterrorism efforts.<sup>485</sup> These bilateral communications were pervasive at all levels of government, including the provincial governorships of Balochistan and Sistan-Baluchistan, members of the Iranian and Pakistani Parliament, both nations' Foreign Ministries, the Iranian President, and the Pakistani Prime Minister.<sup>486</sup> The exhaustive pattern of diplomatic engagement was repeated following Jaish ul-Adl's Mirjaveh abductions in October 2018. In the two months after the initial abductions, Iranian officials held at least 7 official meetings with Pakistani authorities in pursuit of securing hostage release, again involving high level IRGC, parliamentary, and foreign ministry officials.<sup>487</sup>

Proactively, Iran's bilateral diplomatic efforts with Pakistan have established permanent cross-border entities which improve Iranian COIN operations. To date, the Joint Border Commission has convened 23 times for bilateral coordination on countering cross-border criminality, insurgency, and terrorism, and the delegations for each nation usually involve high ranking diplomats and security apparatus executives.<sup>488</sup> Moreover, the frequency of Joint Border Commission convenings appears to be increasing, having met seven times since July 2019.<sup>489</sup> These meetings often produce new or overhauled agreements between Iran and Pakistan on cross-border security which directly increased both Iran's and Pakistan's capacity to cooperatively combat Baluch insurgency. In a 2014 Joint Border Commission, Iran and Pakistan signed an extradition memorandum of understanding, providing clear causeway by which known insurgents wanted by either

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<sup>485</sup> See Appendix G.

<sup>486</sup> See Appendix G.

<sup>487</sup> See Appendix G.

<sup>488</sup> "Iran-Pakistan Hold 23rd Session of Joint Border Commission," *Iran Daily*, January 1, 2020, NewsBank.

<sup>489</sup> Arab News Pakistan, "Pakistan Army Denies Reports of Joint Border Patrols with Iran," Arab News, December 9, 2019, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1596296/pakistan>; "Iran and Pakistan Sign Border Agreement," Islam Times, January 3, 2020, <https://www.islamtimes.org/en/news/836265/iran-and-pakistan-sign-border-agreement>.

nation could be held accountable for offenses committed on the other side of the border.<sup>490</sup> Similarly, a 2016 Joint Border Commission agreement targeted potential safe havens of militants and insurgents in the vicinity of border communities, and a December 2017 agreement created open, direct communications lines between both nations border force headquarters, while committing to future joint border patrols.<sup>491</sup> These diplomatic summits have also provided recourse by which Pakistan and Iran can share critical intelligence, and enhance one another's COIN approaches. For example, the February 2014 Joint Border Commission included exhaustive Pakistani intelligence updates on the border guard abductions and created a specific task force dedicated to a safe resolution of the crisis.<sup>492</sup> At times, this diplomatic engagement has yielded pre-emptive windfalls for Iranian COIN. During the May 2015 summit, Pakistan revealed that they had arrested Abdul Sattar Rigi, Abdolmalek Rigi's brother and leader of a Jundallah offshoot called Jaish al-Nasr, based on suspicion that he was conducting low-level attacks in Sistan-Baluchistan, and if Iran sought his extradition, that it was feasible.<sup>493</sup>

## **2. Economic**

To convince Pakistan to act in the interest of Iranian COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan, Iran has leveraged the Pakistan's dependence on imports, particularly in the energy sector using intermittent border closures. Pakistan's importations from Iran are highly involved with its own energy security. According to a 2015 report, Pakistan is energy deficient, often experiencing shortfalls between 20 and 40 percent of national demand, resulting in regular

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<sup>490</sup> "Pakistan, Iran Ink Eight Agreements and MoUs," D-8 Organization for Economic Cooperation, May 12, 2014, <http://developing8.org/news/pakistan-iran-ink-eight-agreements-and-mous/>.

<sup>491</sup> Orkhan Jalilov, "Pakistan Army Chief Visits Tehran, Looking to Cooperate on Border Security," Caspian News, November 9, 2017, <https://caspiannews.com/news-detail/pakistan-army-chief-visits-tehran-looking-to-cooperate-on-border-security-2017-11-8-40/>; Ayesha Tanzeem, "Iran, Pakistan Agree to Boost Border Security, Trade," Voice of America News, February 1, 2016, <https://www.voanews.com/east-asia/iran-pakistan-agree-boost-border-security-trade>.

<sup>492</sup> Associated Foreign Press, "Pakistan Ready to Act on Credible, Actionable Intel to Recover Missing Iranian Soldiers," *Express Tribune*, March 26, 2014, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/687627/iran-blames-pakistan-for-abduction-execution-of-soldier/>.

<sup>493</sup> Dawn, "Iranian Terrorist in Pakistan's Custody."

power outages in urban areas, and more hours without power than with it in rural areas.<sup>494</sup> According to the Pakistan Business Council, the top three Pakistani Imports from Iran from 2014 to 2018 were gaseous and liquefied hydrocarbons, light oils, and electricity; 23.74%, 13.33%, and 10.82% of Pakistan's entire import volume for these items, respectively.<sup>495</sup> As Iran has constrained, limited, and intermittently shut down the border, it seems that Pakistan has suffered negative effects resultant from loss of exchange. Per Saira Basit, the frequent border closures which Iran has enacted have a distinctive, palpable "annulment of all trade."<sup>496</sup> Amidst the multitude of border closures Iran has imposed, Pakistani import and export with Iran still remains a fraction of its decade-high of a \$1.2 billion export-import volume from 2009.<sup>497</sup> Moreover, the highest echelons of Iranian governance have indicated that there is a direct relation between Iranian-Pakistani COIN and security cooperation and increased level of economic exchange. During a bilateral exchange between Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and President Rouhani, Khan noted that his "most important" priority for the meeting was countering militants and "terrorism" which he identified as the most inflammatory factor that "caused differences" between Iran and Pakistan. Meanwhile, Rouhani expressed satisfaction at Pakistan's recent performance toward Baluch militant groups, while announcing an agreement to increase Iranian exportation of electricity to Pakistan tenfold.<sup>498</sup>

Considering Pakistan's energy security, there are economic cooperative projects that function as leverage tools for influencing Pakistani behavior, as well. Pakistan is keenly aware that it will likely be wholly import-dependent to satisfy its energy needs in

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<sup>494</sup> Michael Kugelman, "Easing an Energy Crisis That Won't End," in *Pakistan's Interminable Energy Crisis: Is There Any Way Out?* (Washington, DC: The Wilson Center 2015), 2, [https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/the-proposed-iran-pakistan-india-gas-pipeline-unacceptable-risk-regional-security#\\_ftn1](https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/the-proposed-iran-pakistan-india-gas-pipeline-unacceptable-risk-regional-security#_ftn1).

<sup>495</sup> Samir S. Amir and Salik Saeed, *Pakistan's Trade With Its Regional Partners* (Karachi, Pakistan: The Pakistan Business Council, May 2019), 92, <https://www.pbc.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/Regional-Trade-digital.pdf>.

<sup>496</sup> Basit, "Explaining the Impact of Militancy on Iran-Pakistan Relations," 1047–1048.

<sup>497</sup> Amir and Saeed, *Pakistan's Trade with Its Regional Partners*, 88.

<sup>498</sup> "No Third Country Can Affect Iran-Pakistan Ties: Rouhani," *Tehran Times*, April 22, 2019, NewsBank.

the coming decades.<sup>499</sup> Iran and Pakistan have been negotiating construction of a pipeline which would transfer Iranian natural gas to Pakistan since the early 1990s.<sup>500</sup> In 2013, months before Jaish ul-Adl's first attack, Iran and Pakistan began pipeline construction on both sides of the border.<sup>501</sup> Securing natural gas reserves in the early years after Jundallah's disbandment was also important to Pakistan. Per the U.S. Energy Information Administration, as of 2015, Pakistan had a yearly shortfall in natural gas demands of at least 730 billion cubic feet per year, roughly 33 percent of its overall demand.<sup>502</sup> The Iran-Pakistan pipeline provides an answer to this deficit. With initial capability estimates of transferring 22 billion cubic meters per year from Iran to Pakistan, this energy provision provided redressal of a critical energy shortfall for Pakistan.<sup>503</sup>

Beginning with even early Jaish ul-Adl attacks and abductions, it is evident that Iran utilized the continued construction and participation in the joint pipeline as leverage toward influencing action against Jaish ul-Adl and other insurgents. When Iranian president Rouhani met with the National Assembly Speaker of Pakistan after the February 2014 Jakigour abductions, he demanded that Pakistani forces do more to secure their border regions, calling Jaish ul-Adl's capacity to strike at Iran from the safety of Pakistan "by no means acceptable."<sup>504</sup> In response, Sadiq reaffirmed his commitment toward deepening "ties with Iran in all fields," and noted that Pakistan "would not allow such acts of terror to negatively impact ties with Iran."<sup>505</sup> The association between continued work on the

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<sup>499</sup> Kugelmann, "Easing an Energy Crisis That Won't End," 2.

<sup>500</sup> Ariel Cohen, Lisa Curtis, and Owen Graham, *The Proposed Iran-Pakistan-India Gas Pipeline: An Unacceptable Risk to Regional Security*, No. 2139 (Washington, DC: The Heritage Foundation, 2008), 2, [https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/the-proposed-iran-pakistan-india-gas-pipeline-unacceptable-risk-regional-security#\\_ftn1](https://www.heritage.org/asia/report/the-proposed-iran-pakistan-india-gas-pipeline-unacceptable-risk-regional-security#_ftn1).

<sup>501</sup> Jonathan Marcus, "Pakistan-Iran Gas Pipeline Defies US," BBC News, March 11, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-21736725>.

<sup>502</sup> "Pakistan: Energy Analysis," United States Energy Information Administration, August 2016, <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis.php?iso=PAK>.

<sup>503</sup> Muhammad Umar Farooq Baloch, "Pakistan-Iran Pipeline Project—A Liberal Perspective," Institute for Strategic Studies Research and Analysis Papers 4, no. 2 (July 2012): 121, [https://ndu.edu.pk/issra/issra\\_pub/articles/issra-paper/ISSRA\\_Papers\\_Vol4\\_IssueII\\_2012/06-Pakistan-Iran-Pipeline-Project-Umer-Baloch.pdf](https://ndu.edu.pk/issra/issra_pub/articles/issra-paper/ISSRA_Papers_Vol4_IssueII_2012/06-Pakistan-Iran-Pipeline-Project-Umer-Baloch.pdf).

<sup>504</sup> "Pakistan Again Urged to Improve Security," *Iran Daily*, February 19, 2014. NewsBank.

<sup>505</sup> *Iran Daily*.



pipeline and Pakistan's continued pursuit and applied pressure on Baluch groups endures beyond the Jakigour hostage crisis. Gholam Reza Asadollahi an Iranian Parliament representative, and the head of the "Iran-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Group" specifically noted that continued progress and completion of the pipeline was directly dependent on Pakistan taking more aggressive measures against Jaish ul-Adl and other Iranian Baluch insurgent groups.<sup>506</sup> In May 2014, Asadollahi called completion of the cross-border pipeline "an important and strategic project," that should be "implemented and finalized" without delay, but also noted that the attacks by Jaish ul-Adl and other insurgent groups "produced many problems" and put continuation of the project at risk.<sup>507</sup> Similarly, during a May 2014 meeting between Pakistan Prime Minister and Iranian First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri, both entities linked continued construction on the project a "safe and secure" environment in the Iran-Pakistan border region.<sup>508</sup>

### 3. Military

Iran has threatened as well as demonstrated the capability and willingness to commit violence inside of Pakistan if Pakistan's efforts to contain Baluch insurgent groups prove insufficient. Iranian officials, particularly those from the IRGC, have frequently threatened to cross into Pakistan and attack Jaish ul-Adl if Pakistan fails to do so.<sup>509</sup> On several occasions, Iran has made good on this threat, conducting unilateral military action into Pakistani sovereign territory as punishment and redressal for Iranian Baluch insurgent attacks. In October 2014, in the wake of back-to-back insurgent attacks in Zahedan, Iranian security forces pursued Baluch insurgents into Pakistan, violating Pakistan's sovereign territory, and causing the death of at least one Pakistani soldier.<sup>510</sup> In May 2015, following

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<sup>506</sup> "Iran MP Says Pakistan PM Visit Could Help Pipeline Project," *Qods*, May 10, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>507</sup> *Qods*.

<sup>508</sup> "President Underscores Iran-Pakistan Security Ties," *Iran Daily*, May 11, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>509</sup> Ted Regencia, "Iran Warns Pakistan to Crack Down on Jaish al-Adl," Al Jazeera, February 16, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/02/iran-warns-pakistan-crack-jaish-al-adl-190216071021469.html>; "Iran to Use Its Power If Abducted Border Guard Killed By "Rebel" Group—Minister," IRNA, March 26, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>510</sup> Alex Vatanka, "Iran-Pakistan: Will Border Tensions Boil Over?," BBC, October 24, 2014, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-29752647>; "Pakistan's Failure to Guard Its Borders Is Unacceptable: Iran Police Chief," *Tehran Times*, October 12, 2014, NewsBank.

two fatal Jaish-ul-Adl attacks within a month, and prefaced with previous warnings that failure of Pakistani forces to capture those responsible for the attacks would force Iran to destroy Jaish ul-Adl in Pakistan themselves, Iranian forces launched a two day barrage of rocket and mortar fire into Balochistan, purportedly directed at Jaish ul-Adl bases of operation.<sup>511</sup> At least one Pakistani was killed.<sup>512</sup>

Iran is further able to influence Pakistan in military and security affairs through positive reinforcement, and Iran's military and security behavior toward Pakistan factors into Iran's pressuring Pakistan to crack down on Baluch insurgents. One of the largest actions Iran has taken in terms of military and security action toward Iran-Pakistan relations has been inaction. As Afshon Ostovar notes, throughout the Middle East, one of Iran's most powerful and often-used tools for influencing foreign states has been the creation and support of "militant clients," particularly those "among co-religionist Shiites ... in foreign countries at the substate level."<sup>513</sup> Pakistan, however, with the second largest concentration of Shia Muslims in the entire world, has not been a target for Iran's militant client creation.<sup>514</sup> This dynamic is persistent, both in previous eras of Iran-Pakistan relations, as well as the time period which is subject to the study of this thesis.<sup>515</sup> Furthermore, Pakistan struggles against its own Baluch insurgencies, and at times these insurgents have based themselves in Sistan-Baluchistan and attacked across the border.<sup>516</sup> These attacks have intermittently prompted Pakistan to demand from Iran their assistance in prosecution and extradition of Baloch insurgents using their side of the border as a safe

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<sup>511</sup> Gul Yousufzai, "Pakistan Says Iranian Mortar Attack Kills Civilian," Reuters, May 27, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-iran-border/pakistan-says-iranian-mortar-attack-kills-civilian-idUSKBN18N0FM>; "Pakistan Accountable For Deaths of Iranian Border Guards: Ministry," *Iran Daily*, April 27, 2017, NewsBank; "Gunmen Kill Two Policemen in Southwest Iran," *Iran Daily*, May 15, 2017, NewsBank.

<sup>512</sup> Yousufzai.

<sup>513</sup> Afshon Ostovar, "The Grand Strategy of Militant Clients: Iran's Way of War," *Security Studies* 28 no. 1 (October 2018): 168, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09636412.2018.1508862>.

<sup>514</sup> "Iran's Shia Policy Keeps Pakistan on Side," *Jane's*, November 13, 2009, <https://janes-ihs-com/Display/jiaa5242-jiaa-2009>.

<sup>515</sup> *Jane's*.

<sup>516</sup> "Pakistan Blames Iran-Based Separatists For Deadly Baluchistan Attack," DW, April 20, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/pakistan-blames-iran-based-separatists-for-deadly-baluchistan-attack/a-48416436>.

haven, as was the case with a Baloch separatist attack that killed 15 Pakistani military members in April 2019.<sup>517</sup> In response President Rouhani agreed to the creation of a “Joint Border Force” along the Pakistani-Iranian frontier, specifically designed to pool the intelligence, border control, and surveillance resources of both nations.<sup>518</sup> In addition the agreement set up a bilateral “reaction force” designed to quickly respond to militant attacks on both sides of the border.<sup>519</sup>

#### **D. A COHERENT NARRATIVE**

Coherent Information operations designed to create a relative gap in positive opinions between counterinsurgents and insurgents can yield significant windfalls. As discussed in previous chapters, effective narratives play a critical role for both insurgency and COIN. In *Taliban Narratives*, Thomas Johnson describes the insurgency-COIN conflict as “primarily an information war supported by military kinetics,” where ultimately the belligerent faction with the best narrative “will probably win or at least stalemate the conflict” to their advantage.<sup>520</sup> Johnson also mentions the criticality of a force conducting superior “perception management,” which can be summarized as the totality of efforts by which a given insurgent or COIN force seeks to manage its reputation in the eyes of a population or audience.<sup>521</sup>

In the Post-Jundallah era, Iran created a pervasive narrative which positively portrayed the Iranian government as wholly superior when compared with Baluch insurgents considering impact on the Baluch population. First, Iran’s messaging largely jettisoned undertones of U.S. involvement in the Baluch insurgency, which previously was the lynchpin of the COIN narrative against Jundallah. Next, Iranian COIN messaging emphasized Iranian forces as proactively engaging insurgents, creating a perception of the

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<sup>517</sup> Shahab, “Pakistan Asks Iran to Act on Militants Behind Baluchistan Killings.”

<sup>518</sup> “Iran, Pakistan Agree to Joint Border ‘Reaction Force,’” DW, April 22, 2019, <https://www.dw.com/en/iran-pakistan-agree-to-joint-border-reaction-force/a-48434184>.

<sup>519</sup> DW.

<sup>520</sup> Johnson, *Taliban Narratives*, 13.

<sup>521</sup> Johnson, 11.

Iranian government making Sistan-Baluchistan a safer place. Iran continued this self-portrayal as a forward-leaning government in consideration of the Jaish ul-Adl hostage crises, which could be considered a complete reversal in narrative when compared with similar incidents during Jundallah's existence. Iran's counter-messaging in response to Jaish ul-Adl attacks maintained positive outlooks and emphasized an ever-improving security situation, converting what could have been Jaish ul-Adl psychological victories into events which benefitted the perception of Iranian security apparatuses. Finally, Iran utilized this same emphasis of optimism and progressive action to simultaneously deflect blame for continued attacks toward Pakistani incompetence, while portraying Iran in a positive light as a concerned neighbor and mentor who sought to improve regional, as well as national security.

### **1. The Absence of the United States in Recurring Villainy**

There is a presence of U.S. association with Jaish ul-Adl in the Iranian COIN rhetoric, but it is far less pertinent than COIN rhetoric against Jundallah. Cross referencing and Boolean logic-based search tools indicate that both domestically and internationally, Iran marketed a heavier narrative association between Jundallah and the United States than it did between Jaish ul-Adl and the United States. For example, when cross referencing all of the articles that the News Article database Nexis Uni contains for Jundallah, regardless of variance of spelling, there is an absolute higher occurrence of articles which contain subject matter on Jundallah and the United States when compared with this same frequency of association between Jaish ul-Adl and the United States.<sup>522</sup> Looking at Iranian domestic media, with consideration to these same cross references based on articles in NewsBank's archives, this difference in dynamic is equally apparent.<sup>523</sup>

Beyond simple data, Iran's accusatory rhetoric concerning the United States against Jaish ul-Adl is a much more reserved than that which Iran employed against Jaish ul-Adl's predecessor. Iran's head of state has never written to the Secretary General of the United Nations, demanding condemnation of the United States for alleged involvement in a Jaish

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<sup>522</sup> See Appendix H.

<sup>523</sup> See Appendix H.

ul-Adl attack, but they have done so in the case of Jundallah.<sup>524</sup> Of note, when compared with Iran's repeated assertions of connections between Jundallah and the U.S. government, the association that Iran chooses to weave into its narrative against Jaish ul-Adl has been more tangential and secondary in nature. Iran frequently asserted that Jundallah was directly "backed" or "supported" by the United States.<sup>525</sup> However, in describing the U.S. relation to Jaish ul-Adl, alleged U.S.-insurgent association has been less direct. Rather than asserting a direct Jaish ul-Adl-America connection, state officials have framed Jaish ul-Adl as part of a larger network of "Saudi-hired terrorists, who enjoy the U.S. endorsement," while portraying the United States as aligned with Israel and Saudi Arabia toward historically supporting terrorism inside Iran.<sup>526</sup>

## **2. Positive Reinforcement of Iranian Competency**

The Iranian government's COIN narrative in the post-Jundallah era emphasized the state's consistent, continuous counterinsurgent efforts inside Sistan-Baluchistan. Whereas COIN against Jundallah had an operational narrative emphasis of reprisal, against Jaish ul-Adl the IRGC and other security apparatuses emphasized their proactive, pre-emptive offensives against Baluch insurgent organizations. There were two elements to this proactive and consistent emphasis, which will be discussed in this section.

First, the NAJA, the IRGC, and local police all conducted and emphasized operational raids which claimed to strike at, if not fully dismantle terrorist cells in Sistan-Baluchistan. There were offensive raids which specifically targeted Jaish ul-Adl. In June 2016, NAJA forces ambushed a Jaish ul-Adl convoy outside the city of Khash, killing 5 insurgents.<sup>527</sup> In July 2017, NAJA forces discovered and confiscated a Jaish-ul-Adl cache

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<sup>524</sup> Lynch, "Ahmadinejad's Letter to Ban Ki-moon."

<sup>525</sup> "Rigi Details Western Support for His Terror Acts," *Tehran Times*, May 23, 2010, NewsBank; "Police Kill Suicide Bomber," *Iran Daily*, July 9, 2013, NewsBank.

<sup>526</sup> *Iran Daily*, "Gunmen Kill Two Policemen in Southwest Iran"; "Terrorist Attack Kills IRGC Member in Southeastern Iran," *Iran Daily*, February 2, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>527</sup> "Police Commander Says One Jaish-Ul-Adl Terrorist Still At Large, Patrolling Continues," *Tehran Times*, June 14, 2016, NewsBank.

of anti-aircraft guns, heavy machine guns and assault rifles.<sup>528</sup> In March 2018, the IRGC attacked and killed two Jaish ul-Adl suicide bombers preparing to attack a border outpost.<sup>529</sup> In September 2018, the IRGC targeted and killed Jaish ul-Adl's second-in-command in a raid.<sup>530</sup>

Second, Iranian security forces launched offensive operations against unidentified insurgent groups in Sistan-Baluchistan. While there was frequent reporting on counter Jaish ul-Adl operations, there was an equal, if not greater number of offensive operations announced against unnamed organizations. In August 2014, MOIS and NAJA successfully announced the recovery two celebrity hostages who has been kidnapped by insurgent elements.<sup>531</sup> In September 2014, the IRGC foiled an insurgent assault attempt on a border security installation near Saravan.<sup>532</sup> In April 2016, Iranian security apparatuses allegedly killed the head of a Sistan-Baluchistan group called Ansar Al-Furqan.<sup>533</sup> In June of that year, Zahedan-based security forces claimed to have fully “dismantled” a terrorist cell based around Khash.<sup>534</sup> In July, the IRGC reported that they had arrested scores of insurgents and destroyed an illicit tunnel which they were using to sneak into Iranian territory from Pakistan.<sup>535</sup> Between March 2016 and March 2017, the MOIS claimed that the Iranian security apparatuses had stopped or otherwise defeated 30 bomb plots in total nation-wide.<sup>536</sup> Though none of these foiled attacks were specifically confirmed to be

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<sup>528</sup> “Arms Cache of Jaish ul-Adl Terror Group Seized in SE Iran,” *Iran Daily*, July 8, 2017, NewsBank.

<sup>529</sup> “IRGC Forces Kill Jaish-Ul-Adl’s Second-In-Command,” *Tehran Times*, September 29, 2018, NewsBank.

<sup>530</sup> *Tehran Times*.

<sup>531</sup> “Two Abducted Iranians Freed,” *Iran Daily*, August 17, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>532</sup> “IRGC Foils Terrorist Attack in Southeastern Province,” *Iran Daily*, September 10, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>533</sup> “Iran Arrests Key Member of Terrorist Group in Southeast,” *Iran Daily*, June 26, 2016, NewsBank.

<sup>534</sup> *Iran Daily*.

<sup>535</sup> “Iran Busts Terror Cell in East, Detains 40: Interior Minister,” *Iran Daily*, July 21, 2016, NewsBank.

<sup>536</sup> “Iran Foils Terrorist Operation,” *Tehran Times*, May 13, 2017, NewsBank.

related to Jaish ul-Adl, Iran still used these operations as a positive reinforcement of their effectiveness against Baluch insurgency.

### 3. Converting Hostage Crises into COIN Capital

Iranian COIN's record of hostage negotiation against Jundallah was abysmal. Jundallah conducted two abduction missions, first in 2007, and second in 2008.<sup>537</sup> In total, 38 hostages were taken. All the Chabahar hostages were quickly freed due to rapid intervention by Pakistani security forces.<sup>538</sup> However, the fate of the Saravan hostages proved deleterious to Iranian COIN's narrative and subsequent credibility. Over the course of six months, the hostages taken in Saravan were gradually executed by Jundallah as Iran refused to meet their demands, in full view of the public. Jundallah executed two hostages a week after the abduction.<sup>539</sup> The insurgent group executed an additional two hostages in July, and two more in August.<sup>540</sup> Jundallah killed the remaining hostages from October to December.<sup>541</sup>

The Iranian response to Jundallah's abductions played a large part to the injuries of Iran's own credibility. Alistair C. MacWilson, notes that resolution of hostage crises is a zero-sum conflict for a security apparatus's reputation: "a government that can resolve the incident successfully, and that can be seen to have done so, will enhance its public image; a government that concedes to terrorist demands, or fails to prevent an unacceptable number of hostages being killed, may lose public support as well as its own credibility."<sup>542</sup>

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<sup>537</sup> Shahid, "Iranian Hostages Freed"; Reuters, "Iran Says Rebels Killed 16 Abducted Policemen," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, December 5, 2008, [https://www.rferl.org/a/Iran\\_Rebels\\_Killed\\_16\\_Policemen/1356706.html](https://www.rferl.org/a/Iran_Rebels_Killed_16_Policemen/1356706.html); "Iranian Police Killed By Rebels," BBC, December 4, 2008, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7765474.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7765474.stm).

<sup>538</sup> Shahid.

<sup>539</sup> "Jundallah Kill 2 Hostages in Iran," Iran News, June 19, 2008, NewsBank.

<sup>540</sup> "Jundallah Claims It Killed Two More Policemen," Iran News, July 29, 2008; "Three Policemen Abducted, Jundallah Claims," Iran News, August 13, 2008.

<sup>541</sup> "Jundallah: Four Remaining Iranian Hostages Executed," Iran News, October 8, 2008; Reuters, "Iran Says Rebels Killed 16 Abducted Policemen."

<sup>542</sup> Alastair C. MacWillson, "Effective Government in Crisis Management," in *Hostage-Taking Terrorism Incident-Response Strategy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1992), 84, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-12477-0>.

The Iranian response to Jundallah certainly falls into the second category, and Iran suffered the loss of face that MacWilson discusses. As Jundallah continued to execute Iranian hostages from the safety of the Pakistani borderlands, Iran accidentally portrayed itself as helpless and inept toward protecting those taken. The conveyance of this helplessness or ineptitude was reinforced by the comments of several prominent security force executives. In July, less than a month after the abductions, the head of NAJA stated that he had no new information on the case, and that NAJA's information stream was based nearly entirely on Jundallah's public assertions.<sup>543</sup> An MOIS minister made a similar statement in August, claiming that hostage release was being impeded by the political situations in Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>544</sup> MOIS, NAJA, and foreign ministry officials repeatedly refused to negotiate with Jundallah.<sup>545</sup> These vehement, public refusals to negotiate likely exacerbated the situation, because they forced Jundallah operatives to either kill hostages, or appear incoherent themselves. Finally, the Iranian narrative during hostage taking placed the onus and blame on Pakistan to recover the hostages, which combined with its own lack of action, further underlined Iran's own ineptitude to rescue its own people.<sup>546</sup>

Iran also endured major abductions by Jaish ul-Adl, but the ultimate outcomes, along with their effects of the Iranian narratives surrounding these events, have been the exact opposite of similar incidents during Jundallah's reign. To date, Jaish ul-Adl has conducted two abduction operations against Iran; the insurgent organization kidnapped five border guards in February 2014, and twelve border guards in October 2018.<sup>547</sup> Contrary

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<sup>543</sup> "Police Chief: No Further Information on Kidnapped Cops," Iran News, July 10, 2008, NewsBank.

<sup>544</sup> "Situation in Pakistan Has Made Release of Hostages Difficult: Minister," *Tehran Times*, August 24, 2008, NewsBank.

<sup>545</sup> "Iran: No Hostage Talks with Jundallah," *Tehran Times*, July 7, 2008, NewsBank, "Iran Will Not Negotiate With Criminals," Iran News, June 30, 2008, NewsBank.

<sup>546</sup> "Pakistan Urged to Counter Terrorists," Iran News, June 28, 2008, NewsBank; "Iran Cautions Pakistan over Jundallah," *Tehran Times*, July 2, 2008, NewsBank; "Iran Says Pakistan Was Not Cooperative in Releasing Hostages," *Tehran Times*, December 10, 2008, NewsBank.

<sup>547</sup> al-Awsat, "Jaish-ul-Adl Publishes Images of Abducted Iranian Soldiers"; Seyed Hamid Hosseini, "Jaish ul-Adl Was Forced to Free 4 Iranian Border Guards," Iran Review, April 10, 2014, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Jaish-ul-Adl-Was-Forced-to-Free-4-Iranian-Border-Guards.htm>.



to the experience with Jundallah, Jaish ul-Adl has only killed one hostage.<sup>548</sup> Moreover, Iran has worked with Pakistan to secure the release or recovery of almost all of the hostages Jaish ul-Adl has taken.<sup>549</sup>

The Iranian COIN counternarrative to Jaish ul-Adl's hostage negotiation was markedly different than that which the state employed against Jundallah. According to Washington, D.C.-based *Iran Times International*, Iranian security services learned from their kidnapping experiences with Jundallah, and sought to avoid the same mistakes, instead opting for a narrative designed to convince the population that the regime "knows what it is doing and is expertly working to free the prisoners."<sup>550</sup> Iranian security apparatus officials during both cases made a point of frequently, consistently releasing progress and information updates to the public to demonstrate their own forward-leaning capability in resolving the issue. For example, within three days of the February 2014 abductions, Iranian officials had sent a delegation to press Pakistani forces to help return the hostages, and also summoned the Pakistani ambassador to Tehran to further pursue Pakistan's cooperation.<sup>551</sup> The Iranian COIN response to the 2018 Jaish ul-Adl abductions followed a similar pattern. Iran's foreign ministry and the IRGC both publicly reached out through to Pakistan for cooperation in securing hostages.<sup>552</sup> The Iranian COIN narrative has continued to update and press for complete resolution to the hostage crises, refusing to settle for anything short of full accountability. In 2014, for example, despite Jaish ul-Adl's claims that the remaining hostage had died, multiple Iranian officials rejected this claim, and instead vowed to continue to press Pakistan to take responsibility for the hostage's

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<sup>548</sup> See Appendix D and Appendix H.

<sup>549</sup> "Tehran, Islamabad Cooperating Over Border Guard's Fate," *Iran Daily*, April 11, 2014, NewsBank; "Five of Iran's Abducted Border Guards Freed," *Tehran Times*, November 16, 2018, NewsBank.

<sup>550</sup> "Rebels Execute Border Guard," *Iran Times International*, April 4, 2014, Nexis Uni.

<sup>551</sup> "Iran Team Due in Pakistan Over Abductions," *Iran Daily*, February 12, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>552</sup> "IRGC Commander: Pakistan Has Promised Full Cooperation on Release of Iranian Guards," *Iran Daily*, October 23, 2018, NewsBank; "Pakistan Assures Iran of Cooperation in Iranian Guards' Abduction," *Iran Daily*, October 18, 2018, NewsBank.

recovery.<sup>553</sup> Despite the successful release of five border guards in November 2018, IRGC commanders released statements to the public declaring their refusal to settle for anything less than 100 percent safe return for the remaining hostages.<sup>554</sup> Simultaneously, Iran has avoided rejecting the demands of Jaish ul-Adl outright as it did with Jundallah, while simultaneously creating a perception of active negotiation with Pakistan, and not Jaish ul-Adl, to secure hostage release.

#### **4. Optimism and Responsibility: Framing Successful Jaish ul-Adl Attacks**

According to a preponderance of experts in COIN theory, a strong narrative that demonstrates the value added by COIN efforts and insulates the government from a loss of face in short term setbacks and crises is a critical element to permanently defeating an insurgency. In 1995, the current Afghanistan Director for the United States National Security Council Kurt Amend emphasized the centrality of a positive, pervasive narrative for any COIN operation, calling it the “foundation of all strategy.”<sup>555</sup> Amend further argues that narratives are a determinant of all realms of counterinsurgency, to include politics, discourse, and operational activity.<sup>556</sup> John Mackinlay believes that the “crucial task for the insurgent and the counterinsurgent ... is to manipulate the attitudes of the population living in this grey area.”<sup>557</sup> Per Mackinlay, a successful narrative must be sufficiently strong, consistent, and embedded within a population’s consciousness for a COIN operation to retain popular support when facing impending catastrophe or destruction.<sup>558</sup> Per the U.S. military counterinsurgency manual Joint Publication 3-24, overwhelmingly successful COIN usually contains narratives which don’t simply

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<sup>553</sup> “Cmdr. Rejects Reports on Death of Kidnapped Border Guard,” *Iran Daily*, August 23, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>554</sup> “Commander: Iran Pursuing Fate of Kidnapped Border Guard,” *Iran Daily*, January 1, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>555</sup> Kurt Amend, “Counterinsurgency Principles for the Diplomat,” *Orbis* 54, no. 2 (2010): 222. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orbis.2010.01.002>.

<sup>556</sup> Amend, 222.

<sup>557</sup> Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 133.

<sup>558</sup> Mackinlay, 133–134.

“undermine the insurgency narrative,” but “gain the initiative” through demonstration of “positive change to regain legitimacy where it has been lost and reestablish stability.”<sup>559</sup> In regards to countering Jaish ul-Adl’s constant attacks on Iranian forces, the Iranian COIN narrative has similarly sought to simultaneously insulate itself from a loss of face and reputation at the hands of Jaish ul-Adl, while presenting the Iranian government as the predominant agent of progress. This serves to frame Jaish ul-Adl attacks as futile, desperate attempts by insurgents to stay relevant, and emphasizes the positive delta to security the Sistan-Baluchistan region has experienced over time.

Rather than framing Jaish ul-Adl operations as attacks, the Iranian narrative has adopted narrative optimism, emphasizing the security apparatus initiative in meeting Jaish ul-Adl. For example, in reporting on an August 2014 Jaish ul-Adl attack which killed three Border Guards, the Islamic Republic framed the dynamics of the conflict as a successful defense of an outpost; the “strong resistance” of the border guards repelled Jaish ul Adl, and prevented them from successfully accomplishing their “ominous objective.”<sup>560</sup> A June 2018 Jaish ul-Adl operation in Mirjaveh carries similar dynamics, emphasizing that IRGC and Basij deaths were the result of security forces confronting and repelling Jaish ul-Adl as they tried to pass through Mirjaveh “to carry out acts of sabotage and conduct terrorist acts.”<sup>561</sup> This framing not only applies to armed skirmishes, but also suicide attacks. For example, with Jaish ul-Adl suicide attacks that injured two in March 2018, Iranian government-funded *Press TV* emphasized that the attack was defeated, noting that Iranian forces destroyed the suicide explosives before the Jaish ul-Adl could reach their targets.<sup>562</sup>

Simultaneously, government officials characterized their conflict with Jaish ul-Adl as an indicator of overwhelming improvement in security. The Iranian government often summarized and downplayed Jaish ul-Adl attacks’ severity as the mark of improvement in Sistan-Baluchistan since the defeat of Jundallah. In response to one of Jaish ul-Adl’s most

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<sup>559</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency*, I-3.

<sup>560</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Iranian Forces Foil Terrorist Attack in Border Town.”

<sup>561</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Three Terrorists, Three Iranian Forces Killed in Border Clash.”

<sup>562</sup> “Iran Forces Foil Twin Car Bombings Near Pakistan Border, Kill Two Terrorists.” *PressTV*. March 12, 2018. NewsBank.

deadly attacks in April 2017, IRGC Ground Force Commander Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour remarked that previously, Baluch insurgents were able to attack deep into Iranian territory.<sup>563</sup> He then compared that paradigm to the contemporary security situation, noting that Jaish ul-Adl and other Baluch insurgents “are no more capable of [establishing] presence deep in our territory,” and thus can do nothing other than attack at the border.<sup>564</sup> Similarly, Supreme leader Ayatollah Khamenei, in remarks following the February 2019 IRGC bus bombing mourned the loss of the 27 killed as “the price that is paid” for stability and security, while also noting that Jaish ul-Adl attacks were meaningless because “as long as a nation holds its ground,” insurgent groups like Jaish ul-Adl “can do it no harm.”<sup>565</sup> This narrative of improved levels of security over time is also reinforced through individual incident reports as reported by the Iranian media. For example, in reporting on Jaish ul-Adl attacks in early February 2019, October 2018, and July 2016, *Iran Daily* continuously emphasizes that Iran is winning against the insurgents, concluding reports with characterizations of how security forces are continuously “thwarting” Jaish ul-Adl incursions into Iranian territory.<sup>566</sup>

## 5. Pakistan’s Role in the Narrative

As was the case during Jundallah, Iran blamed the actions of another nation for the continued attacks, casualties and deaths caused by Baluch insurgents within Iran. However, in the post-Jundallah era, Iran’s ascription of blame for Jaish ul-Adl attacks to Pakistan was less an excuse, and more an assignment of responsibility. Instead of outright condemnation, Iran’s narrative sought to explain Jaish ul-Adl’s continued attacks were a result of Pakistan’s refusal or inability to neutralize insurgent groups. Iran consistently portrayed Pakistan as a friendly nation struggling with a similar problem to one that Iran itself was withstanding, and that Pakistan’s failure required Iranian assistance to correct. In criticism

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<sup>563</sup> “Iran Border Guards Targeted From Outside Country: IRGC Commander,” *Iran Daily*, April 29, 2017, Nexis Uni.

<sup>564</sup> *Iran Daily*.

<sup>565</sup> “Leader: Enemies Cannot Hurt Iranian Nation,” *Iran Daily*, February 18, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>566</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Terrorist Attack Kills IRGC Member in Southeastern Iran”; “Terrorists Abduct Iranian Forces Near Pakistani Border,” *Iran Daily*, October 16, 2018, NewsBank; “Armed Bandits Kill Four Border Guards in Iran’s Sistan and Baluchestan,” *Iran Daily*, July 6, 2016, NewsBank.

and condemnation, Iran only resorted to such tactics when their own national security was threatened. Shifting the responsibility for Baluch insurgents' attacks, without admitting or betraying any loss of authority and power was thus the narrative approach that Iran adopted toward Pakistan concerning their relevance to Jaish ul-Adl. Iran's messaging concerning Jaish ul-Adl in Pakistan sought to avoid loss of face for the Iranian government by more subtly shifting the blame for continued attacks to Pakistan through a narrative which portrayed Pakistan as a nation who was ineptly struggling in the areas of counterterrorism and COIN and would prevail if they just simply followed the Iranian examples.

COIN theory has established that narratives must carefully manage blaming, buck passing, and scapegoating. Kelly Greenland and Paul Staniland, in "Ten Ways to Lose at Counterinsurgency," identify that one of the most common critical flaws with failed COIN approaches is overemphasis of "external support as a scapegoat," providing an excuse for continued failures that acts as a shroud which distracts from a failing, deleterious approach.<sup>567</sup> However, they note that successful COIN approaches all at some point address foreign influences "explicitly and systematically."<sup>568</sup> This balancing act of two extremes extends to considerations of COIN narratives and messaging. As part of any overall COIN operation, crafted narratives, as the 2009 U.S. government Counterinsurgency Guide states, are the "informational components that reinforce governmental legitimacy and effectiveness" against insurgent threats.<sup>569</sup> It follows, then, that blame and scapegoating of foreign entities regarding insurgent successes is a double-edged sword in COIN. While it may deflect some blame, criticism, and population away from government's failures to stop insurgency, it also inherently admits that the government, as the avowed arbiter of power and authority over a territory, is insufficient in stopping an insurgency.

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<sup>567</sup> Kelly M. Greenhill and Paul Staniland, "Ten Ways to Lose at Counterinsurgency," *Civil Wars* 9, no. 4, 411 (December 2007): 411, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13698240701699623>.

<sup>568</sup> Greenhill and Staniland, 411.

<sup>569</sup> U.S. Department of State, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide* (Washington, DC: Department of State, 2009), 12, <https://2009-2017.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf>.

The Iranian COIN narrative has consistently emphasized that Pakistan has been bound by its own commitments to help fight Jaish ul Adl. From Jaish ul-Adl's first confirmed attack in October 2013, Iran has crafted a narrative by which Iran and Pakistan have mutually agreed to measures for border security, with Pakistan's failure to uphold their end of the agreement is the cause for Jaish ul-Adl's continued existence.<sup>570</sup> A major component woven into the Iranian narrative following the October 2013 attack involved reference to a February 2013 bilateral security agreement, and Pakistan's failure to abide by it. This narrative pervaded the commentary of prominent elements of the Iranian government, including President Rouhani, The Foreign Ministry, and members of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Councils.<sup>571</sup> Following the April 2017 Mirjaveh attack, Foreign Minister Zarif again cited Pakistan's failure to uphold February 2013 and subsequent security agreements.<sup>572</sup>

Throughout the post-Jundallah era, Iran has asserted close ties with Pakistan as part of its COIN narrative, conveying the overall Iran-Pakistan dynamic is one of cooperation and friendship in the area of militant insurgency. Iran's narrative of Pakistan-Iran relations portrays the Iranians as a benevolent elder brother, with Iran a willing, active participant in the partnership. In April 2019, Rouhani described relations between Pakistan and Iran as "brotherly and friendly."<sup>573</sup> In a December 2013 visit by Foreign Minister Sharif to Pakistan, Sharif conveyed Iran's intent to provide unwavering reinforcement of Pakistan's counter-terror and COIN efforts, recalling the deep "history of mutual security concerns" between Iran and Pakistan, and vowing to "enhance bilateral cooperation and make it stronger."<sup>574</sup> This characterization often falls directly adjacent to criticism of Pakistani ineptitude. For Example, when Zarif cited Pakistan's failure to live up to security

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<sup>570</sup> "Iranian Forces Monitoring Border Attack 'Terrorists': Commander," Philippines News Agency, October 29, 2013, Nexis Uni.

<sup>571</sup> Philippine News Agency; "Majlis to Mull Deployment of Forces to Pakistan: MP," PressTV, November 2, 2013, Nexis Uni; "Jaish-ul-Adl Terrorists Behind Iran Guards Deaths," Iranian Government News, October 31, 2013, Nexis Uni.

<sup>572</sup> "Iran FM Due in Pakistan to Follow Up on Terror Attack on Border Guards," *Iran Daily*, May 2, 2017, NewsBank.

<sup>573</sup> *Tehran Times*, "No Third Country Can Affect Iran-Pakistan Ties: Rouhani."

<sup>574</sup> "Iran Vows to Support Anti-Terror Efforts," Dawn, December 20, 2013, Nexis Uni.

agreements in December 2013, he also simultaneously stressed that “Pakistan’s safety, growth and efflorescence has always topped Iran’s agenda of ties.”<sup>575</sup>

Iran’s COIN against Jaish ul-Adl has woven accusations of Pakistan’s ineptitude into its overall narrative to deflect criticism from repeated Jaish ul-Adl attacks. Throughout the Iranian government’s narrative, officials have voiced concerns of a chronically inept Pakistan, who in the border security and countering militancy “have not fulfilled our expectations.”<sup>576</sup> In 2014, NAJA commander Ahmadi Moqaddam called Pakistan’s performance an “unacceptable” failure that costs Iranian lives.<sup>577</sup> In 2015, current Mohammad-Esmail Kowsari, then the head of the Iranian parliament’s committee on national security, accused Pakistan of having little to no control over the border area of Pakistani Balochistan.<sup>578</sup> In 2017, following repeated attacks, the Iranian Foreign Ministry released statements calling the Pakistan’s Western Border with Iran “insecure,” while the Iranian border security efforts “provide the most secure border for them [Pakistan].”<sup>579</sup> This characterization of ineptitude has become more poignant over time, culminating with the counter-narrative of Jaish ul-Adl’s February 2019 bus bombing. In the aftermath of the bombing, IRGC Quds Force Commander Qassem Soleimani unleashed a diatribe against Pakistani security policy, captured by his initial statement: “Can’t you [Pakistan], as a nuclear-armed state, deal with a hundreds-strong terrorist group in the region?”<sup>580</sup>

Building on this dynamic, Iran’s COIN narrative further shifts responsibility away from itself with respect to Jaish ul-Adl attacks by portraying itself as the reluctant

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<sup>575</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Iran FM Due in Pakistan to Follow Up on Terror Attack on Border Guards.”

<sup>576</sup> “Iran: Pakistan Has Not Met Expectations in Fighting Terrorism,” *Tehran Times*, February 20, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>577</sup> *Tehran Times*, “Pakistan’s Failure to Guard Its Borders Is Unacceptable.”

<sup>578</sup> “MP Accuses Pakistan of Being Unable to Control Border With Iran,” *Tehran Times*, October 12, 2014, NewsBank; Abbas Qaidaari, “More Planes, More Missiles, More Warships: Iran Increases Its Military Budget By a Third,” *Al-Monitor*, July 13, 2015, <https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/07/khamenei-orders-increase-military.html>.

<sup>579</sup> “Rouhani Writes to Pakistan’s Sharif Over Dead Soldiers,” *Tehran Times*, April 28, 2017, NewsBank.

<sup>580</sup> “General Soleimani to Pakistanis: Saudi Arabia Is Ruining Your Country,” *Tehran Times*, February 22, 2019, NewsBank.

interloper, forced to violate Pakistani sovereignty in an effort to protect itself after Pakistan fails to handle to control its own territory. Iran has marketed itself as a nation which has not dealt with Jaish ul-Adl use of Pakistani territory out of a regard for national sovereignty. Updating the press and the public on border guards kidnapped by Jaish ul-Adl in April 2018, the Iranian Interior Minister stated that Iranian forces would not move against Jaish ul-Adl in Pakistan without “Pakistani ... supervision and ... permission,” adding that thus far Iran has “refused” to operate within Pakistani territory out of “respect” for Pakistan’s territorial integrity.<sup>581</sup> In March 2019, the Iranian government reaffirmed that it had no intention of violating Pakistan’s territory to deal with insurgents, despite purported increases in international pressure for Pakistan to crack down on terror.<sup>582</sup>

However, Iran’s narrative also consistently contains an intent to act in Pakistan as a last resort if Pakistan is unable or unwilling to do so. Following Jaish ul-Adl attacks, Iran’s security services have increasingly called on Pakistan to either improve their security performance in Balochistan or to stand aside and let Iran do it for them. In 2014, following Jaish ul-Adl’s Jakigour kidnapping of border guards in 2014, the Iranian interior minister threatened that continued Pakistani failure to establish border security would warrant Iran to “become more involved in the matter.”<sup>583</sup> Following the April 2017 Jaish ul-Adl Mirjaveh attack, NAJA and IRGC border forces conveyed to Pakistan that they knew where Jaish ul-Adl was hiding in their territory, and would unilaterally strike if Pakistan did not do so first.<sup>584</sup> In March 2019, the Artesh’s Chief of Staff resolved that if Pakistan failed to curb Jaish ul-Adl, that Iranian forces would “take action and avenge the blood of our dear ones.”<sup>585</sup>

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<sup>581</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Iran Says Ready to Fight Terror on Pakistani Soil.”

<sup>582</sup> “Iran Wants Pakistan to Walk The Talk on Terror,” *Tehran Times*, March 12, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>583</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Pakistan Again Urged to Improve Security.”

<sup>584</sup> “Evicting Terrorists Not Limited to Iran’s Borders: IRGC Commander,” *Iran Daily*, July 20, 2017, NewsBank.

<sup>585</sup> “Iran’s Military Chief: Pakistan Has Started Operations Against Terrorists,” *Tehran Times*, February 18, 2019, NewsBank



## **E. CHAPTER CONCLUSION**

This chapter demonstrated that Iran vastly improved its counterinsurgency approach against Baluch insurgents after the Jundallah's disbandment, especially against Jaish ul-Adl. Influenced by experiences against Jundallah, Iran has learned from its past mistakes and developed a coherent COIN approach in Sistan-Baluchistan. At a tactical and operational level, Iran has developed and implemented a population-centric COIN approach through comprehensive, exhaustive border control measures which have all-but isolated insurgents from the local population in Sistan-Baluchistan. Furthermore, Iran has succeeded in persuading Pakistan to expand its border security measures, and increase its aggression, attention, and pursuit against anti-Iran insurgent groups which reside in Pakistani Balochistan. Finally, Iran has crafted a narrative which above all else, stresses its own successes, and portrays the Iranian government as consistently, proactively, and aggressively reducing the presence and effectiveness of Jaish ul-Adl and other insurgent organizations in the province.

With this three-pronged approach, Iran has performed far better against Jaish ul-Adl and other post-Jundallah insurgents than it had against Jundallah. Iran has successfully diminished, marginalized, and contained the Baluch insurgency in a manner and scale that Iran simply failed to achieve with Jundallah. This delta in performance has a variety of influences. Among them are differences in sectarian influence, factionalism among insurgent groups, and relevant international developments which have influenced these insurgencies. Chief among the reasons for Iran's difference in COIN performance against Jundallah and Jaish ul-Adl, however, is the IRGC. Since 2005, IRGC involvement in Sistan-Baluchistan has skyrocketed into an assumption of absolute command and control authority over COIN and security considerations. The dynamics and interactions of these influences, as they function as causes for Iran's improvement at counterinsurgency, will be the focus of the next chapter.

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## **V. SOURCES OF IMPROVEMENT IN IRANIAN COIN PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE BALUCH INSURGENCY**

Against Jundallah, the Iranian state failed to construct a coherent, or complete COIN approach in Sistan-Baluchistan. Due to several critical errors, outlined in the previous chapter, Iranian COIN operations from 2003 to 2012 failed to contain or defeat insurgency. However, after Jundallah's disbandment, Iranian COIN operations have been completely re-evaluated and reconstructed, with a far more complete, comprehensive, and effective approach which appears to have contained, if not diminished Baluch insurgent groups. As discussed in Chapter IV, since 2012, Iran has utilized a COIN approach which involves border security, placing pressure on Baluch insurgents in Pakistan, and a multi-faceted narrative which stresses the optimistic improvements and successes of the Iranian government in Sistan-Baluchistan.

There are two primary factors which explain the transition between a failing Iranian COIN against Jundallah and a significantly more successful Iranian COIN approach in Sistan-Baluchistan following Jundallah's disbandment. The first factor involves the developments of Baluch insurgency after the death of Abdolmalek Rigi and Jundallah's subsequent demise. Jaish ul-Adl and other insurgent groups which succeeded Jundallah represent a relative self-inflicted weakening of the Baluch insurgency's prospects for continued expanding influence in Sistan-Baluchistan. The second factor is that since 2009, the IRGC has assumed absolute, total control over all matters relevant to COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan, and the IRGC's growing involvement is the single state-controlled factor which has made the greatest difference in COIN performance from 2012 to the present.

The following section of this chapter will discuss the changes to the Baluch insurgency since 2012, and how these changes have ultimately weakened it as a force of influence in Sistan-Baluchistan as well as among the Baluch population. First, since Jundallah has disbanded, there has been an increased level of intra-insurgent interference, competition, and infighting which has negatively impacted the insurgency. Second, in Jundallah's wake, the most powerful Baluch insurgent groups have wholeheartedly placed ideologies of sectarian divide and pan-Arab/pan-Sunni uprisings against Iran at the center

of their narratives, which has had a mixed, if not deleterious resonance within the Baluch population. Finally, with the demise of Jundallah, tribal divides have increasingly created new tensions between insurgent groups while also opening new areas of contention. Importantly, as will be discussed in each subsection, these are mistakes which Baluch autonomy and separatist movements have made in the past, which the insurgency now appears to be allowing themselves to reiterate.

Section B of this chapter discusses why the IRGC, upon attainment of absolute authority in Sistan-Baluchistan, was able to construct a COIN approach that was significantly more successful than those previously attempted. First, the manner by which the IRGC were deployed to get Sistan-Baluchistan back under control did not occur in a vacuum; the nationwide unrest which raged throughout 2009 created a state consciousness which was much less willing to tolerate continued Baluch insurgency in Southeast Iran. Second, by declaring the IRGC the absolute arbiter and head of the Command and Control authority in Sistan-Baluchistan, the Iranian state created a unity of command that successfully sidestepped organizational and political infighting between factions and groups inside the government. Third, the organization's structure, mission, and experience with COIN and security throughout the history of the Islamic Republic provide the IRGC an absolute advantage in performance and capability in COIN when compared with other Iranian security apparatuses. Fourth, the organization has robust sources of funding, political authority and influence, and industrial resources which proved critical to execution of an effective COIN approach. Finally, revisiting the end of the Jundallah era, though the IRGC efforts failed to forestall the Baluch insurgency with their efforts, the removal of Rigi as a leadership figure and the subsequent collapse of Jundallah, as an Iranian action, has also been an IRGC-initiated action which has led to the self-imposed diminishing of Baluch insurgents discussed in Section A of this chapter.

#### **A. FRAGMENTATION OF INSURGENCY**

While Jundallah was an organization that grew in strength by absorption and recruitment, it appears the post-Jundallah era has been one marked by fragmentation and competition for Iranian Baluch insurgency and nationalist movements.

## 1. Organizations in Tandem and Competition over Succession

Though Jaish ul-Adl is definitively the largest, most active, and most avowed group to have succeeded Jundallah, it is in fact one among several groups claiming the champion the Iranian Baluch cause following Jundallah's demise.<sup>586</sup> According to Nicholas Cappuccino, excluding Jaish ul-Adl there was at least one other prominent, noteworthy insurgent group which formed as "splinter" organizations following the death of Abdolmalek Rigi and subsequent dissolution of Jundallah: Harakat Ansar Iran, more recently called Ansar Al Furqan.<sup>587</sup> Another long-existing organization, called Hizbul al-Furqan, was also prominent in the post-Jundallah era.<sup>588</sup> In addition, an organization linked to the longstanding Pakistani insurgent organization Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan called Sipah-E-Sahaba Iran exhibited frequent activity in Sistan-Baluchistan from 2012 onwards.<sup>589</sup> Finally, start-up insurgent groups, such as Jaish al-Nasr, have conducted attacks in the region.<sup>590</sup>

The parallels between these organizations are significant. Though Harakat Ansar Iran and Hizbul al-Furqan both pale in comparisons to Jaish ul-Adl considering their size, operational activity, and notoriety with the general public, both organizations have executed attacks similar in justification and operational aspects. Ansar Al Furqan and Jaish ul-Adl operate within the same territory. For example, both groups have conducted attacks against Iranian security forces in Chabahar.<sup>591</sup> As Chris Zambelis notes, their tactics as

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<sup>586</sup> Cappuccino, "Baluch Insurgents in Iran."

<sup>587</sup> Cappuccino.

<sup>588</sup> Cappuccino.

<sup>589</sup> "Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan," Mapping Militant Organizations, February 15, 2012, <https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/147>.

<sup>590</sup> Chris Zambelis, "Iran Confronts Intensifying Insurgent Offensive in Sistan-Balochistan Province," The Jamestown Foundation, April 17, 2015, <https://jamestown.org/program/iran-confronts-intensifying-insurgent-offensive-in-sistan-balochistan-province/>.

<sup>591</sup> "Iran Says Two 'Terrorists' Killed and Five Arrested," RadioFarda, June 15, 2017, <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-sunni-extremists-terrorists-killed-arrested/28553308.html>; "Chabahar: 4 Killed and Several Injured in a Bomb blast," Balochistan Post, December 6, 2018, <http://thebalochistanpost.net/2018/12/chabahar-4-killed-and-several-injured-in-a-bomb-blast/>; "Casualties Reported in Attack on Basij Base in Southern Iran," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, February 2, 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/casualties-reported-in-attack-on-basij-base-in-southern-iran/29747300.html>.

well as their methodology of targeting is also nearly identical.<sup>592</sup> Moreover, their messaging is strikingly similar. Zambelis further notes that both groups use similar language to frame their efforts against the Iranian government, to include the prevalent labeling of Iranian forces as a “Safavid” empire.<sup>593</sup>

Overlapping, parallel organizations with no coordination present a lost opportunity for Baluch insurgency. In general discussion of conflict, per Russell Glenn, as of 1939, the United States Army, extrapolating from Clausewitz’s defined Principles of War, had identified “unity of effort” as one of seven critical tenets in the successful “conduct of war.”<sup>594</sup> Currently, the U.S. DoD defines unity of effort as “coordination and cooperation toward common objectives, even if the participants are not necessarily part of the same command or organization, which is the product of successful unified action.”<sup>595</sup> Per Zambelis, Harakat Ansar Iran and Jaish ul-Adl never publicly acknowledged each other’s existence, and analysis indicates that coordination between these groups is scarce, if at all existent during Jundallah’s tenure as well as after Jundallah’s demise.<sup>596</sup> Fragmentation following Jundallah’s demise presents opportunities lost for the capabilities of Baluch insurgency to combat the Iranian government; rather than coordinating their efforts, Baluch insurgent groups have acted independently, creating an effects of negative interference on one another’s notoriety, and capacity to counteract the Iranian government.

Direct competition and infighting between insurgent groups have heavily influenced insurgent developments in the region. Zambelis believes that Jundallah’s demise has given way to a period of increased “rivalry and dissension” among the Baluch insurgency, where “regional and tribal disputes” drive internal competitions for power.<sup>597</sup>

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<sup>592</sup> Zambelis, “Evolution of the Ethnic Baluch Insurgency,” 18–19.

<sup>593</sup> Zambelis, 20.

<sup>594</sup> Russell W. Glenn, “No More Principles of War?,” *Parameters* 28, no. 1 (April 1, 1998): 52, <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1306225316/>.

<sup>595</sup> U.S. Department of Defense, *The Dictionary of Military Terms*, Joint Pub 1-02 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Defense, 2009), 576.

<sup>596</sup> Zambelis, “Evolution of the Ethnic Baluch Insurgency,” 19.

<sup>597</sup> Zambelis, 19; Umid Niayesh, “Leader of Baluch Rebels Killed in Pakistan,” Trend News Agency, August 29, 2014, <https://en.trend.az/iran/2306348.html>.

Factionalism has at times directly divided the internal organizational dynamics of Jaish ul-Adl. Per Jaish ul-Adl's own statements, Abdul Rauf Rigi, Abdolmalek Rigi's younger brother and one-time leader of Jundallah, broke off from Jaish ul-Adl and formed his own separate insurgent organization called Jaish ul-Nasr in the wake of Jaish ul-Adl's first abduction operations.<sup>598</sup> Competition also lays at the heart of insurgent groups' merger. Zambelis cites the heightened sense of competition for predominance of the Baluch cause as the primary driving factor for Harakat Ansar Iran's declaration of allegiance and solidarity to fellow Baluch insurgent group Sepah-E-Sahaba Iran in 2013.<sup>599</sup> Joanna Paraszczuk similarly faults factional competition as the root cause of Harakat Ansar Iran's merger with Hizbul Furqan at the end of 2013.<sup>600</sup> Per Paraszczuk, the merger of the two organizations was executed in order to pool resources and capabilities for a better capability to compete with an increasingly relevant and active Jaish ul-Adl.<sup>601</sup> There are indications that competition for primacy has also driven intra-insurgency violence. In 2014, for example, Abdul Rauf Rigi was killed in Pakistan, possibly "as a result of internal disputes" between Jaish ul-Nasr and other insurgent organizations, with some sources specifically accusing Jaish ul-Adl of carrying out the assassination.<sup>602</sup>

Whereas a lack of unity of effort creates inefficiencies and limits capabilities of an overall insurgency, intra-force competition and conflict can have a far more deleterious effect of any type of war effort. As early as the 5th century B.C., Sun Tzu's *Art of War*

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<sup>598</sup> Niayesh, "Leader of Baluch Rebels Killed in Pakistan"; Jaish ul-Adl, "اعلاميه سازمان: انحلال جيش", [Organization declaration: Dissolution of Jaish al-Nasr and merger of Nasr with Jaish ul-Adl], *Edaalat News* (blog), November 15, 2016, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2016/11/blog-post\\_45.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2016/11/blog-post_45.html).

<sup>599</sup> Zambelis, "Evolution of the Ethnic Baluch Insurgency," 19.

<sup>600</sup> Joanna Paraszczuk, "Iran Sunni Baloch Insurgents: "Union With Hizbul-Furqan Strengthens Our Front Against Safavids," *EA Worldview*, December 21, 2013, <https://eaworldview.com/2013/12/iran-sunni-baloch-insurgents-union-hezb-ul-forqan-strengthens-front-safavids/>.

<sup>601</sup> Paraszczuk; Niayesh, "Leader of Iran's Baluchi Rebels Killed in Pakistan"; Jaish ul-Adl, "اعلاميه", [Organization declaration: Dissolution of Jaish al-Nasr and merger of Nasr with Jaish ul-Adl].

<sup>602</sup> "Anti-Iran Terrorist Group Executes Ringleader's Killer," *The Iran Project* (blog), September 3, 2014, <https://theiranproject.com/blog/2014/09/03/anti-iran-terrorist-group-executes-ringleaders-killer/>; "Iran Says Abdul Rauf Rigi Was Killed in Intergroup Conflict," *Tehran Times*, September 4, 2014, NewsBank; Niayesh,

establishes that as best possible, a key principle of warfare is the criticality of a force refraining wherever possible from facing a united enemy.<sup>603</sup> Sun Tzu also comments on the inferiority of a force that is “split up into fractions” against a “single, united body.”<sup>604</sup> Rather than presenting a unified or coordinated front, the factionalism of the Baluch insurgency, particularly post-Jundallah, has created a situation where an increasingly unified Iranian COIN battles groups who at least in part are in conflict with themselves, a situation Sun Tzu might describe as “the whole being pitted against the separate parts of a whole.”<sup>605</sup>

Fragmentation, competition and infighting following the demise of strong leadership is a dynamic which is present throughout Baluch history, and the Post-Jundallah developments in Iranian Baluchistan with respect to the insurgency can be thought of as the most recent iteration of history repeating itself. In the 1400s, the accomplishments of Mir Chakar Rind, considered to be “the first nation builder by Baluch historical accounts,” were undone following his death, as the Baluch confederacy was “destroyed by a civil war between the two leading Baluch tribal federations” after his death.<sup>606</sup> Similarly, Harrison notes that Nasir Khan, who he credits as the ruler who has come closest “to establishing a centralized bureaucratic apparatus covering all of Baluchistan,” saw his accomplishments undercut by infighting between prominent leaders within his federation.<sup>607</sup> Factionalism and fragmentation also appear as a critical contributor to the downfall of renewed aspirations of increased Baluch rights and autonomy from Iranian central government following the 1979 revolution. The Islamic Unity Party, headed by Moulavi Aziz Mollazadeh, held talks with, and gained verbal concessions from Ayatollah Khomeini in March 1979 on both Baluch and Sunni rights under the new government.<sup>608</sup> However, when the initial draft of the Islamic Republic’s constitution failed to guarantee any Baluch

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<sup>603</sup> Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), 69.

<sup>604</sup> Tzu, 99.

<sup>605</sup> Tzu, 99.

<sup>606</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 12.

<sup>607</sup> Harrison, 16–17.

<sup>608</sup> Harrison, 116.



accommodations, a crippling internal rift developed inside the movement, with Mollazadeh and the IUP calling for restraint on one side, and a more violent, “anti-Khomeini” oriented faction consisting of a “loose coalition of embattled leftists and national elements” on the other.<sup>609</sup> The IUP did reach “an uneasy truce with Tehran” in which Khomeini guaranteed a constitutional amendment which would in effect allow Sunnis to operate separate court systems, but this deal fell apart and became moot as early iterations of the IRGC and more violent and nationalist movements began to clash with revolutionary guards in Zahedan and other regions of Baluchistan.<sup>610</sup>

These historical events in mind, Jaish ul-Adl and current Baluch insurgencies appear to suffer from problems previous generations of Baluch freedom fighters have endured. As was the case with Chakar Rind, the death of Abdolmalek Rigi and dissolution of Jundallah have created an unresolved power vacuum where insurgent groups are in direct competition against one another for notoriety, as well as the hearts and minds of the Baluch. Just as Nasir Khan struggled to unite the Iranian Baluch tribes under his banner, the uncrossing, uncoordinated parallel paths of Ansar Al Furqan and Jaish ul-Adl have yielded counterproductive dynamics which certainly fall short of the capabilities a unity of effort between these insurgent groups could yield. As with the IUP, disputes over agreements reached between the central Iranian government and insurgent groups yielded a significant fragmentation as Jaish ul-Nasr seceded from Jaish ul-Adl in the wake of the 2014 abductions.

## **2. Incorporation of Sectarian and Transnational Issues into Narratives**

As the self-proclaimed successor to Jundallah, Jaish ul-Adl has defined itself as and its fight against the Iranian government along sectarian lines, but it has often attempted to link itself to other non-Baluch Sunni insurgencies and opposition groups operating inside of Iran. Reviewing Jaish ul-Adl statements, it is clear that the group defines the constituency it represents as not simply Baluch, but “Sunni” Baluch populations, and that Jaish ul-Adl portrays itself waging war against an Iranian state, that seek to impose a

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<sup>609</sup> Harrison, 116–117.

<sup>610</sup> Harrison, 116.

“Shiite” dominated way of life.<sup>611</sup> Jaish ul-Adl’s identity is not simply Baluch, but heavily plays on sectarian divides. From its very first major attack against the Iranian state in October 2013, Jaish ul-Adl has carried elements beyond Baluch nationalism. In Jaish ul-Adl’s statement of establishment, there is further emphasis on injustices suffered by Sunnis at the hands of Iran’s Shiite regime.<sup>612</sup> The declaration of existence mentions Baluch injustice, but also makes frequent note of injustice suffered by other Sunni minorities in Iran, such as Khorasan, and Hormozgan.<sup>613</sup> A critical objective of Jaish ul-Adl’s public releases over time appears to be to establish themselves as one of multiple Sunni minority populations struggling against the Iranian government. For example, in the wake of several significant developments in Iranian Kurdistan from 2013-2017, Jaish ul-Adl has released statements expressing solidarity and brotherhood with Kurdish insurgent groups and the Kurdish people.<sup>614</sup> Of note, Jaish ul-Adl, during its annual Eid-al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha messages has called for mass uprisings not only by Baluch, but other groups it identifies as marginalized Sunnis inside Iran, to include ethnic Turkmen, Azeri, Kurds, and Arabs.<sup>615</sup>

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611 Jaish ul-Adl, “متن پیام سازمان جیش العدل در حمایت از فرزندان اهل سنت کرد، عرب و بلوچ که امروز در تظاهرات”، [Message from Jaish al-Adl’s organization in support of Sunni, Arab and Baluchi children who came to represent the organization today at a demonstration in Copenhagen to protest the execution],” *Edaalat News* (blog), November 9, 2013, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2013/11/blog-post\\_4480.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2013/11/blog-post_4480.html).

612 Jaish ul-Adl, “اعلام وجود سازمان جیش العدل” [Declaration of existence for Jaish al-Adl],” *Edaalat News* (blog), April 19, 2012, <http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2012/04/blog-post.html>.

613 Jaish ul-Adl.

614 Jaish ul-Adl, [Jaish al-Adl Organization News Release: Release Ahlensat Prisoners],” *Edaalat News* (blog), February 16, 2014, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2014/02/blog-post\\_16.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2014/02/blog-post_16.html); Jaish ul-Adl, “مقاومت پیشمرگان حزب دمکرات کردستان ستودنی است” [The resistance of the Peshmarga of the Kurdistan Democratic Party is commendable],” *Edaalat News* (blog), June 27, 2016, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2016/06/blog-post\\_98.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2016/06/blog-post_98.html); Jaish ul-Adl, “مصاحبه سخنگوی دوم سازمان با ماف نیوز” [Interview With Maf News, The Second Spokesman for the Organization],” *Edaalat News* (blog), July 30, 2016, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2016/07/blog-post\\_49.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2016/07/blog-post_49.html); Jaish ul-Adl, “سازمان جیش العدل در کنار کورد و کردستانیم و از خواستهای و اعتراضات بحق مردم کردستان” [We stand by Kurds and Kurdistan and support the legitimate demands and protests of the Kurdish People], *Edaalat News* (blog), September 8, 2017, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2017/09/blog-post\\_9.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2017/09/blog-post_9.html).

615 Jaish ul-Adl, “اعلامیه سازمان به مناسبت عید سعید قربان” [Declaration on the occasion of Eid al-Adha], *Edaalat News* (blog), September 23, 2015, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2015/09/blog-post\\_86.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2015/09/blog-post_86.html); Jaish ul-Adl, “عید سعید فطر مبارک” [Happy Eid Saeed Fitr], *Edaalat News* (blog), July 5, 2016, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2016/07/blog-post\\_38.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2016/07/blog-post_38.html); Jaish ul-Adl, “عید سعید فطر بر عموم مسلمین” [Eid Saeed Fitr to the public of Mubarak Muslims], *Edaalat News* (blog), July 27, 2014, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2014/07/blog-post\\_27.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2014/07/blog-post_27.html).

Jaish ul-Adl seems to identify its insurgency as one among a larger body of transnational Sunni militants. Woven into Jaish ul-Adl's very first narratives are a transnational Sunni Islamism. Multiple analyses of the Jaish ul-Adl's leadership have noted that the group's chief executive, Salahuddin Farooqi, had a long-standing record of criticizing the Iranian government for their support of Bashar Al-Assad's regime in Syria.<sup>616</sup> Jaish ul-Adl also stakes a large part of its identity in transnational sectarian dynamics relevant to Syria. Mention of the Iranian government's sin was pervasive throughout Jaish ul-Adl's early statements. Jaish ul-Adl cited Iranian support for Assad as a near-ubiquitous cause for a multitude of events; According to Jaish ul-Adl, it is one of the reasons Jaish ul-Adl conducts operations against Iran, accounts for the Iranian State's failure to adequately respond to the 2012 earthquake in Northwestern Iran, and is tantamount to Chinese treatment of Uyghurs in Xinjiang province.<sup>617</sup> In early claimed (albeit unconfirmed) attacks by Jaish ul-Adl in 2013, the organization repeatedly justifies themselves by citation of Iranian support for Assad.<sup>618</sup> Furthermore, Jaish ul-Adl's first avowed strike against the Iranian government, in October 2013, was conducted jointly as

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<sup>616</sup> Associated Foreign Press, "Jaish al-Adl: Shadowy Sunni Extremists on Iran-Pakistan Border," Yahoo!News, February 14, 2019, <https://www.yahoo.com/news/jaish-al-adl-shadowy-sunni-extremists-iran-pakistan-110545784.html>.

<sup>617</sup> Jaish ul-Adl, "پیام تسلیت و همدردی سازمان جیش العدل به مردم زلزله زده آذربایجان" [Message of condolences and condolences from Jaish al-Adl Organization], August 16, 2012, *Edaalat News* (blog), [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2012/08/blog-post\\_2253.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2012/08/blog-post_2253.html); Jaish ul-Adl, "سازمان جیش العدل جنایات بوداییان" [Jaish al-Adl condemns Buddhist crimes against Burma Muslims], *Edaalat News* (blog), August 8, 2012, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2012/08/blog-post\\_1649.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2012/08/blog-post_1649.html); Salahuddin Farooqi, "پیام تبریک رهبر جیش العدل صلاح الدین فاروقی به مناسبت عید سعید فطر" [Congratulatory message by leader Jaish al-Adl Salahuddin Faruqi on Eid Saeed Fitr], *Edaalat News* (blog), August 19, 2012, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2012/08/blog-post\\_7900.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2012/08/blog-post_7900.html).

<sup>618</sup> Jaish ul-Adl, "گردانهای نظامی سازمان جیش العدل فعالیت خود را آغاز کردند" [The military battalions of the Jaish al-Adl organization began their activity], *Edaalat News* (blog), August 7, 2012, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2012/08/blog-post\\_8.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2012/08/blog-post_8.html); Jaish ul-Adl, "حمله به پایگاه نظامی کوهک سراوان" [Attack on Jawad al-Adl militants attacked Kuhak Saravan military base, a response to the atrocities of the Khomeini regime against the oppressed Syrian people], *Edaalat News* (blog), July 18, 2013, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2013/07/blog-post\\_18.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2013/07/blog-post_18.html).

retribution for the plight of the Iranian Baluch, as well as for the alleged atrocity and “massacre” that the IRGC had committed in Syria.<sup>619</sup>

There are significant drawbacks which can arise from insurgent groups seeking to place their foundational identity on transnational issues. According to Barbara Gruber and Jan Pospisil, “successful revolutionary collective action” requires strong, and cohesive “identity formation” among insurgents and their supporters, and the strength of collective identity is one primary determinant in “the resilience of insurgent organizations.”<sup>620</sup> Examining the case of the ELN, Gruber and Pospisil note that identity is normally grounded in intermingling conceptualizations of “ethnicity, nationality ... or religion.”<sup>621</sup> Gruber and Pospisil’s study shows, however, that insurgent identities cannot at once have predominant elements of trans-ethnic or trans-national and local ethnic and religious elements which occupy the same space simultaneously, one or the other must be primary. They argue that the ELN’s resilience is only generated by completely subverting and erasing previous elements of identity among insurgents, to include those previously mentioned.<sup>622</sup> The ELN could not claim insurgency identity against Colombia on ethnic, religious, or national lines, so their identity was born out of necessity, as opposed to tactical decision for favorable circumstances.<sup>623</sup> William Mackinlay further expands on how identity politics can confound the insurgent’s identity can confound and impede resonance with local populations. In modern insurgencies, Mackinlay identifies a growing number of what he terms “globalized insurgents,” militants “animated by Pan-Islamic issues and shared strategic narratives.”<sup>624</sup> Mackinlay argues that for the globalized insurgent, “nationality is

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<sup>619</sup> “Iran Sunni Group Jaish al-Adl Claims Border Attack,” BBC News, October 27, 2013, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-24690883>; Jaish ul-Adl “حمله به پایگاه نظامی کوهک سراوان توسط” [Attack on Jawad al-Adl militants attacked Kuhak Saravan military base, a response to the atrocities of the Khomeini regime against the oppressed Syrian people].

<sup>620</sup> Barbara Gruber and Jan Pospisil, “‘Ser Eleno’: Insurgent identity formation in the ELN,” *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 26, no. 2 (March 2015): 226, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592318.2015.1007562>.

<sup>621</sup> Gruber and Pospisil, 227.

<sup>622</sup> Gruber and Pospisil, 232–240.

<sup>623</sup> Gruber and Pospisil, 227, 232–240

<sup>624</sup> Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 105

irrelevant” and the “cause has a more universal character,” one that doesn’t necessarily place “the need to protect a tribal interest or overthrow a particular regime,” as primary in terms of the objectives of an insurgency.<sup>625</sup> Mackinlay concludes that heavy and frequent inclusion of a the globalized insurgent mindset is risky to the effective resonance of insurgent groups’ objectives, as well as how well its own identity is perceived as matching those of the population, simply because transnational consciousnesses inherently do not carry sufficiently tailored “ambitions for the local population and its locally influenced version of Islam.”<sup>626</sup>

Jaish ul-Adl has a significant historic claim to the Baluch nationalist and ethnic causes inside of Iran, one that significantly predates Jundallah. One of Jaish ul-Adl’s two leaders, Mullah Omar, is the former leader of the 1990s and early 2000s militant organization called Sipah-e-Rasoolah, which was absorbed into Jundallah’s command and control structure in 2006 amidst a struggle to maintain itself in terms of personnel and funding.<sup>627</sup> Mullah Omar is also the brother of Maula Bux Darakhshan, Abdolmalek Rigi’s mentor, as well as the first commander the Jundallah leader served under.<sup>628</sup>

Instead, Mullah Omar’s relation to earlier Baluch insurgencies has been suppressed, and instead the Jaish ul-Adl narrative focuses on a leader whose identity falls far more in line with Mackinlay’s globalized insurgent. Though Mullah Omar is believed to be one of Jaish ul-Adl’s two leaders, he receives just a fraction of attention that Jaish ul-Adl’s other leader, Salahuddin Farooqi.<sup>629</sup> Farooqi falls well into Mackinlay’s classification of a “globalized insurgent.”<sup>630</sup> Until Jaish ul-Adl’s creation, Farooqi’s renown came not necessarily from his championing of Iranian Baluch causes, but for his opposition to Iranian involvement in Syria.<sup>631</sup> While Mullah Omar is barely mentioned in organizational

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<sup>625</sup> Mackinlay, 105–106.

<sup>626</sup> Mackinlay, 106.

<sup>627</sup> Baloch, “The Other Jihadis.”

<sup>628</sup> Baloch.

<sup>629</sup> Associated Foreign Press, “Jaish al-Adl: Shadowy Sunni Extremists on Iran-Pakistan Border.”

<sup>630</sup> Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 105–106.

<sup>631</sup> Associated Foreign Press, “Jaish al-Adl: Shadowy Sunni Extremists on Iran-Pakistan Border.”

releases and statements by Jaish ul-Adl, Farooqi has released periodic messages to the organization's followers and supporters, identifying himself as the head of the organization.<sup>632</sup> Moreover, his statements have frequently focused on the Iranian Baluch struggle in relation to Syria, as well as other Iranian Sunni minorities, rather than containing content on the Baluch identity itself.<sup>633</sup>

Though Sectarianism plays a part in the underlying tensions between the Iranian Baluch and their ethnically Persian governance, that sectarianism is by no means the predominant, nor the largest source of tension. Writing in 1981, Harrison notes that the strongest contemporary source of friction between the Iranian government and the Baluch communities in Sistan-Baluchistan falls not along sectarian, but ethnic fault lines; the Baluch grievances against the Iranian government have powerful undercurrents of "racial hostility," and the sheer degree and viciousness of this animosity dwarfs that between the Pakistani Baloch and their "Punjabi overlords."<sup>634</sup> Per Carina Jahani, the Baluch language and culture, and policies and practices by the government which threaten the preservation and continuation of that culture and language, is the primary driver which could motivate the Baluch populations' movements toward "more insurgencies and increased demands for political determinations."<sup>635</sup>

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<sup>632</sup> Jaish ul-Adl, "پیام تبریک رهبر جیش العدل صلاح الدین فاروقی به مناسبت عید سعید فطر" [Congratulatory Message by Jaish al-Adl leader Salahuddin Faruqi on the occasion of Eid Saeed Fitr], *Edaalat News* (blog), August 19, 2012, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2012/08/blog-post\\_7900.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2012/08/blog-post_7900.html); Jaish ul-Adl, "پیام حاج" [Message from Haj Salahuddin Faruqi on the occasion of Eid Saeed Fitr], *Edaalat News* (blog), August 9, 2013, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2013/08/blog-post\\_5697.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2013/08/blog-post_5697.html); Jaish ul-Adl, "پیام امیر سازمان جیش العدل صلاح الدین فاروقی در راستای دعوت به جهاد" [Message from Jaish al-Adl Salahuddin Faruqi, the Emir of the Organization to call for Jihad], *Edaalat News* (blog), September 13, 2013, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2013/09/blog-post\\_13.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2013/09/blog-post_13.html); Jaish ul-Adl, "پیام صلاح الدین فاروقی رهبر" [Message from Salahuddin Farouqi, leader of the Jaish al-Adl organization], *Edaalat News* (blog), November 7, 2013, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2013/11/blog-post\\_7880.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2013/11/blog-post_7880.html); Jaish ul-Adl, "سخنرانی صلاح الدین فاروقی: موضوع: برنامه و سیاست رژیم از استخدام بومیان بلوچ در سپاه پاسداران" [Speech by Salahuddin Farouki: Subject: Regime's plan and policy of employing Baluch natives in the revolutionary guards], *Edaalat News* (blog), December 15, 2016, [http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2016/12/blog-post\\_15.html](http://edaalatnews.blogspot.com/2016/12/blog-post_15.html).

<sup>633</sup> Jaish ul-Adl, "حمله به پایگاه نظامی کوهک سراوان توسط مبارزان سازمان جیش العدل، پاسخی به جنایتهای رژیم سفاک" [Attack on Jawad al-Adl militants attacked Kuhak Saravan military base, a response to the atrocities of the Khomeini regime against the oppressed Syrian people]; Jaish ul-Adl, "گردانهای نظامی سازمان جیش العدل فعالیت خود را آغاز کردند" [The military battalions of the Jaish al-Adl organization began their activity].

<sup>634</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan's Shadow*, 94.

<sup>635</sup> Jahani, "The Balochi Language and Languages in Iranian Balochistan," 167.

Juxtaposing the Baluch with other Arab ethnicities has not been successful insurgent narrative in the past. Harrison notes that attempts to link Baluch autonomy and nationalist movements to a greater spectrum of non-Baluch kinsman have proven destructively “divisive in the past.”<sup>636</sup> A narrative of Baluch identity which grounds itself on identification as sectarian or an Arab-Persian divide is highly contested, and is but one of three Baluch nationalist schools of thought on Baluch origins, the other two arguing that the Baluch originated in Babylon, and the “Aryan tribes” of Asia Minor, respectively.<sup>637</sup> Per Harrison, the narrative of Baluch origin as kinsman of Arabs, particularly Sunni Arabs only gained significant attention once “the Khomeini regime” generated sufficient Arab nation concerns for their own security.<sup>638</sup> Baluch culture and language predates Islam, as well as the subsequent sectarian divides by as much as a millennium, since Baluch language is estimated to have arisen somewhere between 700 and 200 B.C., and bears more similarities to Persian than it does Arabic.<sup>639</sup>

Conceptualizations of Baluch as one of many kinship insurgents throughout the Middle East has proven ineffective in the past. Ahmed Reza Taheri provides one of the historical examples of this disunity creating fragmentation and rejection by the Baluch populations. As Taheri’s historical characterization provides, the Baluchistan People’s Democratic Organization, formed in early 1980, was an organization which integrated Baluch intelligentsia with a larger group of “leftist Persians” to “broaden its base of support.”<sup>640</sup> Harrison also frames the ideology of the movement along the same intentions, with the BPDO’s charter and early actions being specifically designed for Baluch nationalism “to make common cause with like-minded elements in other parts of Iran.”<sup>641</sup> In attempting to broaden their potential base of support and create a common denominator

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<sup>636</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 11.

<sup>637</sup> Harrison, 10.

<sup>638</sup> Harrison, 121.

<sup>639</sup> Philip Carl Salzman, “Book Review: Minorities in Iran: Nationalism and Ethnicity after Khomeini by Rasmus Christian Elling,” *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa* 6, no. 2 (April 3, 2015): 215–216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21520844.2015.1050625>.

<sup>640</sup> Taheri, *The Baloch in Post-Islamic Revolution Iran*, 118.

<sup>641</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 117.

with other independence groups, the BPDO alienated a significant portion of the Iranian Baluch, because it stressed messages and themes which were neither resonant or relevant to Baluch cultures and identity. According to Taheri the Marxist influences and undertones ensured that the BPDO was “doomed to failure,” because the social, economic, and tribal structuring of Baluch communities was incongruous with the “class struggle” identity politics that Persian Marxists, since there were few, if any industrialized areas in Baluchistan in 1980.<sup>642</sup> Furthermore, the BPDO expressly moved to reduce the influence or religious clerics and tribal leaders, which proved highly controversial, and ultimately significant unpopular throughout more conservative Baluch circles.<sup>643</sup>

Jundallah’s approach to sectarian issues serve as a cautionary tale for Jaish ul-Adl and other Baluch groups seeking to base narratives on a sectarian divide. Abdolmalek Rigi’s actions reflect an understanding that excessive emphasis on sectarian and trans-ethnic issues cost him support among the Iranian Baluch, and a need to re-center the movement around the Baluch identity. As early as April 2008, when the Dan Rather-produced interviews aired, Abdolmalek Rigi was rejecting characterization of himself as religious extremist; instead, he argues that Jundallah fights for the Baluch “rights as humans, ... beliefs, ... nationality,” and ultimately, “identity” which is in conflict with religious extremists in control of Iran.<sup>644</sup> In early 2009, Abdolmalek Rigi and his inner circle changed the official name of their organization from Jundallah, which means “Soldiers of God,” to “The Baloch People’s Resistance Movement of Iran.”<sup>645</sup> As Ahmed Reza Taheri describes, the group’s resignation was likely encouraged by Baluch intelligentsia in exile, who based on their own insurgent and separatist experiences, were concerned that growing fundamental and transnational themes woven into Jundallah’s narrative made the insurgency less appealing for both internal and international support.<sup>646</sup> Zambelis’s assessment of Jundallah’s re-designation similarly concludes that this measure

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<sup>642</sup> Taheri, *The Baloch in Post-Islamic Revolution Iran*, 119.

<sup>643</sup> Taheri, 119.

<sup>644</sup> Rather, “The Most Wanted Man in Iran,” 01:10–02:10.

<sup>645</sup> Rather, 01:10–02:10.

<sup>646</sup> Taheri, *The Baloch in Post-Islamic Revolution Iran*, 153–154.



was enacted to distance Jundallah from unpopular extremist ideologies.<sup>647</sup> Per Zambelis, Rigi “framed Jundallah’s struggle as a fight for freedom and human rights.”<sup>648</sup> Rigi’s commitment to this narrative was deep enough that he wrote open letters to President Barack Obama, UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon, and Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan in late 2009 portraying this identity.<sup>649</sup> Per Zambelis, it is only after Abdolmalek Rigi’s removal from organizational leadership, due to his arrest and subsequent execution, that Jundallah fully embarked on the “incremental resort to sectarian-imbued rhetoric against Shi`a Islam.”<sup>650</sup> Zambelis argues that this full embrace of sectarian divide, which linked Jundallah’s struggle to other Sunni groups inside and outside Iran was Jundallah’s self-inflicted hobbling, precisely because it “appeared to lend credence” to Iranian assertions that Jundallah was linked to both Al Qaeda and the Taliban, thereby discrediting the insurgency.<sup>651</sup> Moreover, Jaish ul-Adl and other current Baluch insurgents appear destined to repeat these mistakes. As Zambelis indicates, and this thesis’s research has illustrated above, Jaish ul-Adl is an organization that unlike its predecessor, fully places “radical Salafism,” as the central basis of Post-Jundallah “Baluch militancy.”<sup>652</sup>

### **3. Tribalism**

At the time Harrison wrote on the Baluch, there were at least 17 major Baluch tribes, with as many as 400 “tribal subgroupings.”<sup>653</sup> These heavy tribal elements of Baluch society and communities affect every aspect of politics, economics and other matters in the Sistan-Baluchistan province of Iran, and insurgency and counterinsurgency is by no means immune to that phenomenon.

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<sup>647</sup> Zambelis, “Evolution of Ethnic Baluch Insurgency,” 20.

<sup>648</sup> Zambelis, 20.

<sup>649</sup> Zambelis, 20.

<sup>650</sup> Zambelis, 20.

<sup>651</sup> Zambelis, 20.

<sup>652</sup> Zambelis, 18.

<sup>653</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 9.

In creation and coalescence of a movement to sufficiently combat, oppose, and possibly eventually gain concession from the Iranian government, there are significant fault lines within Baluch culture and society that may serve as fragmentation between that coalescence. Harrison notes that historically, the Iranian Baluch tribes have fiercely defended their independence, often refusing to cooperate with larger Baluch unification movements. In the 1750s, though Nasir Khan conquered large swaths of Iranian Baluch tribal lands, the ground truth of the matter was that “the freewheeling Iranian Baluch Tribes were a law unto themselves.”<sup>654</sup> Furthermore, Harrison’s analysis is that the tribalism inside of Iran is particularly resistant to any unification efforts, with Iranian Baluch to date having never been “able to produce a unified political or military grouping on their own,” and instead movements which have sought a unified front have often at best had a “shaky” and tenuous grip on the tribes of Iranian Baluchistan.<sup>655</sup>

In the last century, this tribalism has contributed to divisions where the tribes and regional Baluch concentrations diverge in the degree and way they are opposed to the Iranian government, and this has given way to intra-Baluch conflict. Audun Kolstad Wiig mentions that the Baluch tribes went to war with each other in 1916; while the Gamshadzais and Ismailzais formed an alliance to repel British invasion against Britain, the Rigi tribe sided with the British against them.<sup>656</sup> Previously mentioned in Chapter IV, Stéphane Dudoignon’s analysis is that the Rigi tribe have by and large cooperated with the Iranian government since 1979.<sup>657</sup> Harrison mentions that since the 1979 Islamic Revolution some tribes have sought to independently come to arrangements with the Iranian government independent of larger Baluch nationalist or autonomy groups, with “limited success,” while other tribes have pursued “autonomy or independence through military struggle.”<sup>658</sup> In the 1990s and early 2000s, there was frequent Baluch on Baluch violence in Iran based on

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<sup>654</sup> Harrison, 17.

<sup>655</sup> Harrison, 18–19.

<sup>656</sup> Wiig, *Islamist Opposition in the Islamic Republic*, 10.

<sup>657</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*.

<sup>658</sup> Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 119.

tribal rivalry and grievance.<sup>659</sup> According to Dudoignon, between 1993 and 2001, at least four feuds broke out along tribal lines, resulting in significant hostility and at times all-out armed inter-tribal conflict.<sup>660</sup> Settling these rivalries drained insurgency efforts, since fighting one another leaves less room to oppose the Iranian government. These inter-tribal rivalries have continued into the contemporary era and it is likely that they have been realities that Jundallah, Jaish ul-Adl and other insurgent groups have been forced to contend with. For example, Zambelis' research on Jundallah indicates that "tribal dynamics" created significant tension internal to the organization which affected the organization "on multiple levels."<sup>661</sup>

## **B. THE GROWING INVOLVEMENT OF THE IRGC**

The Iranian government's single most impactful change between 2003 and the present to their COIN approach against insurgency in Sistan-Baluchistan has been the ascription of the IRGC as the absolute final authority for all COIN against the Baluch. Following a series of Jundallah attacks, the IRGC lobbied, and successfully gained complete control over Sistan-Baluchistan in 2009. Initially, IRGC general Noor-Ali Shushtari possessed power over Sistan-Baluchistan to the extent that Saira Basit called him a "de-facto czar" of the province.<sup>662</sup> The IRGC's level of control and involvement in Sistan-Baluchistan security matters only grew after Shushtari and others were killed during a planning meeting in Pishin in late 2009.<sup>663</sup> From Pishin onward, the IRGC has kept and maintained effective authoritative control over all of Sistan-Baluchistan into the present at the time this thesis is being written. This assumption of IRGC control and absolute involvement in COIN has also coincided with the decline of Iranian Baluch insurgency, to include the significantly improved COIN approach Iran has adopted, as discussed in Chapter IV.

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<sup>659</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*, 218.

<sup>660</sup> Dudoignon 196–201.

<sup>661</sup> Zambelis, "Evolution of Ethnic Baluch Insurgency," 18–19.

<sup>662</sup> Basit, "Explaining the Impact of Militancy on Iran-Pakistan Relations," 1045.

<sup>663</sup> Basit, 1045.

The IRGC has successfully led the implementation of improved COIN operations against Baluch insurgents because it possesses a formidable and unique set of resources, experience, and expertise, which will be discussed in detail in this section. The IRGC's assumption of control in Sistan-Baluchistan coincided with heightened levels of unrest nationwide, which likely influenced Iranian decision-makers toward a lower level of tolerance with respect to Baluch insurgency. Additionally, by declaring the IRGC as the absolute authority over all COIN matters, inter-service rivalry between government organizations was greatly reduced as an impediment of previous COIN efforts. The IRGC, as a unique, unconventional organization is well-suited to handle COIN, and its history and experience against other insurgency and unrest inside of Iran before 2003 demonstrates that it is well-equipped to combat the Baluch insurgency. The IRGC also possesses significant financial and political advantages which make it well-suited to combat the Baluch insurgency, and has unique industrial and telecommunications influences which have proven salutary to COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan. Finally, in reviewing the demise of Jundallah and subsequent developments in Baluch insurgency, it is argued that IRGC involvement has had a significant influence on these events, specifically toward obtaining outcomes which have been positive to Iranian COIN.

### **1. Assumption of IRGC Command and Political Considerations**

The IRGC's assumption of absolute, dominant command over Sistan-Baluchistan, especially pertaining to Jundallah and other Baluch insurgent groups, did not occur in a vacuum. The IRGC's movements to assume wider degrees of autonomy and control in Sistan-Baluchistan coincided with a nationwide expansion of their power, capabilities and overall authorities. As Udit Banerjea details, Ayatollah Khamenei "consolidated" a multitude of intelligence and security agency functions under the IRGC in response to the 2009 Green Movement, a nationwide protest against presidential election results perceived to be fraudulent and illegitimate.<sup>664</sup> Concerned over a widespread opposition movement which potentially could "threaten the legitimacy of the clerical regime," Khamenei granted the IRGC expanded, sweeping powers which effectively allowed the IRGC to assume

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<sup>664</sup> Banerjea, "Revolutionary Intelligence," 94-96.

dominance over the MOIS and other security organizations.<sup>665</sup> Simultaneously, the IRGC was expanding its leverage and grip on power. While the IRGC and Basij were tasked with suppressing and dismantling election backlash, they also were expanding their own power in ways relevant to COIN. For example, Iran purchased the controlling stake of the national telecommunications company, which is discussed in Section B.5 of this chapter, in November 2009.<sup>666</sup>

To ascribe the IRGC's assumption of command exclusively as a function of nationwide unrest would be flawed. To begin with, the decision for the IRGC to assume command of COIN operations in Sistan-Baluchistan predates the unrest resultant of the election. According to Basit, the order for the IRGC to assume absolute control of Sistan-Baluchistan occurred in April 2009.<sup>667</sup> The presidential elections, and subsequent nationwide protests which the IRGC was tasked with suppressing were in June 2009.<sup>668</sup> By that time, according to Basit, IRGC Deputy Ground Force Commander Noor-Ali Shushtari was already well on his way to becoming the "de facto tsar of Sistan-Baluchistan."<sup>669</sup> Second, the April mobilization of the IRGC into Sistan-Baluchistan reflects an Iranian assessment that Baluch insurgency in its own right provided a significant threat to Iranian national security interests. According to Basit, the flooding of forces into Sistan-Baluchistan in April 2009 reflected the IRGC being "put on the defensive," to an extent unprecedented since the Iran-Iraq War.<sup>670</sup>

However, to discount or downplay the interconnectedness of an increased degree to which national unrest and dissent groups have become a focal point for IRGC following the 2009 election and their expanded involvement in COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan would be flawed; instead, it is likely that more resources, attention, and personnel have been

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<sup>665</sup> Banerjea, 96.

<sup>666</sup> Scott Peterson, "Iran's Revolutionary Guard Tightens Grip," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 9, 2009, <https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Middle-East/2009/1209/p10s01-wome.html>.

<sup>667</sup> Basit, "Explaining the Impact of Militancy on Iran-Pakistan Relations," 1045.

<sup>668</sup> Simon Jeffrey, "Iran Election Protests: The Dead, Jailed and Missing," *Guardian*, July 29, 2009. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/blog/2009/jul/29/iran-election-protest-dead-missing>.

<sup>669</sup> Basit, "Explaining the Impact of Militancy on Iran-Pakistan Relations," 1045.

<sup>670</sup> Basit, 1045.

allocated toward Jundallah and other Baluch insurgencies because the increased unrest inside of Iran has caused the state to take the threat of these groups more seriously. As M. Mahtab Alam Rizvi notes, the IRGC's primary, immediately urgent task in 2009 was "silencing" The protests and opposition movements which exploded and flourished in the wake of the election.<sup>671</sup> In the midst of this suppression of opposition, Jundallah carried out the Pishin bombing, which at the time, was their worst attack to date, killing almost 50 people.<sup>672</sup> The attack directly impacted the state as well as the IRGC's reputation, since at least five IRGC generals, including Shushtari, were killed.<sup>673</sup> In the midst of national unrest, the IRGC thus suffered a significant blow to its top leadership, as well as its reputation. Following the attack, and amidst repeated national protests over the election, the IRGC announced and implemented further expansion of its power and authority in Sistan-Baluchistan.<sup>674</sup> The growing nationwide unrest since 2009 has likely driven the IRGC to take a more aggressive and comprehensive approach to COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan precisely because it is concurrent with elevated levels of internal dissent against the clerical regime which the IRGC supports above all else. Another series of mass protests occurred from 2011-2012.<sup>675</sup> Amidst widespread unrest, the efficacy of the IRGC

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<sup>671</sup> Rizvi, "Evaluating the Political and Economic Role of the IRGC," 590.

<sup>672</sup> "President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad Orders Swift Action Against Iran Bombers," Times of India, October 18, 2009, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/middle-east/President-Mahmoud-Ahmadinejad-orders-swift-action-against-Iran-bombers/articleshow/5137537.cms?referral=PM>.

<sup>673</sup> Reza Derakhsi, "US, UK Behind Attack on Guards, Claims Iran," Independent, October 19, 2009, <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/us-uk-behind-attack-on-guards-claims-iran-1805242.html>.

<sup>674</sup> "Timeline: Iran After the Election," Al Jazeera, February 11, 2010, <https://www.aljazeera.com/focus/iran/2009/11/200911411259869709.html>.; "فرمانده کل سپاه خبر داد: - حمایت سازمان‌های اطلاعاتی آمریکا، انگلیس و پاکستان از گروه ریگ-تصویب الگویی ساختاری جدید برای سپاه و بسیج از سوی مقام معظم فرمانده کل سپاه خبر داد: - حمایت [Corps commander announces: Adopts new structural model for army and mobilization by supreme leader]" سپاه از سوی "ISNA, October 27, 2008, <https://www.isna.ir/news/8807-00030.117023/%D9%81%D8%B1%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%AF%D9%87-%D9%83%D9%84-%D8%B3%D9%BE%D8%A7%D9%87-%D8%AE%D8%A8%D8%B1-%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%AF-%D8%AD%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%8A%D8%AA-%D8%B3%D8%A7%D8%B2%D9%85%D8%A7%D9%86-%D9%87%D8%A7%D9%8A-%D8%A7%D8%B7%D9%84%D8%A7%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%AA%D9%8A-%D8%A2%D9%85%D8%B1%D9%8A%D9%83%D8%A7>;

<sup>675</sup> Elizabeth Flock, "Iran Gets Back E-Mail Access, but Other Sites Remain Blacked Out Ahead of Protest," *Washington Post*, February 13, 2012, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/iran-gets-back-e-mail-access-but-other-sites-remain-blacked-out-ahead-of-protest/2012/02/13/gIQAgxz5AR\\_blog.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/blogpost/post/iran-gets-back-e-mail-access-but-other-sites-remain-blacked-out-ahead-of-protest/2012/02/13/gIQAgxz5AR_blog.html).

as a security organization has become more important, and thus their performance in Sistan-Baluchistan toward quelling insurgency has become more reflective on their performance and reputation as a security organization overall.

## **2. Unity and Cohesion of Command**

Iranian COIN in the Jundallah era was tactically and operationally incoherent, caused by endemic differences in agenda, political alliance, capability and operational behavior among the Iranian security apparatuses. Within Iranian security services, counterinsurgency, and counterterrorism apparatuses, there are a multitude of organizations, each with their own specific focus, political machinations, and approaches to COIN. As discussed in Chapter II, there are four security institutions which combat insurgents and terrorists in Iran: The Ministry of Intelligence and Security (MOIS), the law enforcement element, referred to as NAJA, the conventional military (Artesh) and the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC).<sup>676</sup> As Tabatabai notes, there is no default, clear-cut division of labor between these organizations at a national nor local level; with “overlapping agendas and mandates,” The four elements of the security organization often respond to threats in uncoordinated, and counterproductive ways.<sup>677</sup> This “disorder and lack of effective communication” often gives way to an undermining, if not unraveling of internal strategies and counteroffensives.<sup>678</sup>

Organizational overlap and competition created discord which undercut the effectiveness of Iranian COIN toward Baluch insurgents. In the early years of Jundallah, Iranian security groups and their proponents fought among one another, and sought to blame each other for the string of Baluch insurgent attacks. Following the May 2006 Tasooki massacre, the Attorney General of Iran criticized MOIS and local NAJA forces for their inability to forestall Jundallah’s consecutive attacks.<sup>679</sup> The deputy speaker of the Iranian Parliament went further, calling MOIS and NAJA incompetent, and suggesting that

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<sup>676</sup> Tabatabai, “Other Side of the Iranian Coin,” 189.

<sup>677</sup> Tabatabai, 195.

<sup>678</sup> Tabatabai, 195.

<sup>679</sup> “Bandits in Kerman Must Be Tracked Down: Officials,” *Tehran Times*, May 15, 2006, NewsBank.

the IRGC and Basij take over the responsibility of Jundallah's pursuit.<sup>680</sup> Similar rhetoric emerged after the February 2007 Zahedan bombing; the Parliamentary representative from Zahedan faulted poor performance of the Artesh and NAJA for permitting Jundallah to strike.<sup>681</sup>

Following the 2009 IRGC takeover of Sistan-Baluchistan, relevant security force outlooks, and public statements carry a heavier tone of inter-agency cooperation. For example, a 2017 seizure of a Jaish ul Adl arms cache stressed that "coordinated efforts" between agencies led to operational success.<sup>682</sup> Similarly, reporting on the aftermath of the February 2019 Jaish ul-Adl bus bombing clearly demonstrates that local police forces were conducting investigations alongside MOIS, and the information these investigations obtained was acted upon by the IRGC Qods force.<sup>683</sup> This same spirit of cohesion is stressed as one of the critical underpinnings which contributed to the successful return of the 2014 Jaish ul-Adl hostages, evinced by comments of NAJA head Brigadier General Esmail Ahmadi-Moqaddam that "cooperation among the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps, the Police Force, the Intelligence Ministry and the diplomatic apparatus," remained the critical element to securing Border Guards' release."<sup>684</sup>

### **3. Unconventional Organization: The IRGC's COIN Pedigree**

The U.S. DoD COIN Manual states that insurgency, by its nature, requires a highly tailored response, "often requiring specialized training and development of new capabilities or modifications to existing ones."<sup>685</sup> Therefore, military, security, and police forces often experience shortfalls in formulating COIN approaches. Military arms often struggle to adjust to COIN paradigms because COIN consists of a "different set of tasks

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<sup>680</sup> *Tehran Times*, "Bandits in Kerman Must Be Tracked Down: Officials."

<sup>681</sup> "Bomb Attack Kills 11 in Zahedan," *Iran News*, February 15, 2007, NewsBank.

<sup>682</sup> *Iran Daily*, "Arms Cache of Jaish ul-Adl Terror Group Seized in SE Iran."

<sup>683</sup> "IRGC: Bomber, Two Other Terrorists in Iran Attack Identified As Pakistani Nationals," *Iran Daily*, February 19, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>684</sup> "Efforts Ongoing to Free Border Guards," *Iran Daily*, February 28, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>685</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Counterinsurgency*, I-5.



and capabilities than those required in traditional warfare.”<sup>686</sup> Similarly, conventional police and security organizations often find their COIN expertise incomplete because effective COIN requires both “interagency initiatives” and tailored operations which fall outside their “traditional” areas of expertise.<sup>687</sup>

When the IRGC was designated by Khamenei as the supreme authority for Sistan-Baluchistan toward defeating Baluch insurgency, it placed a definitively unorthodox organization at the COIN helm. As Anthony Cordesman and Martin Kleiber describe, the IRGC is a definitively “unconventional” organization.<sup>688</sup> Rather than a traditional police, military, or security organization, Ariane Tabatabai notes the IRGC’s primary function is specifically tailored to function as a “mosaic defense” to counter internal threats to the regime, which she argues is why they are Iran’s best institution for COIN.<sup>689</sup> Afshon Ostovar describes the IRGC as organizationally “multifaceted,” at once functioning as a “security service ... intelligence organization, a social and cultural force, and a complex industrial and economic conglomerate.”<sup>690</sup> Additionally, per Tabatabai, the IRGC has an unparalleled level of “firsthand experience with guerilla tactics” that Iranian forces frequently encounter in Baluchistan and other insurgent border areas; there are IRGC units dedicated to “irregular, asymmetric, unconventional, and guerrilla warfare tactics,” specifically designed to “counter technologically and conventionally superior adversaries.”<sup>691</sup>

The IRGC is at once both an insurgent and a counterinsurgent organization, which makes it uniquely poised compared to other organizations when executing COIN missions. While the IRGC in modernity is best known for its involvement in foreign affairs, as Wehrey et al. note, the IRGC’s founding charter “accorded primacy to an *internal* role,”

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<sup>686</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I-5.

<sup>687</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I-5.

<sup>688</sup> Anthony Cordesman and Martin Kleiber, *Iran’s Military Forces and Warfighting Capabilities: The Threat in the Northern Gulf* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International 2007), 15.

<sup>689</sup> Tabatabai, “Other Side of the Iranian Coin,” 193.

<sup>690</sup> Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 6-7.

<sup>691</sup> Tabatabai, “Other Side of the Iranian Coin,” 193.

countering those who opposed the Islamic Republic.<sup>692</sup> Reviewing the purview of the IRGC as originally specified by the Revolutionary Council, the first two tasks listed, as well as at least four of the eight overall categories of IRGC authority pertain to countering insurgency and opposition inside of Iran.<sup>693</sup> The IRGC's expertise and effectiveness at security is also bolstered further through its experience from the insurgent perspective. Per Afshon Ostovar, the IRGC also has a deep history of supporting, training, equipping, and cooperating a multitude of foreign "terrorists, nonstate actors, militias, insurgents," and other dissent groups.<sup>694</sup>

The IRGC is the organization among Iranian security apparatuses with the longest, most diverse history with internal COIN, both inside Baluchistan, as well as throughout the entire country. In addition to being the force which is most organizationally oriented toward COIN, Ariane Tabatabai argues that the IRGC is by far the most "effective."<sup>695</sup> Operating outside "the sphere and jurisdiction of the regular police and army forces," early IRGC operations effectively countered and eliminated insurgencies with trans-nationalist ideologies, such as the MEK, Monarchy restorationists, and the Tudeh Party.<sup>696</sup> The IRGC's pedigree also involves COIN experience with ethnic insurgencies. Per Ostovar, soon after its establishment in 1979 the IRGC had established COIN units in regions of Iran where ethnic militancy and insurgency were present, to include Khuzestan, Kermanshah, and areas with higher levels of Turkmen and Kurdish populations.<sup>697</sup> Pertaining to the Baluch, the IRGC has also been the functional organization which put down insurgent and nationalist movements that preceded Jundallah. Ostovar, Dudoignon, and Harrison all confirm that the IRGC since 1979 has had COIN and anti-nationalist units in Sistan-Baluchistan which have attempted to neutralize, oftentimes violently ethnically

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<sup>692</sup> Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran*, 21.

<sup>693</sup> Wehrey et al., 21.

<sup>694</sup> Ostovar, "Iran's Way of War," 166.

<sup>695</sup> Tabatabai, "Other Side of the Iranian Coin," 193.

<sup>696</sup> Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran*, 22.

<sup>697</sup> Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 56–57.

Baluch opposition movements.<sup>698</sup> Per Dudoignon, in late 1979 and early 1980, the IRGC also conducted COIN operations against a resurgent Baluch Liberation Front, eventually killing their leader.<sup>699</sup>

#### 4. Funding and Influence

Over time, the IRGC has become the most authoritative and powerful organization in Iran when concerned with security and COIN matters. As Roozbeh Safshekan and Farzan Sabet note, the IRGC, since 1997 has executed the exact same missions as the MOIS, Artesh, and NAJA, having “arrayed itself” as an organization which “paralleled” The other security organizations largely as defense and countermeasure to reform-minded politics that were swept in with the election of President Khatami in 1995.<sup>700</sup> Over time, the IRGC has “usurped” The primacy in authority as well as expertise of the other security organizations, and can be considered from 2003 to the present as Iran’s unparalleled “premier security institution.”<sup>701</sup> Moreover, as Ali Afoneh notes, the IRGC compared with other military and security organizations has an unapparelled “commanding influence over political decision-making,” and this influence has only expanded further since 2009.<sup>702</sup>

In terms of political, financial, and personnel considerations, the IRGC stands above its security apparatus counterparts in Iran. The IRGC, compared to other Iranian security organizations, possesses a degree of autonomy and independence that the other security organizations simply cannot compete with. While the IRGC was established, and for all intents and purposes remains “an independent security force, reporting directly to the Supreme Leader,” The MOIS, NAJA, and Artesh are more entrenched and accountable

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<sup>698</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*, 182-183; Harrison, *In Afghanistan’s Shadow*, 116; Ostovar, 56–57.

<sup>699</sup> Dudoignon, 188.

<sup>700</sup> Roozbeh Safshekan and Farzan Sabet, “The Ayatollah’s Praetorians: The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and the 2009 Election Crisis,” *The Middle East Journal* 64, no. 4 (Autumn 2010): 548, <https://doi.org/10.3751/64.4.12>.

<sup>701</sup> Safshekan and Sabet, 548.

<sup>702</sup> Ali Alfoneh, “The Revolutionary Guards’ Role in Iranian Politics,” *Middle East Quarterly* 15, no.4 (September 2008): 3, <https://www.meforum.org/1979/the-revolutionary-guards-role-in-iranian-politics>.

to governmental bureaucracy, ultimately accountable through their ministry heads to “the president of Iran, who is elected by the people.”<sup>703</sup> Financially, the IRGC has larger coffers than the other organizations involved in security. In 2019, for example, the IRGC’s operating budget was larger than the combined budgets of the NAJA and the Artesh.<sup>704</sup> This disparity in funding is understated, because the IRGC also has access to additional funding through its connections to large sectors of the economy, as well as IRGC’s purported de facto control of “Iran’s Shadow Economy.”<sup>705</sup> Considering personnel, the IRGC in general stands above its counterparts. As detailed by Ali Afoneh, the IRGC generally “has the first pick of potential recruits,” which combined with the IRGC’s superior prospects of compensation and careers, generally has skewed the talent pool in the direction of IRGC center of gravity.<sup>706</sup>

## 5. Industrial Factors

The IRGC internally possesses a multitude of industrial connections useful as support to COIN. Since the IRGC either “directly or indirectly” controls significant companies and conglomerates in “most sectors of the economy,” it can utilize its resources effectively toward achieving short and long-term COIN objectives almost without coordination. It is likely that the IRGC’s connections with industry played a significant part in the speed, efficacy, and exhaustive comprehensiveness with which the state was able to produce increased physical security measures on the Iran-Pakistan border. As mentioned in Chapter IV, plans to construct an enhanced border between Iran and Pakistan wall have been discussed and in progress since at least the year 2000. Moreover, reports by Al Jazeera indicate that the physical wall in its current form began construction as early as 2007.<sup>707</sup>

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<sup>703</sup> Banerjee, “Revolutionary Intelligence,” 93.

<sup>704</sup> Defense Intelligence Agency, *Iran Military Power* (Washington, DC: Defense Intelligence Agency, August 2019), 28, [https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Iran\\_Military\\_Power\\_LR.pdf](https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/Iran_Military_Power_LR.pdf).

<sup>705</sup> Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran*, 55.

<sup>706</sup> Afoneh, “Eternal Rivals?”; Saied Golkar, *The Supreme Leader and the Guard: Civil-Military Relations and Regime Survival in Iran*. PN58. Washington, DC: The Washington Institute for Near-East Policy, 2019. <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Documents/pubs/PolicyNote58-Golkar.pdf>.

<sup>707</sup> Kamal Hyder, “Exclusive Report on Baluch Wall,” June 11, 2007, Al Jazeera, video, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KV1ENB8t\\_jg](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KV1ENB8t_jg).

However, as of 2008 the border wall project remained largely stalled out, according to Al Jazeera reports, with the majority of the border “having no defense at all.”<sup>708</sup> However, following the IRGC’s assumption of COIN and Sistan-Baluchistan command and control in general in 2009, the Iranian construction and engineering conglomerate Khatam-al Anbiya was awarded the exclusive contract to construct, and enhance the physical security barriers at Iran’s Eastern Borders.<sup>709</sup> Khatam-al Anbiya is in fact controlled and run by the IRGC.<sup>710</sup> Functioning as a hand-in-hand military industrial complex, the IRGC has thus leveraged the construction and consistent border upkeep of the physical barriers at the border.

## 6. Narrative Resources

One of the underpinnings of successful COIN David Kilcullen discussed in his 2010 book *Counterinsurgency* was the need to “get the press onside” with COIN efforts, specifically because of the fact that such a relationship allows “dramatically” increases a COIN operation’s capacity to convey its narrative and messaging to both “global and local audience.”<sup>711</sup> In addition to having a network of sympathetic and cooperative media outlets who can produce news and information that create effective COIN messaging, sufficiently comprehensive, and dominant means of delivery that reach relevant audiences is also critical for COIN messaging to be effective. As William Mackinlay discusses in the *Insurgent Archipelago*, previous arrangements between the counterinsurgent and friendly media sources may no longer be sufficient to control and dominated the narrative aspects of the insurgent-counterinsurgent struggle for population support.<sup>712</sup> In part, this insufficiency is due to the fact that the press, and subsequently information operations

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<sup>708</sup> Nazanine Moshiri, “Iran Opium Patrol: Police Fight Drug Smugglers Along Border,” Al Jazeera, June 26, 2008, video, 1:48, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Ep-wtx6dp4>.

<sup>709</sup> Farhad Rezaei and Somayeh Khodaei Moshirabad, “The Revolutionary Guards: From Spoiler to Acceptor of the Nuclear Agreement,” *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no.2 (2018): 145, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13530194.2016.1214817>.

<sup>710</sup> “Khatam-al Anbiya Construction Headquarters (KAA),” Iran Watch, June 1, 2012, <https://www.iranwatch.org/iranian-entities/khatam-al-anbiya-construction-headquarters-kaa>.

<sup>711</sup> Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 40.

<sup>712</sup> Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 94.

designed to win over a population, is no longer dominated by the purview of journalism. “Open source networks” with “user-generated content” have produced a “flood of information, pouring into the new consumer-generated pool.”<sup>713</sup> Mackinlay calls this phenomenon “information anarchy,” and believes that in open-source media this “favours” The insurgent over the counterinsurgent because it is nigh impossible for the COIN “single strategic narrative” to resonate.<sup>714</sup> Unless a COIN narrative has a means for successfully applying “information controls” to user-generated content and “mass communications,” it seems Mackinlay believes that this dynamic is something most contemporary COIN efforts will be forced to contend with.<sup>715</sup>

The IRGC’s capacity to produce media in a manner which is both horizontally and vertically integrated is unparalleled inside of Iran, making it ideal to not only produce, but consistently and comprehensively disseminate unified messages for effect, and is uniquely poised to craft, disseminate, and control the flow of information relevant to COIN inside of Iran. The IRGC has significant media connection and influence, and as a result is able to keep the media “on side.”<sup>716</sup> As Frederic Wehrey et al., as well as Afshon Ostovar both note, the IRGC has a high level of horizontal integration when it comes to press and media production inside of Iran. The IRGC directly controls several press and media sources, to include the website and weekly magazine *Sobh-E-Sadegh*, The Basij News Agency, and Sepah News.<sup>717</sup> The IRGC maintains additional informal networks of press ties through major Iranian media companies either owned or headed by former IRGC officials, including the Islamic Republic of Iran Broadcasting news conglomerate, *Keyhan* newspapers and their subsidiaries, Fars News Agency, Tasnim News Agency, Sepah News, and web-based news services such as Tabnak.<sup>718</sup> The IRGC also is insulated against the “torrent of blogs and imagery” which makes up Mackinlay’s “information anarchy,”

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<sup>713</sup> Mackinlay, 94.

<sup>714</sup> Mackinlay, 94–95.

<sup>715</sup> Mackinlay, 94–95.

<sup>716</sup> Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 40.

<sup>717</sup> Wehrey et al., *The Rise of the Pasdaran*, 15–17; Ostovar, *Vanguard of the Imam*, 6–7.

<sup>718</sup> Wehrey et al., 15–17; Ostovar, 6–7.

precisely because the IRGC is the one controlling the floodgates and the subsequent flow of that information.<sup>719</sup> Until October 2018, the IRGC held majority ownership in Iran's largest telecommunications conglomerate, Iranian Telecommunications Company (TCI), as well as Iran's largest cell phone provider, Hamrah Avval.<sup>720</sup> As of 2015, TCI was the primary internet service provider to 40.1 million Iranians, more than half of the entire 79.5 million Iranian population at the time.<sup>721</sup> At that time, ITC had more than 63 million mobile phone subscriptions, accounting for more than 75 percent of the Iranian population.<sup>722</sup> Especially as the company integrates, by some estimates TCI and MCI, as Mohammed Reza Azali puts it, will all but "control the data and the fixed and wireless communications" across all of Iran, if they do not do so already.<sup>723</sup>

## **7. The Demise of Jundallah, Revisited**

As discussed in Chapter IV, Jundallah's ultimate end as an official organization began in 2010 with arrest and subsequent execution of Abdolmalek Rigi. Rigi's arrest and execution, as well as Jundallah's eventual disbandment comes after the IRGC assumes absolute control in Sistan-Baluchistan.

The actual ground truth of how Rigi was apprehended is debated, with the IRGC and the Iranian state recounting one version of events, while Pakistan, the United States, and the majority of the international community claiming a different sequence of events as to the pathway by which Abdolmalek Rigi wound up in IRGC custody. According to the Iranian version of events, the IRGC and other Iranian intelligence organizations had been tracking Abdolmalek Rigi's movements for months, and when a private plane that Rigi,

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<sup>719</sup> Mackinlay, *The Insurgent Archipelago*, 94–95.

<sup>720</sup> "IRGC Gives Up Stake in Telecommunications Possibly to Avoid Sanctions," Radio Farda, October 24, 2018, <https://en.radiofarda.com/a/iran-irgc-gives-up-stake-in-telecommunications/29561856.html>.

<sup>721</sup> "Iran Population," WorldOMeters, July 1, 2019, <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/iran-population/>; Mohammed Reza Ali, "The Biggest Telecommunication Merger in Iran Is Happening," TechRASA, September 14, 2016, <http://techrasa.com/2016/09/14/biggest-telecommunication-merger-iran-happening/>.

<sup>722</sup> WorldOMeters; Ali.

<sup>723</sup> Ali.

with a forged Afghan passport was traveling on from Dubai to Kyrgyzstan crossed into Iranian airspace, Iranian forces forced the plane to land, boarded it, and apprehended Rigi.<sup>724</sup> The second version, which the majority of international experts endorse, is that Pakistani intelligence services apprehended and then covertly handed Rigi over to Iranian authorities.

Regardless of what version corresponds to the ground truth of the arrest, the arrest of Abdolmalek Rigi is in fact one of the early successes of the IRGC-led COIN operations against Baluch militants. If the Iranian version corresponds to the actual truth of events, then it reflects effective intelligence garnered by a synergy between organizations which can be attributed to Iranian assumption of absolute authority in Sistan-Baluchistan. If Pakistani entities were the ones who apprehended and extradited Rigi, it reflects an opening, initial progress of Iran's post-Jundallah approach of leveraging Pakistani action to attack Baluch insurgents. Either way, the IRGC-led COIN approaches at least partial credit for Rigi winding up in Iranian custody.

Though the arrest and execution of Rigi cannot be considered a death blow for Baluch insurgent groups, it certainly helped create the environment of fragmentation and competition between insurgent groups described above, and if such tactics were successfully incorporated into the Post-Jundallah approach they may prove beneficial to the IRGC-led COIN of Sistan-Baluchistan. As described in Section B of this chapter, since Rigi's death and Jundallah's disbandment, there has been competition between splinter groups for succession of the insurgency. These parallel, competing, and noncooperative Baluch insurgent groups operating in Iran all contain key leadership from Jundallah's inner circle, and multiple groups seek to stress their relationship with Rigi as their justification as the rightful successor to Jundallah. Moreover, an argument can be made that the decapitation approach Iran used against Jundallah was ineffective simply because it did not correctly or comprehensively remove Jundallah's critical core. Indeed, the remnant leaders of Jundallah which survived the IRGC purges remain the driving forces behind the major

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<sup>724</sup> Robert F. Worth, "Iran Says Capture of Rebel Is Blow to U.S.," *New York Times*, February 23, 2010, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/24/world/middleeast/24insurgent.html>.



Baluch insurgent groups still operating in the region today. Mullah Omar, Jaish ul-Adl's second in command, had a critical relationship with Jundallah's Abdolamlek Rigi. Rigi's brother, Abdul Rauf Rigi, played a critical role in Jaish ul-Adl's leadership, as well as his own splinter insurgent group, while Rigi's cousin, Abdol Sattar Rigi also is a critical leader of Jaish ul-Adl. Were these personnel remnants of the Jundallah organization more aggressively pursued after Rigi's death, it may have proven to be a death blow for the overall insurgency. Moreover, removal of critical leadership from Jaish ul-Adl and other organizations in the current era could provide additional fragmentation which would divide insurgent groups even further to the Iranian state's benefit.

The IRGC-led operations against Baluch insurgent movements have capitalized on increasing sectarian elements of their own narratives. As discussed above, since the disbandment of Jundallah, sectarianism has taken the dominant, central role of identity politics and narrative for the Baluch insurgent groups inside Iran, absent any form of temperance. As Sectarianism has become the central thematic theme for Baluch insurgent groups, it has allowed Iran to more effectively cement insurgent groups such as Jaish ul-Adl as associated with groups they identify as "takfiri" terrorist organizations.<sup>725</sup> As Mehdi Khalaji describes, "takfir" is a negative epithet used to describe Muslim groups or ideologies that label Muslims who do not ascribe to their way of thinking as "apostates," and believe that this apostasy justifies "harming or killing them."<sup>726</sup> Two prominent groups that Iran identifies as "takfiri" are the Islamic State and Al Qaeda.<sup>727</sup> As Jaish ul-Adl and other groups have increased the weight and frequency of their emphasis on sectarian divides, the now IRGC-led counter-narrative has capitalized on this development by using that emphasis to discredit the group further by associating it with widely unpopular transnational terrorist networks, such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.

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<sup>725</sup> Mehdi Khalaji, "Takfiris in Tehran: The Sectarian Face of Iranian Counterterrorism," The Washington Institute, June 24, 2016, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/view/takfiris-in-tehran-the-sectarian-face-of-iranian-counterterrorism>.

<sup>726</sup> Khalaji.

<sup>727</sup> Khalaji; Nafees Takar and Noor Zahid, "VOA Explainer: Who Are Takfiri Extremists?," Voice of America, June 22, 2016, <https://www.voanews.com/world-news/middle-east-dont-use/voa-explainer-who-are-takfiri-extremists>.

Repeatedly, since 2012, Iranian state media has used the word “takfiri” to describe Jaish ul-Adl activity, and through that association, have been able to discredit the organization as “anti-Islamic” representing a line of ideology consistent with Al Qaeda and the Islamic State.<sup>728</sup>

There is inherent windfall for Iranian COIN in framing Baluch insurgents as more strongly “takfiri” precisely because that association carries with it an implication that Baluch militants are terrorists, vice insurgents, which further discredits and downplays the degree to which they represent the will of the people. Per David Kilcullen, terrorism is “politically motivated violence ... conducted with the intention to coerce through fear.”<sup>729</sup> By contrast, Insurgency is a “popular movement that seeks to overthrow the status quo through subversion, political activity, insurrection, armed conflict and terrorism.”<sup>730</sup> It is important to note that Kilcullen identifies terrorism as a “component” of insurgency. In so doing, it is implied that terrorism is somehow a narrower, less expansive problem to combat than insurgency. Moreover, per Kilcullen’s definition, terrorism does not include support of the population as a prerequisite and indicates interests which are designed to influence the population through negative reinforcement. Application of the “takfiri” label, enhanced by Baluch insurgents’ own identification toward sectarian narrative elements, thus adds credence to the long-held assertion that Baluch militant are “terrorists” vice insurgents. The more convincing this argument is, the easier it is for Iran to marginalize and downplay the degree to which Jaish ul-Adl and other Baluch insurgent groups are perceived as being popular and formidable.

### C. CONCLUSION

This chapter has discussed that two primary factors have been at the root of the improvement in Iran’s COIN approach in Sistan-Baluchistan from 2003 to the present.

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<sup>728</sup> “Iran Foiled 30 Bombings in Past Year: Intelligence Minister,” *Tehran Times*, April 22, 2017, NewsBank; “No Ground For Daesh Activities in Iran: IRGC Commander,” *Iran Daily*, July 20, 2016, NewsBank; “Iran: Saudi Arabia True ‘Godfather’ of Takfiri Terrorism,” *Iran Daily*, February 19, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>729</sup> Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, 184.

<sup>730</sup> Kilcullen, 184.

First, since Jundallah's disbandment, the Baluch insurgency has weakened significantly, adopting tactics, narratives, and policy which has been self-destructive, and resulted in fragmentation between insurgent groups, and isolation from the populations of Sistan-Baluchistan. Second, the IRGC effectively took over all COIN efforts, as well as overall control of Sistan-Baluchistan, and in so doing has utilized its unique influence, resources, and experience to create and realize an improved COIN approach which appears to be containing, if not diminishing Baluch insurgent activity.

The IRGC's involvement in Sistan-Baluchistan is thus indicative of Iran's greatest COIN advantages. It is the IRGC's growing involvement in Sistan-Baluchistan which turned an ineffective, incoherent COIN approach into one which has reduced insurgent's influence, effectiveness and operational capacity over time. The implications of the IRGC involvement in Iranian COIN, and how it pertains to overall Iranian security apparatuses will be discussed in the following, concluding chapter.

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## VI. THESIS CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to serve as an inquiry into the specific methods and strategy Iran has used in counterinsurgency against ethnic Baluch insurgents in Sistan-Baluchistan and assess the degree to which the Iranian COIN strategy has been successful against Baluch insurgent groups. This thesis found that Iran has developed default strategic responses which it has historically used to respond to all significant internal threats, insurgent and otherwise. Iran's initial COIN approach to Baluch insurgents was mainly consistent with and derived from this default approach. However, Iran's initial COIN approach was not compatible to the particular dynamics of the Baluch insurgency and the environments in which both Iranian COIN and the insurgency operated in, and as a result the initial Iranian COIN approach against Jundallah was ineffective, if not counterproductive. This thesis also found that Iran's COIN approach in Sistan-Baluchistan has not been static, but has evolved over time. Iran's COIN approach began to diverge from the largely default COIN response and became a fully tailored COIN strategy in the aftermath of Jundallah's demise. This overhauled and remodeled strategy, based on an optimistic narrative and fundamental alterations to border security and Pakistani policy which had previously enabled the insurgency, has ultimately resulted in a successful Iranian COIN approach, which to date has contained, if not diminished the threat, growth, and future capacity for Baluch insurgency inside of Iran. Baluch insurgent groups represent an imperfect manifestation of insurgency, which ultimately has helped Iran's prospects of successful COIN. Ultimately, the Iranian continued success in COIN against Baluch insurgent groups has been the result of the IRGC's involvement in COIN efforts.

The final chapter of this thesis will discuss the findings of this thesis research in detail. Next, the propositions, discussed in the introductory chapter, shall be evaluated. The implications, and relevant policy considerations related to the results of this thesis will be evaluated. Finally, this thesis will provide recommendations relevant to the IRGC and American COIN operations based on the findings of this research.

## A. FINDINGS

There have been many Baluch insurgencies and rebellions, and most of them have failed. History shows that there have been far more periods that the Baluch have been governed by outsiders than periods where they have governed themselves. Discussed in Chapter II, the efforts for Baluch autonomy over history have been categorized as failure, with few, short-lived aberrations of increased self-determination and autonomy for the Baluch. With this consideration, to date, the modern Baluch insurgency in Iran from 2003 until the present represents the most recent manifestation of struggles for Baluch autonomy. To date, modern Baluch insurgent groups have failed to meet or achieve high-water marks of their predecessors, and the Iranian state, despite armed conflict and struggle, remains firmly in control of Sistan-Baluchistan.

This thesis found that the Iranian COIN approach in Sistan-Baluchistan was initially ineffective at combatting the Baluch insurgent group Jundallah from 2003 to 2012. Iran's overall COIN response to a to Jundallah had three critical failures which ultimately backfired, leading to a perpetuation, if not outright strengthening of the insurgency. First, Iran's offensive COIN operations were centered around capturing or killing Jundallah's leader, Abdolmalek Rigi. However, the removal of Rigi in the short term made Jundallah more violent and resulted in attacks by the organization that were far more devastating when compared with attacks during Rigi's leadership. In the longer term, the remnants of the organization coalesced into significant insurgent groups which continued the insurgency. Iran's attempt to decapitate Jundallah was executed too late, and failed to sufficiently capture the core leadership, which would prevent organizational survival. Though Jundallah initially consisted mainly of Rigi's immediate family and close associates, the organization eventually grew to contain significant roots outside of Rigi's familial, clan, and criminal ties. By Rigi's capture in 2010 these roots were strong enough for Jundallah to continue in Rigi's absence. The second critical error Iran made in response to Jundallah was a heavy-handed, comprehensive swift justice approach in Sistan-Baluchistan, designed to emphasize the strength of Iranian state authority. Instead of reinforcing the state's authority, Iran's mass arrests, execution, and raids of alleged insurgent and terrorist targets failed to forestall Jundallah operationally, and resulted in

greater sources of grievance and unrest within the Baluch populations. The third critical error of Iran's response to Jundallah was the emphatic, repetitive accusations of alleged U.S. support and assistance to Jundallah. Though they were intended to undermine Jundallah's legitimacy, these accusations ultimately resulted in greater attention and prospects of support for Jundallah internationally, and domestically served to enhance Jundallah's reputation and strengthen its appeal and prospects for growth and support.

These actions, as outlined in Chapter II, were largely a failure because they were the default Iranian response, and not tailored specifically to the environment of Sistan-Baluchistan nor the Baluch insurgent. Iran's response to Jundallah perfectly fits Iran's general patterns of behavior in responding to internal security threats. Chapter II outlines three distinct patterns of behavior with Iran's responses to internal threats: labeling opposition groups as terrorists, heavy use of arrest, repression and law enforcement action, and blaming foreign powers for the overall unrest. Reviewing Iran's response to Jundallah, all three of Iran's critical errors correlate with these default actions. As discussed in detail in Chapter III, these responses did not consider, nor match well with the particular circumstances of the Sistan-Baluchistan environment, the particular properties and makeup of the insurgent groups, or the Baluch populations among whom insurgents and Iran compete for support in the counterinsurgent-insurgent struggle.

As Chapter IV outlines, toward the end of Jundallah's tenure Iran began to re-evaluate, and remodel its COIN approach in Sistan-Baluchistan, with the result being a significantly improved COIN approach. Since Jundallah's demise, attacks in Sistan-Baluchistan have been far less deadly, and all but limited to the area within the immediate vicinity of the border. This improved COIN performance has correlated with a complete reconstitution of Iran's COIN strategy in Sistan-Baluchistan. First, Iran has severely restricted insurgent's cross-border access through overlapping layers of border security. Through the physical construction of a border wall, massive physical security and surveillance efforts along the border, increased deportation of Pakistanis, and border closures, Iran significantly restricted its vulnerability to insurgent attacks, reducing the means and opportunities by which insurgents could conduct meaningful, or significant operations against the Iranian state. Second, Iran has increased pressure on insurgents

beyond Iranian jurisdiction, using diplomatic, military, and economic leverage to persuade Pakistan to more aggressively pursue Iranian Baluch insurgents using Pakistani territory as refuge. Finally, Iran's COIN narrative post-Jundallah has also improved drastically. Since 2012, Iran has woven a narrative which above all else, consistently presents an optimistic outlook on Iranian control of Sistan-Baluchistan. This optimistic narrative stresses continuous improvements of security in Sistan-Baluchistan, framing both Iranian state and insurgent action as Iran security apparatus success.

This thesis also found that the modern Baluch insurgent groups do not represent a particularly strong or formidable insurgency when compared with the power of the Iranian state; Iran's capacity in the last 20 years to maintain absolute control of Sistan-Baluchistan despite virulent, violent insurgency was aided by the fact that modern Iranian Baluch insurgencies have flaws which significantly reduce their own resonance, capabilities, and potential popularity. As was demonstrated in Chapter V, the modern Baluch insurgencies, especially since the demise of Jundallah seem suffer from the same problems which have historically prevented Baluch nationalist movements from creating an enduring, sovereign state. First, the absence of a strong, unifying leader has created redundancy and competition which has been counterproductive to the insurgency. Second, modern Baluch insurgents, like some of their predecessors, have reduced their own appeal by emphasizing sectarian and transnational issues which likely do not resonate with a significant portion of the Iranian Baluch. Finally, longstanding tribal and clan rivalries have further unraveled potential insurgent cohesion.

This thesis found that the Iranian improvement, and continued success at containing and defeating Baluch insurgency inside Sistan-Baluchistan province has been because of the IRGC. Since 2009, the IRGC's wholesale assumption of control and responsibility for defeating insurgents has been at the core of Iran's COIN improvement in Sistan-Baluchistan. Succinctly, the IRGC's vast economic, industrial, financing, political, military, and narrative resources, combined with the IRGC's deep experiences and expertise at both insurgency and COIN present an enemy which Baluch insurgent groups have failed to effectively compete with in a consistent manner. More than any other factor



or phenomenon, the IRGC's sweeping, pervasive involvement in countering Baluch insurgent groups explains the reduction of effectiveness in the Iranian Baluch insurgency.

## **B. EVALUATION OF HYPOTHESES**

Hypothesis 1, which is that Iran utilized a largely default response to dissent, rather than a COIN approach that was specifically tailored to the Baluch insurgency, proved partially correct in its characterization of the Iranian State behavior, but false in terms of a relationship of causation between Iran's retention of power and employment of such an approach. Discussed in Chapter II, in Iran's behavior toward internal opposition and insurgency, several patterns emerge in review of Iran's tactical, narrative, and operational responses which combined form Iran's apparent default approach to insurgency and internal threat: The abstention of distinguishing between insurgent and terrorist, widespread attempts to discredit insurgents by association with United States or other perceived foreign threats, and mass arrests, law enforcement, and offensive action in response to successful insurgent attacks. As discussed in Chapter III, these tactical, narrative, and operational patterns of behavior initially comprised the majority of Iran's response to Baluch insurgency throughout the era of Jundallah. However, Chapter III demonstrated that these approaches did more harm than good to Iranian COIN efforts. Hypothesis 1's prospects of accuracy in relation is further diminished by the experience of Iranian COIN following Jundallah's demise, as discussed in Chapter IV. Higher levels of COIN success correlated with a strategy which distanced itself from the default Iranian responses, established in Chapter II. Rather than blaming foreign powers for the Baluch insurgency, the Post-Jundallah strategy represented a more muted association between Baluch insurgents and the United States. Rather than an outright admonishment and condemnation of Pakistan, Iran's narrative elements stressed bilateral cooperation. Rather than using the default approach of mass arrest and law enforcement operations, Iran concentrated COIN operations on proactively denying insurgents access to targets of opportunity through increased border security.

Hypothesis 2, which postulated that a combination of co-opting key Baluch leaders and targeting of specific high-level insurgents reduced insurgent groups' capacity to act

and gain ground among the population, proved partially valid. This thesis produced no significant evidence that confirmed or denied that the Islamic Republic of Iran revolutionized the strength of positive relationships with Sunni or Baluch tribal elites as response to the rise of Jundallah, Jaish ul-Adl, and or other ethnic Baluch insurgencies active from 2003 to 2020. It could be argued that the positive relationships Iran cultivated with tribal and religious elites across Sistan-Baluchistan served as a bulwark to rises in insurgent support among Baluch populations. However, as Dudoignon describes, the relationships between the Iranian state and these elites significantly predate the rising threat of Jundallah and other Baluch groups. Per Dudoignon, Iran has cultivated these relationships for decades, and as such they cannot fully be considered a COIN approach or response to the Present Baluch insurgency.<sup>731</sup> Moreover, the second half of the proposition proved false. As outlined in Chapter III, the removal of Abdolmalek Rigi and other critical Jundallah leadership may have contributed to Jundallah's eventual demise, but it did not stop the insurgency because remnants of Jundallah quickly coalesced into other groups and continued the insurgency. In five years, from Jundallah's 2005 attack to Rigi's capture in 2010, the center of gravity of Baluch insurgency evolved outside of the critical inner circle of leadership. An argument could be made that effective removal of key insurgent leaders, if done earlier in Jundallah's life cycle may have proven more significant, but the highly hypothetical nature of this prospect dictates that its exploration lies well outside of the scope of this thesis. In addition, with the rise of Jaish ul-Adl's Salahuddin Farooqi, a purported Jundallah member with no significant rank, a Baluch insurgent leader has emerged which in effect has replaced the critical leadership of Abdolmalek Rigi's inner circle.

Hypothesis 3, that the restrictive environment in Sistan-Baluchistan prevented or constrained insurgents from mounting offensives which could undermine or erode Iranian State control, proved false. First, rather than being a hindrance, insurgent groups used elements of the environment to their advantage. Discussed in Chapters III and IV, Jundallah and early post-Jundallah insurgent groups specifically used the barren, vast terrain to slip

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<sup>731</sup> Dudoignon, *The Baluch, Sunnism and the State in Iran*, 30, 269.

into Iranian territory, conduct attacks, and then retreat back across the border into Pakistani. In addition, the implied irrelevance of Iranian COIN with respect to the environmental effects on the insurgency also proved false. As discussed in Chapter IV, a major pillar of Iran's successful COIN approach after Jundallah's demise was that it physically altered the border terrain between Iran and Pakistan, constructing overlapping measures of physical security, to constrict cross-border access. The successful execution of altering the physical terrain as a means of COIN renders proposition 3 false.

Hypothesis 4 proved holds significant, albeit tangential weight. As Chapter V presented, the Baluch insurgent groups which succeeded Jundallah have suffered self-inflicted wounds that undercut their own efficacy as an insurgency by causing fragmentation of insurgent groups and erosion potential bases of insurgent support among Baluch populations. In Jundallah's wake, Jaish ul-Adl and other groups have competed, rather than cooperated with one another. The prominent insurgent groups which succeeded Jundallah have increasingly staked their identity along sectarian divides and transnational issues, creating potential distances and cleavages between the insurgency narrative and its resonance among Baluch populations. Finally, tribalism has further augmented fragmentation between insurgent groups, with tribal rivalry a source of division and tension that both Jundallah and current Baluch insurgent organizations have had to contend with.

Of the five propositions presented at the inception of this thesis, the fifth proposition, that Iran's continued control in Sistan-Baluchistan relative to insurgency is the result of an Iranian COIN approach in that has improved over time, and that the scale and pace of this improvement has outpaced that of insurgent development is the proposition which holds the most weight. As chapters IV and V demonstrate, Iranian COIN within Sistan-Baluchistan province began to drastically evolve, becoming a complete, coherent, and comprehensive strategy that targeted vulnerabilities of the Baluch insurgency. As Chapter V discussed, the IRGC's growing involvement was overwhelmingly the root cause behind the evolution in Iranian COIN, and the IRGC's unparalleled mix of expertise, experience, and resources have been leveraged at a rate and scale which Baluch insurgencies to date have categorically failed to respond to with their own adaptations.

### **C. IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This thesis adds to an already significant body of evidence which demonstrates that the Iranian state is capable of withstanding significant levels of insurgent threat and violence without losing its control or authority over its territory. Against Jundallah, Iran employed a COIN strategy which was ineffective, if not wholly counterproductive for nearly a decade. Iran endured both self-inflicted wounds from its COIN approach as well as repeated, violent attacks from Jundallah while retaining provincial control, and by 2012 had managed to reconstitute its COIN approach and turn previous failure into overall COIN success. As discussed as contextual background to this thesis, there are other ethnic and religious minority-based insurgencies in Iran's outermost territories. Given that the first half of the temporal scope of this thesis consisted of a deeply flawed, arguably self-destructive COIN approach, the Iranian state's current containment and overall success against Baluch insurgency reflects the strength, versatility, and overall vitality of the Islamic Republic's grip on power.

For the immediate future, it is apparent that ethnic insurgent organizations inside Iran, whether or not they have significant foreign support, present minimal, if any actual threat Khamenei regime interests. The findings of this thesis imply that the Iranian government, even at the periphery of its jurisdiction, is more than capable of defeating internal threats, to include violent insurgencies. Even with alleged foreign government support, Jundallah's efforts never truly escalated to where they actually threatened Iran's control over Sistan-Baluchistan. In the future, nations, to include the United States, which may find themselves exploring prospects of either covert or overt supporting to Iranian insurgencies should be realistic about the prospective gains of such endeavors. So long as the IRGC stands as Iran's preeminent security organization, the findings of this thesis imply that foreign support of insurgent organizations will produce little, if any significant effects on undermining or diminishing Khomeini regime's control over Iranian territory.

The IRGC's COIN prowess is exportable and may be used as a tool of Iranian foreign policy. Iran, in particular the IRGC, has long been accused by the international community, to include the United States of "export" of terrorism and insurgency to further

its own foreign policy objectives.<sup>732</sup> However, as the findings of this thesis imply, the IRGC is at the very least capable and proficient at COIN, and this capability also needs to be considered a possible export Iran can use to advance its own international agenda. In particular, the findings of this thesis imply that further research could be conducted to evaluate the role the IRGC can play had in helping Iran's allies stay in power. This applies to the Syrian Civil War, where Iranian support of Bashar Al-Assad has played a critical role in the Assad's regime victory against insurrection. Of note, Assad's IRGC-supported successful retention of control also has included the defeat of insurgents and rebel forces that had significant U.S. support.<sup>733</sup> This dynamic also applies to Iraq. At the very least, since the rise of ISIS in 2014, the IRGC has been actively involved in ensuring that the Iraqi government remains "shia-dominated" and friendly to Iranian interests.<sup>734</sup> If significant unrest, insurgencies, or insurrection reemerges in the Iraqi political landscape, it is well within the realm of possibility that the IRGC will employ their COIN expertise, evinced by COIN in Sistan-Baluchistan, to maximize the probability that a Shia-controlled Iraqi government retains power.

#### **D. RECOMMENDATIONS**

This thesis recommends that the Iranian and IRGC involvement with support of government and regimes throughout the Middle East be re-evaluated from a more critical and comprehensive perspective. The successful strategy which the IRGC created and executed to contain Baluch insurgency in Sistan-Baluchistan can be cloned to help Iran's allies successfully contain or defeat insurgency. Given the IRGC's success in Sistan-Baluchistan, the United States and partner nations need to carefully consider the costs and overall prospects of success in supporting insurgency or other armed opposition groups in nations whose governments have strong ties to Iran, specifically because potential IRGC

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<sup>732</sup> Michael Wigginton et al., "Al-Qods Force: Iran's Weapon of Choice to Export Terrorism." *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* 10, no. 2 (July 3, 2015): 154–155, <https://doi.org/10.1080/18335330.2015.1090053>.

<sup>733</sup> Bethan McKernan, "Trump Signals End of U.S. Support for Syrian Rebels," *The Independent*, November 13, 2016, ProQuest.

<sup>734</sup> Munqith Dagher, "Polling Insights on Iraq's Shia Revolt," *The Washington Institute*, November 8, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/fikraforum/view/polling-insights-on-iraqs-shia-revolt>.

involvement in these conflicts may drastically alter the conflict dynamics away from a reasonable expectation of success for U.S. backed insurgencies when faced with Iranian-backed counterinsurgency.

This thesis also recommends that U.S. COIN strategists and decisionmakers expand and re-evaluate lessons learned from insurgencies so that they are more inclusive of the experiences of U.S. adversaries. This thesis argued that Iran should be considered an exporter of COIN given Iran's involvement in Syria and Iraq. Considering U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere, the United States may also be considered an exporter of COIN. Therefore, the United States should mine the experiences of its competitors in the realm of COIN export toward refinement of its own process and strategies. In general, the security and COIN policies of authoritarian regimes are incompatible with the U.S. COIN approach. Iran and other authoritarian states employ human rights abuses, civil rights abuses, and other atrocities which are simply intolerable to American political values. However, the presence of these tactics, however reprehensible, does not wholly invalidate every single COIN tactic or strategy Iran has used. There are successful aspects of Iran's COIN approach to Baluch insurgency which may be executed without violating human rights or standards of morality. The United States could selectively apply successful aspects of Iran's COIN to American-backed counterinsurgencies. Would a border security plan implemented along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas yield similar improvements in COIN which Iran experienced after it applied greater border security to Sistan-Baluchistan? Could the effectiveness of Iran's optimistic narrative, employed against Jaish ul-Adl, be replicated toward increasing public confidence in security forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, or elsewhere? With the United States continuing to engage in COIN operations throughout the Middle East, there needs to be constant re-evaluation of experience, both from an American-allied perspective, as well as from the perspectives of adversaries. The Iranian approach to Sistan-Baluchistan should be included for consideration in how the United States can provide more successful COIN performance to its allies in the Middle East.

## APPENDIX A. REFERENCES TO JUNDALLAH USE OF RIGI EPITHETS 2007–2009

Date	Specific Labeling	Secondary Labeling	Source
August 21, 2007	“Rigi’s Group”		<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>735</sup>
June 21, 2008	“Rigi’s Terrorist Group”		ISNA <sup>736</sup>
June 27, 2008	“Rigi Terrorist Group”		<i>Qods</i> <sup>737</sup>
September 9, 2008	“Rigi Terrorist Group”	“Rigi Group”	IRNA <sup>738</sup>
December 14, 2008	“Rigi’s Terrorist Ring”		<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>739</sup>
December 24, 2008	“Rigi Group”		<i>Qods</i> <sup>740</sup>
February 22, 2009	“Rigi’s Terrorist Group”		<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>741</sup>
May 30, 2009	“Rigi Terrorist Group”		Iran News <sup>742</sup>
June 1, 2009	“Rigi terrorist group”		Iran News <sup>743</sup>
August 13, 2009	“Rigi Group”		<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>744</sup>
August 23, 2009	“Rigi Terrorist Group”		Iran News <sup>745</sup>
October 21, 2009	“Rigi Group”		<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>746</sup>
October 23, 2009	“Rigi group”		Iran News <sup>747</sup>

<sup>735</sup> “Bandits Kidnap 21 in Southeastern Iran,” *Tehran Times*, August 20, 2007, NewsBank.

<sup>736</sup> “Iran Whistle-Blower Arrested For Receiving 6.5m Dollars State Funds—Judiciary,” ISNA, June 21, 2008, NewsBank.

<sup>737</sup> “Iran Diplomat Denies Remarks Attributed to Interior Minister on US-Iraq Pact,” *Qods*, June 27, 2008, NewsBank.

<sup>738</sup> “Iran Says Baluch Separatist Group Released One Hostage,” IRNA, September 9, 2008, NewsBank.

<sup>739</sup> “UK, U.S. Aided Jundullah Kidnapping: Iranian Official,” *Tehran Times*, December 14, 2008, NewsBank.

<sup>740</sup> “Iran Paper Slams Pakistan Inaction in Dealing With Criminal Group in Southeast,” *Qods*, December 24, 2008, NewsBank.

<sup>741</sup> “Police Chief: Iran Ready to Hunt Terrorists in Pakistan,” *Tehran Times*, February 22, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>742</sup> “Pakistani Ambassador Summoned,” Iran News, May 30, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>743</sup> “Mottaki: Rigi Terrorist Group Supported By Aliens in Afghanistan,” Iran News, June 1, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>744</sup> “Iran Arrests 4 Jundullah Terrorists,” *Tehran Times*, August 13, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>745</sup> “Four Rigi Linked Agents Arrested,” Iran News, August 13, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>746</sup> “CIA, Regional Spy Agencies Set Goals For Terrorists: General,” *Tehran Times*, October 21, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>747</sup> “Iran Urges U.S. to Take Action Against Terrorist Rigi Group,” Iran News, October 23, 2009, NewsBank.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Specific Labeling</b>	<b>Secondary Labeling</b>	<b>Source</b>
October 24, 2009	“Rigi Group”		<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>748</sup>
October 25, 2009	“Rigi Group”		<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>749</sup>
October 27, 2009	“Rigi Terrorist Group”		Iran News <sup>750</sup>
October 27, 2009	“Rigi terrorist group”	“Rigi Group”	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>751</sup>
October 28, 2009	“Rigi Terrorist Group”	“Rigi Group”	Iran News <sup>752</sup>
November 3, 2009	“Rigi’s Terrorist Group”		<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>753</sup>
November 24, 2009	“Rigi’s Terrorist Group”		<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>754</sup>

<sup>748</sup> “Iran Calls For Extradition of Jundullah Terror Suspects,” *Tehran Times*, October 24, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>749</sup> “Regional Terrorism Inspired By Wahhabi Seminaries: Ayatollah Makarem Shirazi,” *Tehran Times*, October 25, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>750</sup> “Pakistan Vows to Uproot Rigi Group,” Iran News, October 27, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>751</sup> “Pakistan Pledges to Capture Jundullah Terrorists And Extradite Them to Iran,” *Tehran Times*, October 27, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>752</sup> “Envoy: Iran-Pakistan Cooperation Beyond Rigi Group Issue,” Iran News, October 28, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>753</sup> “Jundallah Terrorist Executed in Iran,” *Tehran Times*, November 4, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>754</sup> “Iran Commander Talks of U.S. Contact With Jundullah,” *Tehran Times*, November 24, 2009, NewsBank.



## APPENDIX B. MAJOR JUNDALLAH ATTACKS AND INITIAL IRANIAN RESPONSIVE ACTIONS

<b>March 2006 Jundallah Tasooki Massacre</b>		
Date	Perpetrators Arrested/Killed	Source
April 12, 2006 [1 month later]	None, but MPs called for firing of police chief over inaction	Iran News <sup>755</sup>
<b>May 14, 2006 Kermanshah Roadside Killings—[12 dead]</b>		
Date	Perpetrators Arrested/Killed	Source
May 15, 2006 [1 day after]	6 killed, unspecified number arrested	Iran News/ <i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>756</sup>
<b>February 14, 2007 Zahedan Bombings—[18 Dead]</b>		
Date	Perpetrators Arrested/Killed	Source
February 15, 2007 [1 day after]	At least 1 killed, 5 arrested	Iran News <sup>757</sup>
February 18, 2007 [3 days after]	“3 main agents” and 65 others arrested	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>758</sup>
<b>June 12, 2008 Hostage Abduction [15 Hostages killed between June and December]</b>		
Date	Perpetrators Arrested/Killed	Source
June 19, 2008 [5 days after]	3 arrested	Iran News <sup>759</sup>
<b>January 2009 Saravan Ambush [12 killed]</b>		
Date	Perpetrators Arrested/Killed	Source
January 27, 2009 [Same Day]	17 Jundallah operatives killed as they fled back across the border	Iran News <sup>760</sup>
<b>May 28, 2009 Zahedan Bombings [ 25 killed]</b>		
Date	Perpetrators Arrested/Killed	Source
May 30, 2009 [3 days later]	“Entire Team” arrested	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>761</sup>

<sup>755</sup> “MPs Urge Punitive Measures Against Negligent Sistan-Baluchestan Officials,” Iran News, April 12, 2006, NewsBank.

<sup>756</sup> “Sunni Group Claims Kerman Roadside Killings,” Iran News, May 15, 2006, NewsBank; *Tehran Times*, “Bandits in Kerman Must Be Tracked Down: Officials.”

<sup>757</sup> Iran News, “Bomb Attack Kills 11 in Zahedan.”

<sup>758</sup> “Zahedan Bombings Intended to Foment Sunni-Shia Conflict: Governor,” *Tehran Times*, February 18, 2007, NewsBank.

<sup>759</sup> Iran News, “Jundallah Kill 2 Hostages in Iran.”

<sup>760</sup> “Rebels Kill Cops,” Iran News, January 27, 2009, NewsBank.

<sup>761</sup> “Suspects in Zahedan Terror Attack Arrested,” *Tehran Times*, May 30, 2009, NewsBank.

<b><u>October 18, 2009 Pishin Bombing [42 killed]</u></b>		
Date	Perpetrators Arrested/Killed	Source
October 21, 2009 [3 days later]	3 arrested	<i>San Diego Union Tribune</i> <sup>762</sup>
<b><u>July 16, 2010 Zahedan Bombings [27 dead]</u></b>		
Date	Perpetrators Arrested/Killed	Source
July 18, 2010 [2 days later]	40 arrested	<i>Philadelphia Inquirer</i> <sup>763</sup>
<b><u>December 15, 2010 Chabahar Bombing [39 dead]</u></b>		
Date	Perpetrators Arrested/Killed	Source
December 15, 2010 [same day]	1 arrested, 1 killed	<i>Guardian</i> <sup>764</sup>
December 19, 2010 [4 days later]	9 arrested	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>765</sup>

<sup>762</sup> Ali Akbar Dareini, "Iran Arrests Suspects in Attack on Military Chiefs," *San Diego Union Tribune*, October 21, 2009, <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-ml-iran-bombing-102109-2009oct21-story.html>.

<sup>763</sup> "Iran Arrests 40 Following Bombing At Mosque," *Philadelphia Enquirer*, July 18, 2010, [https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news/nation\\_world/20100718\\_Iran\\_arrests\\_40\\_following\\_bombing\\_at\\_mosque.html](https://www.inquirer.com/philly/news/nation_world/20100718_Iran_arrests_40_following_bombing_at_mosque.html)

<sup>764</sup> Mark Tran and Saeed Kamali Dehghan, "Iran Mosque Bombing Kills Dozens," *Guardian*, December 15, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/dec/15/iran-chahbahar-suicide-bombing-mosque>.

<sup>765</sup> "Sunis Hold Rally Protesting Terrorist Attack In Chabahar," *Tehran Times*, December 19, 2010, NewsBank.

**APPENDIX C. ARRESTS, EXECUTIONS AND KILLINGS  
RELATED TO JUNDALLAH 2006–2008**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Arrested</b>	<b>Killed</b>	<b>Executed</b>	<b>Related Jundallah Attack</b>	<b>Source</b>
January 9, 2006	14	0	0	N/A	Associated Press <sup>766</sup>
April 6, 2006	0	12	0	Tasooki Incident	Agence France Presse <sup>767</sup>
May 4, 2006	4	0	0	Tasooki Incident	Agence France Presse <sup>768</sup>
May 15, 2006	0	6	0	Kerman Roadside Attack	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>769</sup>
May 25, 2006	0	5	0	Kerman Roadside Attack	Agence France Presse <sup>770</sup>
February 15, 2007	5	0	0	February 2007 Zahedan Bombing	Ottawa Citizen <sup>771</sup>
February 19, 2007	0	0	1	February 2007 Zahedan Bombing	Associated Press International <sup>772</sup>
February 20, 2007	65	0	0	February 2007 Zahedan Bombing	International Herald Tribune <sup>773</sup>
March 14, 2007	0	0	1	February 2007 Zahedan Bombing	Agence France Presse <sup>774</sup>
April 18, 2007	90	0	0	February 2007 Zahedan Bombing	Christian Science Monitor <sup>775</sup>

<sup>766</sup> “Iran Detains 14 Suspected Extremists,” Associated Press Online, January 9, 2006, Nexis Uni.

<sup>767</sup> “Rebels Murder, Shoot Officials in Southeastern Iran: Report,” Agence France Presse, April 9, 2006, Nexis Uni.

<sup>768</sup> “Iran Arrests Rebels in Restive Border Regions,” Agence France Presse, May 4, 2006, Nexis Uni.

<sup>769</sup> *Tehran Times*, “Bandits in Kerman Must Be Tracked Down: Officials.”

<sup>770</sup> “Iran Security Forces Kill Five Militants,” Agence France Presse, May 25, 2006, Nexis Uni.

<sup>771</sup> Ali Akbar Dareini, “Blast Kills 11 Members of Iran’s Elite Guard: Jundallah, A Sunni Militant Brigade, Takes Responsibility,” *Ottawa Citizen*, February 15, 2007, Nexis Uni.

<sup>772</sup> Karimi, “Iran Executes Bomber.”

<sup>773</sup> Nazila Fathi, “Insurgents Were Trained in Pakistan, Iran Charges; 65 Arrested For Attacks in Sunni Border Area,” *The International Herald Tribune*, Nexis Uni.

<sup>774</sup> “Iran Hangs Sunni Militant in Restive Province,” Agence France Presse, March 14, 2007, Nexis Uni.

<sup>775</sup> David Monetero, “Ethnic Spat Heats Up Pakistan-Iran Border,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 18, 2007, Nexis Uni.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Arrested</b>	<b>Killed</b>	<b>Executed</b>	<b>Related Jundallah Attack</b>	<b>Source</b>
May 27, 2007	0	0	7	February 2007 Zahedan Bombing	Amnesty International <sup>776</sup>
July 20, 2007	0	4	0	N/A	Associated Press International <sup>777</sup>
December 13, 2007	6	12	0	N/A	Agence France Presse <sup>778</sup>
<b>TOTALS</b>	184 Arrested, 27 Killed, 8 Executed				

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<sup>776</sup> Amnesty International, *Further Information on UA 76/07 (MDE 13/034/2007, 22 March 2007) Fear of Imminent Execution/Torture*, MDE 13/066/2007 (London: Amnesty International, June 5 2007), <https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/64000/mde130662007en.pdf>.

<sup>777</sup> “Revolutionary Guard Clashes With Bandits In Southeastern Iran, Kills Four, Suffers Casualties,” Associated Press International, July 20, 2007, Nexis Uni.

<sup>778</sup> “Iran Kills Sunni Rebels Planning Attacks: Police,” Agence France Presse, December 13, 2007, Nexis Uni.

## APPENDIX D. JAISH UL-ADL ATTACKS AND IRANIAN RESPONSE 2013-2020

Date, [Location], Incident	Dead/ Injured	Pakistan Blamed?	Reprisal executions, Arrests, and operations	Additional developments/ Comments	Source:
October 28, 2013, [Saravan], Jaish ul-Adl Border Guard Attack	14/6	Yes, ineptitude/ laziness	16 people executed in response, none of whom carried out the attack.	Iran Sent a letter to the UN demanding their help.	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>779</sup>
11/6/2013 [Zabol] Assassination of a city prosecutor by Jaish ul-Adl	2/0	No	No	Assassinated a prosecutor and his driver; but the IRGC announced they would close off parts of the border at this point	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>780</sup>
12/1/2013 [Saravan Region] Jaish ul-Adl Border Guard Attack	1/4	Yes, claimed that remaining assailants escaped to Pakistan	No	N/A	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>781</sup>

<sup>779</sup> “Iran Protests to Pakistan Over Border Attack,” *Tehran Times*, October 28, 2013, NewsBank.

<sup>780</sup> “Police Will Confront Terrorists in Border Regions,” *Iran Daily*, November 17, 2013, NewsBank

<sup>781</sup> “Terrorists Kill Border Guard in SE,” *Iran Daily*, December 4, 2013, NewsBank.

<b>Date, [Location], Incident</b>	<b>Dead/ Injured</b>	<b>Pakistan Blamed?</b>	<b>Reprisal executions, Arrests, and operations</b>	<b>Additional developments/ Comments</b>	<b>Source:</b>
12/18/2013 [Saravan Region] Jaish ul-Adl Bombing	3,0	No	No	IED, victims were physically constructing border wall/ physical deterrents	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>782</sup>
2/7/2014 [Jakigur] Jaish ul-Adl Abducts border guards	0/5	Yes:	No	IRGC commander questions why this keeps happening, asks foreign ministry to investigate	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>783</sup>
8/23/2014 [N/A] Iranian Update on Border Guard Hostages	N/A	Yes	No	N/A	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>784</sup>
8/31/2014 [N/A] Jaish ul-Adl releases new propaganda videos	N/A	No	No	Iranian officials denied that Jaish ul-Adl had mounted any recent attacks.	ISNA <sup>785</sup>

<sup>782</sup> “Three IRGC Personnel Killed in Southeast,” *Iran Daily*, December 18, 2013, NewsBank.

<sup>783</sup> “Iran Complains to Pakistan on Abduction of Five Border Guards,” *Tehran Times*, February 10, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>784</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Cmdr. Rejects Reports on Death of Kidnapped Border Guard.”

<sup>785</sup> “Iran Denies Attack on Southeastern Province,” ISNA, August 31, 2014, NewsBank.

<b>Date, [Location], Incident</b>	<b>Dead/ Injured</b>	<b>Pakistan Blamed?</b>	<b>Reprisal executions, Arrests, and operations</b>	<b>Additional developments/ Comments</b>	<b>Source:</b>
9/10/2014 [Saravan] Iranian forces thwarted an attack	0/0	Yes, used the border to carry out the attack	No	Iranian news claimed the attack was thwarted. Jaish ul-Adl didn't claim responsibility, but Iran's narrative implied heavily they were involved.	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>786</sup>
October 12, 2014 [Saravan Border Area] Jaish ul-Adl Border Outpost Attack	4/3	Yes	No	Car bomb on the ninth, shooting on the tenth, on a border base per an article in November.	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>787</sup>
11/26/2014 [Zahak] Attack on NAJA forces	3/0	No	No	Deeper inside Iranian territory than most Jaish ul-Adl attacks. Jaish ul-Adl has yet to claim this attack.	<i>Tehran Times, Iran Daily</i> <sup>788</sup>
4/2/2015 [unknown] Jaish ul-Adl attack on border outpost	8/0	Yes	N/A	N/A	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>789</sup>

<sup>786</sup> *Iran Daily*. "IRGC Foils Terrorist Attack in Southeastern Province."

<sup>787</sup> *Tehran Times*, "Pakistan's Failure to Guard Its Borders Is Unacceptable."

<sup>788</sup> "Three Police Forces Martyred in Southeastern Iran," *Tehran Times*, November 28, 2014, NewsBank; "Three Security Forces Killed in Sistan-Baluchistan," *Iran Daily*, November 26, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>789</sup> "8 Iranian Border Guards Killed in Terrorist Attack," *Tehran Times*, April 8, 2015, NewsBank.

<b>Date, [Location], Incident</b>	<b>Dead/ Injured</b>	<b>Pakistan Blamed?</b>	<b>Reprisal executions, Arrests, and operations</b>	<b>Additional developments/ Comments</b>	<b>Source:</b>
6/13/2016 [Khash] NAJA raid on Jaish ul-Adl hideout	1/0	Yes	Killed 5	Also claimed to confiscate “a huge amount” of munitions.	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>790</sup>
7/6/2016 [Unknown] Jaish ul-Adl Border Guard Ambush	4/0	Yes	N/A	N/A	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>791</sup>
7/21/2016 [Unknown] IRGC destroyed an underground tunnel	0/0	Yes	No	Article contains similar phraseology about recent clashes between Iranian and Jaish ul-Adl forces, where Iran has continued to “thwart” all plots	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>792</sup>
4/27/2017 [Mirjaveh] Jaish ul-Adl border attack	11/3	Yes	N/A	Government commentary framed the attack as successful defense of the border.	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>793</sup>
4/29/2017 [Mirjaveh]	10/2	Yes	N/A	Article presents that this is an improvement ... Jaish ul-Adl	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>794</sup>

<sup>790</sup> *Iran Daily* “Iranian Forces Kill 10 Terrorists in East, West.”

<sup>791</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Iran Busts Terror Cell in East.”

<sup>792</sup> *Iran Daily*.

<sup>793</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Pakistan Accountable For Deaths of Iranian Border Guards.”

<sup>794</sup> *Iran Daily*, “IRGC: Iran Border Guards Targeted From Outside Country.”



Date, [Location], Incident	Dead/ Injured	Pakistan Blamed?	Reprisal executions, Arrests, and operations	Additional developments/ Comments	Source:
Jaish ul-Adl Border Outpost Attack				they can barely get through the border ... Iran is a “safe island in this sea.”	
5/13/2017 [Multiple] Iranian announcement of a foiled terrorist operation	0/0	Yes	Claims to have foiled 30 terrorist operations in the last year.	Does not specifically ascribe any of the foiled plots to Jaish ul-Adl. Article likely designed to highlight the positive performance of Iranian security apparatuses.	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>795</sup>
7/8/2017 [Saravan] Iranian seizure of Jaish ul-Adl weapons stockpile	0/0	Yes.	No	Article claimed that Iranian forces seized an anti-aircraft weapon, and dozens of rifles and submachine guns. Also re-emphasized the repeated success of the state at “thwarting” attacks in recent years.	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>796</sup>
4/17/2018 [Mirjaveh] Jaish ul-Adl assault on Border Guard Watchtower.	2/2 [Terrorist attack foiled]	Yes	Killed at least five. The rest retreated over the border.	This clash is framed as an Iranian success; claims that Jaish ul-Adl was intending to seize the border outpost, but they were stopped by the resistance of the guards on duty,	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>797</sup>

<sup>795</sup> *Tehran Times*, “Iran Foils Terrorist Operation.”

<sup>796</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Arms Cache of Jaish ul-Adl Terror Group Seized in SE Iran.”

<sup>797</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Iranian Forces Foil Terrorist Attack in Border Town.”

Date, [Location], Incident	Dead/ Injured	Pakistan Blamed?	Reprisal executions, Arrests, and operations	Additional developments/ Comments	Source:
				as well as rapidly deployed reinforcements.	
6/25/2018 [Zabol] Jaish ul-Adl attack on police	2/0	Yes	No	Despite these attacks and the massive border, Iran framed its security efforts as “successful.”	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>798</sup>
6/26/2018 [Mirjaveh] Clash with Jaish ul-Adl	3/1	Yes	Killed 3 Jaish ul-Adl members in the attack	Police and IRGC reports framed the attack as a foiled plot; forces intercepted militants as they were trying to cross the border.	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>799</sup>
9/29/2018 [Saravan] IRGC attack on Jaish ul-Adl	0	Yes	Killed 4, injured 2 Jaish ul-Adl members.	Killed Jaish ul-Adl’s second in command	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>800</sup>
10/16/2018 [Mirjaveh] Jaish ul-Adl Abducted Basij, Border Guards, and local police	0/11 [abducted]	Yes	No	Iran Claimed that Jaish ul-Adl had insiders who betrayed the guards, also claimed the insider threat had poisoned or otherwise incapacitated the forces before they were kidnapped.	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>801</sup>

<sup>798</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Three Terrorists, Three Iranian Forces Killed in Border Clash.”

<sup>799</sup> *Iran Daily*.

<sup>800</sup> *Tehran Times*, “IRGC Forces Kill Jaish-UI-Adl’s Second-In-Command.”

<sup>801</sup> *Iran Daily* “Terrorists Abduct Iranian Forces Near Pakistani Border.”

<b>Date, [Location], Incident</b>	<b>Dead/ Injured</b>	<b>Pakistan Blamed?</b>	<b>Reprisal executions, Arrests, and operations</b>	<b>Additional developments/ Comments</b>	<b>Source:</b>
11/16/2018 [N/A] Jaish ul-Adl Hostages Freed	0,0	Yes	No	5 Hostages were released; Iranian statement claims this was done without capitulating to Jaish ul-Adl's demands	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>802</sup>
1/1/2019 [N/A] IRGC public update on border Guard hostages	0	Yes	No	Message appears designed to reaffirm that the IRGC is still working on releasing the remaining hostages.	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>803</sup>
2/2/2019 [Nikshahr] Jaish ul-Adl bombing of Basij office	1,5	Yes, mentioned hostages in Pakistan.	No	Summarized recent progress and successful Iranian raids and arrests of terrorists in Sistan-Baluchistan.	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>804</sup>
2/14/2019 [Saravan Highway] Jaish ul-Adl Bombing of an IRGC bus	27/13	Yes	No	"Accused Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates of supporting terror groups."	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>805</sup>

<sup>802</sup> *Tehran Times* "Five of Iran's Abducted Border Guards Freed."

<sup>803</sup> *Iran Daily*, "Commander: Iran Pursuing Fate of Kidnapped Border Guard."

<sup>804</sup> *Iran Daily*, "Terrorist Attack Kills IRGC Member in Southeastern Iran."

<sup>805</sup> "Pakistan Must Beef Up Security Along Iran Border: IRGC," *Iran Daily*, February 14, 2019, NewsBank.

<b>Date, [Location], Incident</b>	<b>Dead/ Injured</b>	<b>Pakistan Blamed?</b>	<b>Reprisal executions, Arrests, and operations</b>	<b>Additional developments/ Comments</b>	<b>Source:</b>
2/18/2019 [unknown] Arrests connected to the IRGC bus bombing	0	Yes	3 arrested	N/A	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>806</sup>
2/21/2019 [Unknown] Iran Arrests in connection with IRGC bus bombing	0/0	No	8 arrested.	Claimed one of those arrested owned the car used in the attack, also claimed to have recovered explosives.	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>807</sup>
3/17/2019 [Pakistan] Confirmation remaining Border Guards are Alive	0/0	No	N/A	N/A	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>808</sup>
3/19/2019 [Pakistan] Border Guards Released	0/0	No	N/A	Five more hostages released, 4 remain.	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>809</sup>

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<sup>806</sup> “Three Linked to Terror Act in Southeast Iran Arrested,” *Tehran Times*, February 18, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>807</sup> “8 Arrested For Terror Attacks Martyring 27 IRGC in SE Iran,” *Iran Daily*, February 21, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>808</sup> “Video Claims Abducted Iranian Border Guards Call Families After Five Months,” *Iran Daily*, March 17, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>809</sup> “Iran Says 5 Abducted Border Guards Freed in Pakistan,” *Tehran Times*, March 21, 2019, NewsBank.

## APPENDIX E. IRAN-PAKISTAN BORDER CLOSINGS

Date	How long?	Reaction to attack?	Pre-emptive?
June 10, 2014	Indefinite period	Taftan hotel bombing (occurred in Pakistan, Shia pilgrims headed for Iran)	No <sup>810</sup>
April 2018	At least since January, ended April 19, 2018 <sup>811</sup>	uncertain	In January Iran promised to reopen the border once fencing was complete ... possible reaction to Pakistan falling behind on fencing timeline. <sup>812</sup>
June 2018	Unknown	Unknown, this might be related to the four-month border closure or more that ended in April 19, 2018]	Unknown, but relevant A Pakistani Minister publicly expressed concern that this was hurting local economies. <sup>813</sup>
September 20, 2018	1 month	NO (unclear if Pakistan or Iran initiated)	Muharram “Security has been tightened around the country to ensure the security of

<sup>810</sup> “Iran Closes Border For An Indefinite Period,” *Express Tribune*, June 10, 2014, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/719719/iran-closes-border-for-an-indefinite-period/>.

<sup>811</sup> Muhammad Zafar, “Raahdari Comes Back to Life,” *Express Tribune*, April 19, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1689327/1-raahdari-comes-back-life/>.

<sup>812</sup> Muhammad Zafar, “PPP Demands Reopening Of Zero-Point Trade Gate,” *Express Tribune*, April 15, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1685850/1-ppp-demands-reopening-zero-point-trade-gate/>.

<sup>813</sup> Pakistan, Iran Agree to Further Boost Bilateral Ties,” Global Village Space, June 2, 2018, <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/pakistan-iran-agree-to-further-boost-bilateral-ties/>.

Date	How long?	Reaction to attack?	Pre-emptive?
			Muharram processions.” <sup>814</sup>
11/6/2018	At least three weeks (as of 11/16)	NO (gate closed longer than they should have been ... possible border guard abduction relation).	Originally closed for Arba’een, but probably. <sup>815</sup>
March-April 2019	Approximately one month (border reopened April 15, 2019)	NO	Eid-A-Norwuz (Iranian new year) <sup>816</sup>
9/9/2019	2 days, at least	NO	Ashura <sup>817</sup>
10/4/2019	2 weeks (16 days)	NO	Abareen (Shia mourning period 40 days after Ashura) <sup>818</sup>

<sup>814</sup> “Chaman, Taftan Borders Closed For Two Days,” *Express Tribune*, September 20, 2018, [https://tribune.com.pk/story/1807884/1-chaman-taftan-borders-closed-two-days/?\\_\\_cf\\_chl\\_jschl\\_tk\\_\\_=2b1212e25a00188309ebdc9f63d09f2370050d5e-1577731422-0-ATd\\_znU0G9kvTyLx40pz\\_SJjnmalipg6towgybwHuLUPApFnDkqNCIgmcr\\_RoRhgFW\\_X\\_5Fju\\_dSHhW0V0k07tbM9avgjISbsU3qzq6kCm19dlc8bpCsgXy1eibD5rSZvZ1zT03ezYXwvq3\\_fmQZwxzfzPU8eiyL6aJ2j4EpNN5Pjcv6XfO2tPBEOcn0fF75txxWsCecrbXmW1raWnlPf2x7OD3ENfB\\_uSBvkXw88iE2SCBfZgB9o9FRjvvsAwfnGqIzjxmXmu\\_u3msbrQrWK3yXWG93JbTrZG9HsyxRgebPcVVu2DHsbTZH1VSIyBkL2htr3JFuoLlx5Hn38cg5NLWs](https://tribune.com.pk/story/1807884/1-chaman-taftan-borders-closed-two-days/?__cf_chl_jschl_tk__=2b1212e25a00188309ebdc9f63d09f2370050d5e-1577731422-0-ATd_znU0G9kvTyLx40pz_SJjnmalipg6towgybwHuLUPApFnDkqNCIgmcr_RoRhgFW_X_5Fju_dSHhW0V0k07tbM9avgjISbsU3qzq6kCm19dlc8bpCsgXy1eibD5rSZvZ1zT03ezYXwvq3_fmQZwxzfzPU8eiyL6aJ2j4EpNN5Pjcv6XfO2tPBEOcn0fF75txxWsCecrbXmW1raWnlPf2x7OD3ENfB_uSBvkXw88iE2SCBfZgB9o9FRjvvsAwfnGqIzjxmXmu_u3msbrQrWK3yXWG93JbTrZG9HsyxRgebPcVVu2DHsbTZH1VSIyBkL2htr3JFuoLlx5Hn38cg5NLWs).

<sup>815</sup> Muhammad Zafar, “Pak-Iran: Trade and Travel Suspended For Three Weeks,” *Express Tribune*, November 6, 2018, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1841347/1-pak-iran-trade-travel-suspended-three-weeks/>.

<sup>816</sup> “Iran Opens Corridor At Taftan Border,” *Nation*, April 15, 2019, <https://nation.com.pk/15-Apr-2019/iran-opens-corridor-at-taftan-border>.

<sup>817</sup> “Taftan Border Closed For Ashura,” *Dawn*, September 10, 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1504515>.

<sup>818</sup> Ali Raza Rind, “Travel Resumes At Pak-Iran Border Near Chagai,” *Dawn*, October 21, 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1512059/travel-resumes-at-pak-iran-border-near-chagai>.

## APPENDIX F. IRANIAN DEPORTATIONS OF PAKISTANIS IN SISTAN-BALUCHISTAN

Date	Number of personnel	Other facts
2012	10,346	Estimated Deportation for the Entire Year <sup>819</sup>
2014	5618	Article date 11/20/2016
11/20/2016	28,684	This is the number of estimated Pakistanis deported from Iran from 2013-2015 <sup>820</sup>
8/3/2016	20,000-26,000 (Year to date)	This is almost daily they are deporting scores of people; they get 5-100 people a day. Border guards also allegedly shooting immigrants on sight. <sup>821</sup>
1/1/2017	29,000	Total number of Pakistanis deported from Iran through Taftan in 2016 <sup>822</sup>
1/12/2017	128	NSTR <sup>823</sup>
7/30/2017	128	NSTR <sup>824</sup>
9/30/2017	20+	Article claims by Pakistan's count the numbers in recent

<sup>819</sup> "Over 500,000 Pakistanis Deported in Last 5 Years," Economic Times of India, September 5, 2017, <https://m.economictimes.com/news/international/world-news/over-500000-pakistanis-deported-in-last-5-years/articleshow/60375931.cms>.

<sup>820</sup> "Nearly 250,000 Pakistanis Deported From 2012-2015: Report," Dawn, November 20, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1297540>.

<sup>821</sup> Qaiser Butt, "Iran Deports Over 20,000 Illegal Pakistani Immigrants Every Year," *Express Tribune*, August 3, 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1155188/iran-deports-20000-illegal-pakistani-immigrants-every-year/>.

<sup>822</sup> Syed Ali Shah, "Nearly 29,000 Pakistanis Seeking Illegal Passage to Europe Deported by Iran in 2016," Dawn, May 16, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1333502>

<sup>823</sup> Sumaira Hussain, "Irani Forces Extradited 72 Pakistani on Taftan Border to Levies," Urdu Point, January 12, 2017, <https://www.urdupoint.com/en/pakistan/irani-forces-extradited-72-pakistani-on-tafta-87128.html>.

<sup>824</sup> "Iranian Border Guards Arrest 100 Pakistanis on Taftan Border," Times of Islamabad, July 30, 2017, <https://timesofislamabad.com/30-Jul-2017/iranian-border-guards-arrest-100-pakistanis-on-taftan-border>.

Date	Number of personnel	Other facts
		years have been between 20,000-26,000. <sup>825</sup>
3/19/2017	61/35	61 that week, 35 the week before, also claimed that those in Pakistan trying to cross the border had been discovered with weapons. <sup>826</sup>
10/1/2018	13626 as of end of September	NSTR <sup>827</sup>
11/23/2018	253	NSTR <sup>828</sup>
11/26/2018	118	NSTR <sup>829</sup>
11/5/2019	29	Arrested throughout Iran <sup>830</sup>
4/29/2019	107	A day after a new agreement signed <sup>831</sup>
6/11/2019	144	NSTR <sup>832</sup>

<sup>825</sup> “Iran Deports Over 20 Pakistani Immigrants,” *Express Tribune*, September 10, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1502633/iran-deports-20-pakistani-immigrants/>.

<sup>826</sup> “Iran Hands Over 61 Pakistan Immigrants to FIA at Taftan border,” *Express Tribune*, March 19, 2017, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1359601/iran-hands-61-pakistan-immigrants-fia-taftan-border/>.

<sup>827</sup> Syed Ali Shah, “FIA Stops 19 Prospective Illegal Immigrants From Entering Iran,” *Dawn*, September 17, 2018, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1433492>.

<sup>828</sup> “Iran Hands Over 253 Illegal Immigrants to Pakistan,” *The Iran Project* (blog), November 20, 2018, <https://theiranproject.com/blog/2018/11/20/iran-hands-over-253-illegal-immigrants-to-pakistan/>.

<sup>829</sup> “Iran Deports 116 Pakistani Nationals,” *Pakistan Today*, November 27, 2018, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/11/27/iran-deports-116-pakistani-nationals/>.

<sup>830</sup> “Iran Hands Over 29 Pakistani Nationals to Islamabad Government,” *The Iran Project* (blog), November 5, 2019, <https://theiranproject.com/blog/2019/11/05/iran-hands-over-29-pakistani-nationals-to-islamabad-government/>.

<sup>831</sup> “Iran Sets Free 107 Pakistani Nationals,” *The Iran Project* (blog), April 29, 2019, <https://theiranproject.com/blog/2019/04/29/iran-sets-free-107-pakistani-nationals/>.

<sup>832</sup> “Iran Hands Over 144 Pakistanis at Taftan Border Crossing,” *ShiiteNews*, June 11, 2019, <https://shiitenews.org/featured/item/98463-iran-hands-144-pakistanis-taftan-border-crossing/>.



**APPENDIX G. IRAN-PAKISTAN BILATERAL ACTION TAKEN TO CONVINCING PAKISTAN TO CRACK DOWN ON BALUCH INSURGENTS**

<b>Date and Action Type</b>	<b>Related Incident</b>	<b>Relevant Diplomatic Action 1</b>	<b>Relevant Diplomatic Action 2</b>	<b>Diplomatic Meeting?</b>	<b>Source</b>
10/28/2013 [Meeting]	10/25/2013 Border assault	Iranian Government lodged an official complaint to the Islamabad government/summoned the Pakistani Charge D'affaires in Iran: "the Pakistani government has failed to deal seriously with the terrorists operating near the country's border with Iran ... urged Islamabad to take serious measures under the security agreements between the two countries to deal with and arrest the terrorists."	Pakistan response: "expressed regret over the incident and said that it would convey Iran's protest to the Pakistani government."	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>833</sup>
10/29/2013 [Meeting]	10/25/2013 Border assault	"Iranian ambassador to Islamabad demanded Pakistan to immediately identify and extradite the terrorists ... in a meeting with a Pakistani deputy foreign minister in Islamabad."	"Pakistani official condemned the terrorist incident and expressed condolence to the government and people of Iran ... would make every effort to deal with the issue."	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>834</sup>

<sup>833</sup> "Tehran Times, Iran Protests to Pakistan Over Border Attack."

<sup>834</sup> "Tehran Calls On Pakistan to Identify And Hand Over Terrorists to Iran," *Tehran Times*, October 29, 2013, NewsBank.

<b>Date and Action Type</b>	<b>Related Incident</b>	<b>Relevant Diplomatic Action 1</b>	<b>Relevant Diplomatic Action 2</b>	<b>Diplomatic Meeting?</b>	<b>Source</b>
11/11/2013 [Update]	10/25/2013 Border assault	“Talks have been held with Pakistani authorities on arresting the perpetrators of the terror attack ... the two sides have agreed to seriously follow up the case until the terrorists are apprehended.”		No	Iran Daily <sup>835</sup>
2/9/2014 [Criticism/ Statement]	February 2014 border guard abduction	“Criticized the performance of Pakistani government ... border police ... asked how it was possible that rebels ambush the Iranian guards, kidnap them, take them to Pakistan and release some photos of them.”	“Iran and Pakistan border security officers started their search for abductees after the incident occurred.”	No	Iran Daily <sup>836</sup>
2/12/2014 [Meeting]	February 2014 border guard abduction	“Iran will dispatch a delegation to Pakistan to pursue the case ... Iranian border guards have already met their Pakistani counterparts to investigate the issue ... Pakistani officials shoulder a responsibility in this regard which they should honor.”	“Iran’s Foreign Ministry on Sunday summoned the Pakistani Ambassador to Tehran Noor Mohammad Jadmani to protest the transferring of the abductees.”	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>837</sup>
2/14/2014 [Criticism/ Statement]	February 2014 border	““The diplomatic apparatus must also put pressure on Pakistan through serious negotiations to swiftly		No	Iran Daily <sup>838</sup>

<sup>835</sup> “Pakistan Cooperating on Border Raid Probe,” *Iran Daily*, November 11, 2013, NewsBank.

<sup>836</sup> “Iran Police to Follow Up Guards Kidnap,” *Iran Daily*, February 9, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>837</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Iran Team Due in Pakistan Over Abductions.”

<sup>838</sup> “Iran Must Press Pakistan Over Abductions,” *Iran Daily*, February 14, 2014, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
	guard abduction	determine the fate of ... border guards, return them [to Iran] and prevent the repetition of incidents' ... Deputy Chairman of Iran's Majlis ... Mansour Haqiqatpour said."			
2/15/2014 [Meeting]	February 2014 border guard abduction	"Iran's deputy foreign minister for consular, parliamentary and Iranian expatriate affairs, said ... that necessary consultations for the release of the abducted Iranian border guards are underway ... also stated that the results of the consultations will not be publicized until the issue is finalized."	N/A	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>839</sup>
2/17/2014 [Criticism/Threat/Statement]	February 2014 border guard abduction	"Tehran's interior minister has warned Pakistan that Iranian forces may enter Pakistani and Afghan territory to release border guards seized by a rebel group ... The official asked Pakistan to treat the case 'strongly and seriously' or allow Iran to secure the remote region 'deep on Afghanistan and Pakistan soil ... we do consider it our own right to	N/A	No	Al-Arabiya <sup>840</sup>

<sup>839</sup> "Iran Optimistic About Freedom Of Abducted Guards," *Iran Daily*, February 15, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>840</sup> "Iran Says May Send Forces Into Pakistan Territory," *AlArabiya.net*, February 17, 2014, Nexis Uni.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
		intervene and create a new security sphere for our safety.”			
2/19/2014 [Meeting]	February 2014 border guard abduction	“Hassan Rouhani has called on Pakistan to counter terrorism and extremism in the country to improve security alongside its border with Iran ... ‘Our borders should remain safe...we call on the Pakistani government to do its utmost to resolve these problems’ ... made the remarks in a meeting with Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, speaker of the National Assembly of Pakistan ... ‘the transformation of religious and sectarian differences into terrorism is by no means acceptable.”	“Sadiq ... commended the ‘positive and growing’ relations between Tehran and Islamabad and expressed Pakistani officials’ determination to expand ties with Iran in all fields ... underlined that Islamabad would seriously follow up ways to improve economic cooperation with Iran, particularly on the implementation of Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline ... said Pakistan is a victim of terrorism ... added that his country’s government and nation are determined to fight terrorism and would not allow such acts of terror to negatively impact ties with Iran.”	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>841</sup>
2/19/2014 [Pakistani Statement]	February 2014 border guard abduction	“Pakistan said on Tuesday that Iran should not send troops across the two countries’ shared border ... ‘Iranian forces have no authority to cross our borders in violation of the		No	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>842</sup>

<sup>841</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Pakistan Again Urged to Improve Security.”

<sup>842</sup> “Pakistan Asks Iran Not to Send in Troops After Guards Kidnapped,” *Tehran Times*, February 19, 2014, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
		international law. We must respect each other's borders ... The government of Pakistan regrets the suggestions of negligence on its part over the incident, especially when Pakistan's active support against terrorists' groups in the past, is well-known."			
2/22/2014 [Meeting]	February 2014 border guard abduction	"Iran and Pakistan have set up a joint border committee to secure the release of five Iranian border guards abducted by the Jaish-ul-Adl ... decision was made at the 17th meeting of the Iran-Pakistan Joint Border Commission in Quetta ... the third meeting between Iranian and Pakistani officials since the five border guards were abducted."	"Iranian and Pakistani officials discussed the enhancement of border commerce, the restoration of border barriers, opening a new terminal in Makran region, power transmission, the extradition of nationals, visa issuance and joint border patrols ... head of the Pakistani delegation Baber Yaqoub Mohammad expressed deep concern over the abduction ... underlined Pakistan's resolve to work together with Iran over the issue ... Deputy governor of Iran's Sistan-Baluchestan province, ... expressed gratitude over Pakistan's cooperation in pursuing the fate of	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>843</sup>

<sup>843</sup> "Iran, Pakistan Form Committee On Abducted Guards," *Iran Daily*, February 22, 2014, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
			the abducted guards and underscored the need for closer mutual cooperation to prevent similar incidents. “		
2/22/2014 [Statement]	February 2014 border guard abduction	A member of the Majlis National Security and Foreign Policy Committee has called for a diplomatic solution for the release of abducted Iranian border guards ... Hojjatollah Khoda'isuri, said that: ‘Country’s diplomatic apparatus, Foreign Ministry as well as the Ministry Of Intelligence are making efforts to resolve the issue ... all the five border guards ... are alive and efforts are been made for their release.’”		No	ISNA <sup>844</sup>
2/24/2014 [Statement]	February 2014 border guard abduction	“The Iranian interior minister says Islamabad has vowed to seriously pursue the fate of the five abducted Iranian border guards ... ‘we have conducted a number of meetings with Pakistani officials in this regard and they have vowed to positively		NO	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>845</sup>

<sup>844</sup> ISNA, “MP Calls For Diplomatic Solution to Free Iran Abducted Border Guards.”

<sup>845</sup> “Islamabad Vows to Help Free Abducted Iranian Border Guards,” *Tehran Times*, February 24, 2014, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
		cooperate with Iran ... Since Pakistan is a friendly and neighboring country of us, and we have good cooperation with them, we should settle our issues in a calm atmosphere,' he added.”			
2/25/2014 [Statement]	February 2014 border guard abduction	Pakistan Capitulation to Iranian demand: “The head of the Iranian Foreign Ministry’s Department of Social Affairs said on Tuesday that Pakistani authorities have managed to locate the hideout of the terrorist group and the location where the kidnapped Iranian border guards are being held.”		No	Iran Daily <sup>846</sup>
3/3/2014 [Meeting]	February 2014 border guard abduction	“Ali Larijani warned that unconstrained acts of sabotage by criminals along the Iran-Pakistan border can affect relations between the two countries ... In a Sunday meeting with Speaker of Pakistan’s Provincial Assembly of Baluchistan Mir Jan Muhammad Jamali ... Larijani said acts of sabotage along Iran and Pakistan border will lead to		Yes	Iran Daily <sup>847</sup>

<sup>846</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Pakistan Locates Jaish-Ul-Adl Hideout.”

<sup>847</sup> “Speaker: Border Insecurity Affects Iran-Pakistan Ties,” *Iran Daily*, March 3, 2014, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
		<p>‘misunderstandings in the relations between the two countries ... It is necessary that Pakistani security bodies seriously and speedily resolve the issue of Iranian nationals being taken hostage ... ’ added that Iran and Pakistan have always enjoyed amicable ties ... crucial for expanding political, economic and cultural relations between the two countries ... came as officials in Pakistan said on Saturday that security forces have freed 11 foreign hostages ... near the Iranian border ... did not include the five Iranian border guards kidnapped in February ”</p>			
3/3/2014 [Meeting]	February 2014 border guard abduction	<p>“Iranian Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli held a meeting with ... the speaker of the assembly of the Pakistani province of Balochistan ... Fazli told Jamali that Pakistan should control illegal movements in the areas on the border with Iran ... The Pakistani government is expected to crack down on illegal movements in</p>	<p>“The two countries should make efforts to prevent foreign interventions through enhancing their cooperation ... should continuously exchange information in order to make proper decisions ... hold more meetings and should establish a permanent commission for gathering information for</p>	Yes	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>848</sup>

<sup>848</sup> “Iran Asks Pakistan to Exert More Control Over Border Areas,” *Tehran Times*, March 3, 2014, NewsBank.



Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
		the area of the border with Iran, and Iran is ready to cooperate in this matter.”	decision making and purposeful action ... increasing business and commerce in border areas is essential for improving the situation in the region ... also stated that the Iran-Pakistan joint commercial commission should become more active ... the commission will hold a meeting sometime in the next two months”		
3/4/2014 [Meeting]	February 2014 Border Guard Abduction	“Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has had a telephone conversation with his Pakistani counterpart to pursue the case of five kidnapped Iranian border guards,”	N/A	Yes	ISNA <sup>849</sup>
3/6/2014 [Petition]	February 2014 Border Guard Abduction	“Thousands of Iranian actors, directors, producers and screenwriters have issued a statement asking the United Nations, international leaders, and the government of Pakistan to take action to return five Iranian border guards who were kidnapped ... 'We Iranian cineastes respectfully	N/A	NO	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>850</sup>

<sup>849</sup> “Iran Foreign Minister Discusses Border Guards With Pakistani Counterpart,” ISNA, March 4, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>850</sup> “Iranian Cineastes Ask For Release Of Abducted Border Guards,” *Tehran Times*, March 6, 2014, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
		request that all influential international officials, the UN, and the friendly neighboring government of Pakistan to do their utmost in a humanitarian effort to return the innocent guards to their families' ... Groups of cultural figures and university professors have also asked for the release of the border guards in separate statements.”			
3/9/2014 [Meetings]	February 2014 Border Guard Abduction	“Governor-General of Iran’s Sistan-Baluchestan province Ali Owsat Hashemi and Governor of Pakistan’s Balochistan State Mohammad Khan Achek Zehi met behind the closed doors in Zahedan ... Border exchanges, security issues, specially the freedom of the abducted guards were among the most important issues discussed during the meeting...Speaker of Pakistan’s Balochistan Parliament ... vowed to free the guards by the end of the current Iranian year.”	“Last week, Tehran and Islamabad held a joint border commission meeting in the Pakistani city of Quetta to discuss the kidnapping.”	Yes [2]	Iran Daily <sup>851</sup>

851 “Iran, Pakistan Discuss Abducted Border Guards,” *Iran Daily*, March 9, 2014, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
3/16/2014 [Meeting]	February 2014 Border Guard Abduction	“Pakistani Ambassador in Tehran Noor Mohammad Jadmani will meet Iranian members of the parliamentary friendship group this week to inform them on the latest measures to release Iranian abducted border guards ... expansion of cooperation between Tehran and Islamabad in all fields including the fight against terrorism will also be discussed in the meeting.”	N/A	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>852</sup>
3/19/2014 [Statement]	February 2014 Border Guard Abduction	Highlights the diplomatic, economic, and military aspects of engagement have all been used: “‘We have taken measures in all diplomatic, security ... and military spheres to secure the release of the abducted border guards,’ Rahmani Fazli told a press conference ... ‘Also, we have conducted official and unofficial negotiations through the Foreign Ministry, and we hope that all these measures would lead to the release Iranian border guards.’”	N/A	No	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>853</sup>

<sup>852</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Pakistan Ambassador to Brief MPs on Abducted Guards.”

<sup>853</sup> “Interior Minister Optimistic About Release Of Iranian Border Guards,” *Tehran Times*, March 19, 2014, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
3/26/2014 [Threat/ Statement]	February 2014 Border Guard Abduction	Threat to violate Pakistani Territory if Pakistan loses hostages: “Minister Abdolreza Rahmani-Fazli has said that his country will use its power and abilities if a border guard abducted by Pakistani rebel group is killed ... ‘We hope that the news of killing our child ... is not true. Otherwise ... We will definitely use our power and abilities. We expect Pakistan to lead the issue in a more methodical manner ... they have to order their forces to resolve the issue in the region ... Otherwise, we consider our right to apply all our abilities in our border areas.’”		No	IRNA <sup>854</sup>
4/4/2014 [Border Guards Released]	February 2014 Border Guard Abduction	Border guards released: “‘The abducted Iranian border guards have been handed over to the Islamic Republic of Iran’s liaison in Pakistan, but they have not entered the country yet.’”	“Owsat-Hashemi cautioned that ‘they [Iranians] should wait about the issue ... we hope to bring good news to the Iranian people ...’ Owsat-Hashemi confirmed that Iran was holding talks with Jaish ul-Adl ... On 4 April Jaish ul-Adl	No	Iran Daily, AND ISNA <sup>855</sup>

<sup>854</sup> IRNA, “Iran to Use Its Power If Abducted Border Guard Killed By “Rebel” Group—Minister.”

<sup>855</sup> “MP: Iran Border Guards Freed,” *Iran Daily*, April 4, 2014, NewsBank; “Iran Official Lowers Expectations For Quick Release Of Border Guards,” ISNA, April 4, 2014, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
			issued a statement saying that the group had handed over the abducted Iranian soldiers to a delegation of Sunni scholars.”		
4/11/2014 [Statement]	February 2014 Border Guard Abduction	“cooperation between Tehran and Islamabad will continue to establish the fate of an abducted Iranian border guard ... the two states are making serious efforts for the safe recovery of kidnapped border guard ... Interior Ministry said on Wednesday it will step up diplomatic efforts ... ‘By no means do we accept that Jamshid Danaeifar, the last kidnapped Iranian border guard, has been martyred and we will intensify diplomatic efforts in that regard ... The Pakistani government and those tasked with following up on the fate of the last abducted border guard are responsible.’”	N/A	No	Iran Daily <sup>856</sup>
4/21/2019 [Statement]	February 2014 Border	“Commenting on the remarks by some MPs who had said that Dana’ifar might be alive, Rahmani-		No	ISNA <sup>857</sup>

<sup>856</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Tehran, Islamabad Cooperating Over Border Guard’s Fate.”

<sup>857</sup> “Iran Pursues Case Of Abducted Guard Through Pakistan—Minister,” ISNA, April 21, 2014, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
	Guard Abduction	Fazli said: ‘We are pursuing the issue through Pakistan and other regional channels to find out; however, we have not reached a conclusion yet.’”			
5/6/2014 [Meeting]	N/A	“Pakistan’s Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met Iranian Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani-Fazli ... underlined the need for promoting ties with Iran. Sharif added forging comprehensive and bilateral ties with stable neighboring and regional countries remains a priority... described Pakistan as a friendly and brotherly country.”	“both officials said that grounds must be prepared for further enhancement of cooperation and interaction between the two countries ... Sharif and Rahmani-Fazli also discussed border issues and security cooperation between Iran and Pakistan ... visit is aimed at improving security cooperation between the two countries following the kidnapping of Iranian border guards.”	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>858</sup>
3/25/2016 [Meeting]	N/A	President Rouhani Pakistan Visit: Discussion on cooperation in defense, commerce, development	N/A	Yes	Iran Review <sup>859</sup>
10/16/2018 [Update]	October 2018 Border	“Close coordination” of Pakistani and Iranian forces: search and rescue, air surveillance, troop deployments	N/A	No	Iran Daily <sup>860</sup>

<sup>858</sup> “Iran Reaching Out to Neighbors,” *Iran Daily*, May 6, 2014, NewsBank.

<sup>859</sup> Sarah Sajid, “Issue of Pakistan-Iran Cross Border Terrorism, and its Future Remedies,” *Iran Review*, April 5, 2016, <http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Issue-of-Pakistan-Iran-Cross-Border-Terrorism-and-its-Future-Remedies.htm>.

<sup>860</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Pakistan Assures Iran of Cooperation in Iranian Guards’ Abduction.”

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
	Guard Abduction				
10/22/2018 [Meeting]	October 2018 Border Guard Abduction	IRGC Ground Force Commander visited Pakistan to follow up and get further cooperation on abduction of guards.	N/A	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>861</sup>
10/31/2018 [Meeting]	October 2018 Border Guard Abduction	Meeting between foreign minister Zarif and Pakistani PM Khan, in Islamabad	“The security of Iran equals security of Pakistan; no effort will be spared to help assuage Iranian concerns.” Pakistan foreign minister Quereshi	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>862</sup>
11/4/2018 [INTEL sharing]	October 2018 Border Guard Abduction	Pakistan gave Iran confirmation that the border guards were all alive and in good health	N/A	No	Iran Daily <sup>863</sup>
11/17/2018 [Statement]	October 2018 Border Guard Abduction	Minister of the Interior: “Iran is ready to conduct joint operations inside Pakistani territory, with their permission and cooperation.”	Credits the success thus far in released hostages to Pakistani-Iranian cooperation.	No	Iran Daily <sup>864</sup>

<sup>861</sup> “Zarif: Pakistan Vows to Increase Military Presence On Common Border,” *Iran Daily*, October 22, 2018, NewsBank.

<sup>862</sup> “Pakistan’s Imran Khan, Zarif Discuss Bilateral Ties, Border Guards,” *Iran Daily*, October 31, 2018, NewsBank

<sup>863</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Iran Says Ready to Fight Terror on Pakistani Soil.”

<sup>864</sup> *Iran Daily*.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
11/25/2018 [Statement]	Border Guard abduction	Iranian Parliament representative from Sistan-Baluchistan: released a statement that the hostages would be returned home safe, and that in large part this was due to the cooperation between Pakistan and Iranian forces.	N/A	No	Iran Daily <sup>865</sup>
12/8/2018 [Meeting]	Border Guards kidnappings	Iranian parliament speaker Ali Larijani: terrorist groups have done damage to all countries in the region, they need to be stopped.	Comments were made at a meeting with Larijani's Pakistani counterpart. Said that Pakistani cooperation was critical for the safe return of the remaining abductees	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>866</sup>
12/10/2018 [Meeting]	N/A	22nd Iran-Pakistan joint border meetings. In attendance: high-ranking officials from both states' security apparatuses, foreign affairs department, border control, and local governance.	Tied Pakistan's performance in security to economic improvement: "The two Muslim neighboring countries have cultural, historical and religious commonalities as well as many common economic interests. Expansion of bilateral relations can lead to an economic boom and improved security."	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>867</sup>
12/16/2018 [Statement]	BLA attack	Iran foreign ministry offers condolences, said Iran stood ready to	After the BLA attack, Iran's foreign emissary had been summoned to a	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>868</sup>

<sup>865</sup> "MP: Remaining Seven Abducted Border Guards to Be Released Soon," *Iran Daily*, November 25, 2018, NewsBank.

<sup>866</sup> "Parliament Speaker Urges Pakistan to Help Release Iranian Border Guards," *Iran Daily*, December 8, 2018, NewsBank.

<sup>867</sup> "Iran-Pakistan Joint Border Meetings Begin in Zahedan," *Iran Daily*, December 10, 2018, NewsBank.

<sup>868</sup> "Iran Says Ready For Joint Anti-Terror Operation After Deadly Attack in Pakistan," *Iran Daily*, December 16, 2018, NewsBank.



Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
		participate in any joint campaign against Baluch insurgents.	meeting in Islamabad to hear complaints		
12/29/2018 [Meeting]		Meeting between Pakistan's joint staff HQ and an Iranian envoy, specifically for border issues	Two sides agreed to heavier border security in an MOU on the 26 <sup>th</sup> of December.	Yes [2]	Iran Daily <sup>869</sup>
2/16/2019 [Statement]	February 2019 IRGC bus bombing	Head of the IRGC Maj General Jafari: "Pakistan, from this moment forward, will suffer the consequences of tolerating Jaish ul-Adl's existence and activities on their soil."	Jafari: "Pakistan-do a better job of security, Counterterror, and border control; follow Iran's lead and preemptively confront them"	No	Iran Daily <sup>870</sup>
2/16/2019 [Statement]	February 2019 IRGC bus bombing	IRGC MAJ General Jafari: Held Pakistan responsible for acting against Jaish ul-Adl. Said that Iran would step in if Pakistan failed to act. Also claimed that Pakistan knew where Jaish ul-Adl's bases of operations were but were either tolerating or supporting them. Said if safe haven of Jaish ul-Adl was allowed to continue, Pakistan would suffer severe consequences.	N/A	No	Iran Daily <sup>871</sup>

<sup>869</sup> "Iran's Envoy Meets Top Pakistani Commander," *Iran Daily*, December 29, 2018, NewsBank.

<sup>870</sup> *Iran Daily*, "Pakistan Must Beef Up Security Along Iran Border: IRGC."

<sup>871</sup> "Iran Summons Pakistan Ambassador Over Terrorist Attack," *Iran Daily*, February 17, 2019, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
2/17/2019 [Meeting]	February 2019 IRGC bus bombing	Pakistan’s Ambassador to Iran was summoned for his government’s failure to prevent the car bombing. The Iranian foreign Ministry conveyed their expectation for Pakistani forces to attack the locations, movements, and fortifications of Jaish ul-Adl. Stressed once again that their continued presence put a heavy strain on Iran-Pakistani relations	Pakistani foreign minister said his country was willing to conduct joint counterterror operations, offered sympathy for those lost, stated that he was sending a delegation to Iran to address the issue	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>872</sup>
2/20/2019 [Statement]	February 2019 IRGC bus bombing	“Iran’s Deputy Interior Minister ... said Islamabad has taken steps against militant groups over the years but ‘given the type of threats and our level of expectations,’ Pakistan’s moves have not yielded results.	Deputy Interior Minister: “no signs that the Pakistani government had done ‘anything special’ against the group following the attack.	No	ISNA <sup>873</sup>
2/22/2019 [Statement]	February 2019 IRGC bus bombing	“Soleimani said Iran does not want mere condolences, but concrete action from neighboring Pakistan, asking, ‘Can’t you, as a nuclear-armed state, deal with a hundreds-strong terrorist group in the region?’”	N/A	No	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>874</sup>

<sup>872</sup> “Thousands Attend Funeral for IRGC Members Killed in Terror Bombing,” *Iran Daily*, February 16, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>873</sup> “Iran Not Satisfied With Pakistani Measures Against Militants,” ISNA, February 20, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>874</sup> *Tehran Times*, “General Soleimani to Pakistanis: Saudi Arabia Is Ruining Your Country.”

<b>Date and Action Type</b>	<b>Related Incident</b>	<b>Relevant Diplomatic Action 1</b>	<b>Relevant Diplomatic Action 2</b>	<b>Diplomatic Meeting?</b>	<b>Source</b>
2/24/2019 [Meeting/ Pakistani Action]	February 2019 IRGC bus bombing	“Pakistan Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi immediately sent a high-level delegation to Tehran to assure ... a thorough investigation and all-out cooperation in hunting down the culprits.”	“Pakistan Army spokesperson Major General Asif Ghafoor ... said ... ‘We both are considering fencing the border so that no third party ... could sabotage the brotherly and friendly relations through any nefarious act.’”	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>875</sup>
3/2/2019 [Pakistani Statement]	February 2019 IRGC bus bombing	Pakistani Foreign Minister, Shah Qureshi: “Relations between Iran and Pakistan are growing stronger ... security cooperation between Iran and Pakistan continues to grow.”	N/A	No	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>876</sup>
3/8/2019 [Statement]	February 2019 IRGC bus bombing	Senior Advisor to Khamenei: “Relations between Iran and Pakistan are brotherly, good and constructive... promotion of economic cooperation and establishment of a railroad linking Iran, Pakistan and China could further strengthen ties ... incidents like a recent attack on Iranian forces by terrorists who entered Iran’s Sistan-Baluchistan province from	N/A	No	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>877</sup>

<sup>875</sup> “Pakistan to fence 950km of common border with Iran,” *Iran Daily*, February 24, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>876</sup> “Negative elements fail to harm Tehran-Islamabad ties: Pakistan FM,” *Tehran Times*, March 2, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>877</sup> “Pakistan president, PM send letter to Ayatollah Khamenei,” *Tehran Times*, March 8, 2019, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
		Pakistan do harm to the relations ... called on Pakistan to make more efforts to ensure the security in common borders and put an end to terrorist attacks against Iran by groups based in Pakistan.”			
3/10/2019 [Pakistani Action]	February 2019 IRGC bus bombing	Pakistan announces “crackdown” against terrorists-182 madrassas shut down, 120 people arrested.	Rouhani: “We are awaiting your decisive operations against these terrorists.” “The news agency quoted Rouhani as telling Khan ... We should not allow decades of friendship and fraternity between the two countries to be undermined by the actions of small terrorist groups, the source of whose financing and arms is known.”	No	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>878</sup>
3/23/2019 [Pakistani Action]	October 2018 Border Guard Abduction	Direct Pakistani Military Action against Jaish ul-Adl: “military rescued the soldiers in Chaghi district of Balochistan province, near the Afghan border.”	N/A	No	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>879</sup>

<sup>878</sup> “Pakistan Won’t Allow Its Soil to Be Used For Terrorist Activities,” *Tehran Times*, March 10, 2019, NewsBank; “Pakistan Promises ‘Good News’ For Iran Over Border Attack,” *Tehran Times*, March 10, 2019, NewsBank.

<sup>879</sup> “Freed Iranian Soldiers Receive Hero’s Welcome in Tehran,” *Iran Daily*, March 23, 2019, NewsBank; “Pakistan Hands Over 4 Abducted Border Guards to Iran,” *Iran Daily*, March 21, 2019, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
4/22/2019 [Meeting]	N/A	Bilateral head of state meeting: Iran was pleased with Pakistan's recent performance against terrorism, cross border security among highest priority issues	"The issue of security at borders was another issue we discussed ... We are happy that the Pakistani side has called groups which take inhuman actions 'terrorist' and counters them as terrorists."	Yes	<i>Tehran Times</i> <sup>880</sup>
5/11/2019 [Pakistani Action]	N/A	Construction has begun, will be done in 3-4 years; building a fence on the Pakistani side of the border.		No	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>881</sup>
12/25/2019 [Pakistani Action]	Border Guard abduction	"IRGC Brigadier General Qassem Rezaei pointed to "satisfactory" negotiations with Pakistani officials to secure the release of the three border guards held in Pakistan."	"One of the priorities of border guards is enhancing border diplomacy with all neighboring countries ... Widening such relations has not only resulted in a remarkable cut in borders' expenses but also has increased competence of border guards,' the commander remarked ... went on to say that Iran and Pakistan are to stage a maritime military exercise in common waters in Esfand."	No	<i>Iran Daily</i> <sup>882</sup>

<sup>880</sup> *Tehran Times*, "No Third Country Can Affect Iran-Pakistan Ties: Rouhani."

<sup>881</sup> *Iran Daily*, "Pakistan Begins Fencing Border with Iran."

<sup>882</sup> "Abducted Iranian Border Guards to Return From Pakistan: Commander," *Iran Daily*, December 25, 2019, NewsBank.

Date and Action Type	Related Incident	Relevant Diplomatic Action 1	Relevant Diplomatic Action 2	Diplomatic Meeting?	Source
January 1, 2020 [Meeting]	N/A	23rd session of the Joint Border Commission: Meeting covered “border issues, counterterrorism measures, illegal trade, drug smuggling, illegal border crossing and human trafficking.”	“Mir Ziaullah Lango ... the provincial home minister of Pakistani Balochistan, addressed the session on Wednesday and said that focus on the two neighbors’ joint economic and security interests was Islamabad’s top priority ... called for the elimination of terrorism, weapons and narcotics smuggling ... through effective measures ... added that terrorist elements are putting the peace and stability of the two countries’ common border at risk”	Yes	Iran Daily <sup>883</sup>

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<sup>883</sup> *Iran Daily*, “Iran-Pakistan Hold 23rd Session of Joint Border Commission.”

## APPENDIX H: CROSS REFERENCES FOR INSURGENT ORGANIZATIONS AND UNITED STATES ASSOCIATION

The research presented in this appendix is in reference to Chapter IV, subsection D, concerning the comparative narrative nexuses between press and media stories produced the Jundallah and the United States, and Jaish ul-Adl stories which mention the United States. Focused on domestically produced news sources, NewsBank’s news databases show that there is a far higher occurrence overall of Iran-produced news media which contains mention of both Jundallah and the United States than there are occurrences of Iran-produced media which contains mention of both Jaish ul-Adl and the United States. Nexis Uni, which has a more internationally focused database, also contains less stories which mention both Jaish ul-Adl and the United States when compared with stories which mention Jundallah and the United States.

<b><u>NEXIS UNI SEARCH RESULTS</u></b>			
<b><u>Terms Cross-Referenced</u></b>	<b><u>Results</u></b>	<b><u>Total results with insurgent organization name</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
<b>Insurgent/ U.S. Cross References</b>			
“Jundallah” and “U.S.”	3469	7115	48%
“Jundallah” and “U.S.”	2315	5183	45%
“Jundallah” and “U.S.”	914	1635	55%
“Jondallah” and “U.S.”	31	65	47%
“Jondallah” and “US”	31	57	54%
“Jondallah” and “US”	478	853	56%
“Jandallah” and “US”	387	791	48%
“Jandallah” and “US”	18	41	44%
“Jandallah” and “US”	19	41	46%
<b>Total Jundallah/U.S. Cross Reference: 7662/15781, 48%</b>			
<b>“Jaish Adl” “U.S.” cross reference</b>	<b>1440</b>	<b>3505</b>	<b>41%</b>
<b>Insurgent/ America Cross References</b>			
“Jundallah” and “America”	1332	5183	25.6%
“Jundallah” and “America”	388	1635	23.5%
“Jondallah” and “America”	10	65	15%
“Jondallah” and “America”	284	853	33.2%
“Jondallah” and “America”	23	57	40%

<b>NEXIS UNI SEARCH RESULTS</b>			
<b><u>Terms Cross-Referenced</u></b>	<b><u>Results</u></b>	<b><u>Total results with insurgent organization name</u></b>	<b><u>Percentage</u></b>
“Jandullah” and “America”	129	791	16.3%
“Jandallah” and “America”	8	41	19.5%
“Jandollah” and “America”	7	41	17%
<b>Total Jundullah/America Cross Reference</b>	<b>1694</b>	<b>7115</b>	<b>23.8%</b>
<b>Total Jaish Adl/America Cross Reference</b>	<b>330</b>	<b>3505</b>	<b>9.4%</b>
<b>NEWSBANK SEARCH RESULTS</b>			
<b>Insurgent/“U.S.” Cross References</b>			
“Jundullah” and “U.S.”	32	219	14.6%
“Jundallah” and “U.S.”	29	127	22.8%
“Jundollah” and “U.S.”	19	85	22%
“Jondullah” and “U.S.”	0	7	0
“Jondallah” and “U.S.”	0	0	0
“Jondollah” and “U.S.”	15	56	26.7%
“Jandullah” and “U.S.”	0	0	0
“Jandallah” and “U.S.”	0	0	0
“Jandollah” and “U.S.”	0	0	0
<b>Total Jundullah/ “U.S.” Cross Reference</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>19.3%</b>
<b>Jaish Adl/ “U.S.” Cross Reference</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>15.1%</b>
<b>Insurgent/ “America” Cross References</b>			
“Jundullah” and “America”	5	219	2.2%
“Jundallah” and “America”	4	127	3.1%
“Jundollah” and “America”	4	85	4.7%
“Jondullah” and “America”	0	7	0%
“Jondallah” and “America”	0	0	N/A
“Jondollah” and “America”	10	56	17.8%
“Jandullah” and “America”	0	1	0%
“Jandallah” and “America”	0	0	N/A
“Jandollah” and “America”	0	0	N/A
<b>Total Jundallah/ “America” Cross Reference</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>4.6%</b>
<b>Jaish Adl and America</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>3.1%</b>

<sup>a</sup> These cross references were constructed utilizing the Nexis Uni and NewsBank subscription databases. With respect to NewsBank, these searches focused on NewsBank’s Iranian Domestic News Sources. According to NewsBank, the domestic Iranian news sources contained in its database are: *Tehran Times*, *Iran News*, *Iran Daily*, IRNA, ISNA, Moj News Agency, *Qods*, and articles selected and republished by BBC.

<sup>b</sup> “Jundullah” is spelled multiple ways. This variance appears both in Iranian domestic news sources, as well as in international media. For that reason, each individual spelling of Jundullah was cross referenced.



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