



MEMORANDUM

October 29, 2015

To: Hon. Brad Sherman
Attention: Kinsey Kiriakos

From: K. Alan Kronstadt, Specialist in South Asian Affairs, x7-5415
Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division

Subject: **Pakistan's Sindh Province**

This memorandum responds to your request for information on Pakistan's Sindh province, including specific discussion of its Thatta and Badin districts. Content may appear in other CRS products. Please contact me if you need further assistance.

Overview¹

Sindh is one of Pakistan's four provinces, accounting for roughly one-quarter of the country's population in less than 18% of its land area. Its provincial capital, Karachi, is among the world's largest megacities, and also the site of significant sectarian, ethnic, and political violence. Covering more than 54,000 square miles of southeastern Pakistan (about the size of Florida, see **Figure 1**), Sindh stretches from the Jacobabad district in the north to the vast Indus River delta wetlands abutting the Arabian Sea and India in the south, and from the thinly-populated Dadu district in the west to the Thar Desert and a militarized border with India to the east (see **Figure 2**). One-third of Pakistan's 650-mile Arabian Sea coastline is in Sindh. The vast majority of Sindh's residents live at or near the final few hundred miles of the Indus's course.

Official government population statistics continue to be based on the most recent national census in 1998, which put Sindh's population at 30.4 million out of Pakistan's then-total 132 million, with 52% living in rural areas. Yet Pakistan's population has grown rapidly in the current century and is now at or near 200 million.² A provincial government department website reports a Sindh population of 44.2 million, but a 2012 press report citing government sources stated that Sindh's population increased by more than 80% from 1998-2011 to above 55 million. Other estimates reach as high as 60 million.³ About one in four Pakistanis live in Sindh, and about one-third of Sindh's population lives in the Karachi metropolitan area. The province is notably more urban than is Pakistan overall. Estimates show that about half of Sindh's

¹ Tables and Appendix prepared by Susan Chesser, Information Research Specialist, 7-9547.

² The *CIA World Fact Book* estimated a Pakistani population of just over 196 million in mid-2014.

³ See the Sindh Population Welfare Department at <http://www.pwdsindh.gov.pk>, and "Population Shoots Up by 47% Since 1998," *News International* (Karachi), March 29, 2012.

residents live in urban areas, while only 33%-38% of the entire country's population does.⁴ According to the *CIA World Fact Book*, about 14% of Pakistanis are ethnic Sindhis, and 12% speak Sindhi as their mother tongue. If correct, this indicates that about half of Sindh's population is comprised of ethnic Sindhis.

Figure 1. Map of Pakistan



Source: Adapted by CRS

History

Sindh takes its name from the Sindhu River, today known as the Indus. Pakistan's largest river, the Indus runs nearly 2,000 miles from its origin on the Tibetan Plateau to a 16,000-sq. mi. delta at the Arabian Sea near Karachi, modern Sindh's capital, major seaport, and Pakistan's business center. Evidence of an advanced urban civilization at Kot Diji, in central Sindh, dates to 3300 BCE and is considered the forerunner of the Indus Valley Civilization that flourished in the region for the next 2,000 years. Arab invaders brought Islam to the region during the 8th century CE, and the Sindhi language developed in

⁴ Data from the Sindh Board of Investment website and the *CIA World Fact Book*.

Arabic's distinctive Nakshi script. Much of the region came into the orbit of the Mughal Empire during the 17th century—Muslim emperors ruled first through the local Kalhora clan and later through Talpurs from northern Sindh—until two major British military victories in 1843, and Sindh's subsequent rule by the Bombay Presidency, an administrative division of British India. According to the Sindh government's official history, the British conquest was “inhumane,” and “their supporters were Hindus,” resulting in “a constant policy to subdue the Muslim majority and to lionize the Hindu minority in Sindh.”⁵

Figure 2. Districts of Sindh



Source: Government of Sindh website

“Father of the Nation” Muhammad Ali Jinnah, who would become the first leader of an independent Pakistan, issued his famous Fourteen Points in 1929; these included a call for Sindh’s separation from the Bombay Presidency. This was accomplished in 1936, when Sindh became a separate province with its own legislature. Many Sindhis were leading supporters of the “two-nation theory” that identified South Asia’s Muslims as a distinct nation deserving of its own state, and the Sindh Assembly was the first in British India to endorse the 1940 Lahore Declaration calling for that independent Muslim state.

⁵ See the Sindh government website at <http://www.sindh.gov.pk/dpt/History%20of%20Sindh/history.htm>.

At independence in 1947, Pakistan comprised five major ethnolinguistic groups: Bengalis—an absolute majority of the original country’s entire population in then-East Pakistan—and Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns, and Baloch, each a majority within the four respective provinces of then-West Pakistan. All five of these Muslim-majority communities had long self-identified as a distinct people or culture, and all experienced active secessionist or nationalist movements in the wake of independence. Each of these movements itself had vital transborder aspects, with Sindh’s spanning eastward to India.⁶ These links grew primarily from more than one million, relatively wealthy, mostly Muslim, Urdu-speaking, “Mohajirs” who settled in major Sindhi urban centers such as Karachi, Hyderabad, and Sukkur after migrating from central and southern India during the 1947 Partition.

Regionalism and Separatism⁷

Pakistan’s 1971 bifurcation into two states left a “rump” (West) Pakistan dominated both politically and demographically by Punjabis, but containing three other major ethnonationalist communities: Sindhis, Pashtuns, and Baloch. Support for the two-state approach had always been tepid among these smaller groups—the overarching logic of South Asian Muslim unity did little to incorporate the region’s narrower separatist and autonomist movements—and the success of Bengali separatism led national leaders to pursue a tough state-centric policy that sought to suppress ethno-lingual movements such as those of the Baloch, Mohajirs, and Sindhis. Increased Punjabi dominance elicited considerable resentment among the country’s ethnic minorities.

Sindhi nationalism predated the loss of East Pakistan, beginning soon after 1947 independence with opposition to Punjabi settlers in rural areas and efforts to suppress the Sindhi language (Urdu was declared Pakistan’s official language, thus empowering Urdu-speaking Mohajirs from India). Many Sindhis also saw themselves acting in opposition to a “Mohajir-Punjabi nexus.” Within four years of independence, the proportion of Sindhi-speakers in the province had dropped from 87% to 67%, and Sindhis became a minority in their own capital city, where about 57% were Mohajirs by the early 1950s.⁸ The 1955 imposition of the “One-Unit” scheme, which had combined West Pakistan’s four provinces into a single political unit, presented another grievance. Soon after, newly irrigated Sindhi land began being granted to retired military officers and bureaucrats (mostly Punjabis), in a practice that continues today. By one account, up to 40% of Sindh’s best farmland came to be owned by non-Sindhis.⁹ Moreover, Sindh, as lower riparian of the Indus River, continues to have water disputes with Punjab, and Sindhis also found themselves significantly underrepresented in the powerful Pakistani military and civil bureaucracy.

In the 1970s, with Sindhi and Pakistan People’s Party (PPP)-founder Z.A. Bhutto as Prime Minister, Sindhi nationalists sought to change laws so as to strengthen Sindhi identity and potentially lead to a separate or autonomous “Sindhudesh” (“Land of the Sindhis”). This movement was weakened by a mixture of concessions and suppression by the federal government. The PPP was a national, rather than Sindhi party, banned by General Zia ul-Haq after he took power in a 1977 military coup, and thus did not provide a vehicle for separatism. Although Sindh has always possessed most of the characteristics required for a viable independent state—and some nationalist sentiments persist to this day—its role as

⁶ Punjab and Bengal were bifurcated by the borders of the new Indian and Pakistani states, at great human cost during Partition. Pashtun tribes remain numerous in Afghanistan, and sizeable Baloch populations are in both Afghanistan and Iran.

⁷ Content in this section is culled largely from Stephen Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Brookings Institution Press, 2004).

⁸ Feroz Ahmed, *Ethnicity and Politics in Pakistan* (Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁹ *Ibid.*

Punjab's conduit to the sea may well be the ultimate reason that successful Sindhi separatism faced long odds.

Sindh's Mohajirs had their own autonomist movement from the mid-1980s until the early 2000s. This was rooted in that community's loss of preeminence in provincial politics, bureaucracy, and industry, its lack of meaningful representation in the army, and its loss of identity following migration, among other factors.¹⁰ After the 1970 election elevated a Sindhi to the prime ministership, Mohajir student organizations began efforts to consolidate community identity, and in 1984 the Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM or United National Movement) political party was founded, one with an early "penchant for torture, kidnapping, and murder."¹¹ Political violence in Karachi grew to such a scale that, by the early-1990s, it had caught the attention of the army, which launched a crackdown that sent MQM leader Altaf Hussein into apparently permanent exile in London. Yet the party remains a major player in the province (and nationally) and has continued to be dominant in Karachi proper. Sindhi-Mohajir frictions remain unresolved, especially given widespread perceptions among Mohajirs that the provincial government is fundamentally unable to serve the needs of the Mohajir community.

Government and Politics

Sindh provides a core votebank for the national PPP. Rural Sindhis tend to overwhelmingly support that party, and the city of Lakarna is the base of the powerful Bhutto dynasty (Z.A. Bhutto's daughter, Benazir, served twice as prime minister, from 1988-90 and again from 1993-1996; her widower, Asif Zardari, took the party reins after her 2009 assassination and ruled Pakistan as its president from 2008-2013; their 26-year-old son is now party chairman). Meanwhile, the MQM plays a significant role in both national and provincial politics, and has for decades dominated municipal governance in Karachi.

Sindh sends 75 representatives to Pakistan's 342-seat National Assembly (NA), or 22% of the chamber's total. The 2013 national election saw the PPP again account for a majority (55%) of Sindh's representation at the federal level, with 41 seats. The MQM won 23 seats (31% of Sindh's total), demonstrating that these two parties dominate provincial politics. Of the remaining 11 Sindhi seats in the NA, 8 are held by parties affiliated with the Pakistan Muslim League. The Lahore-based branch led by current and thrice Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif (PML-Nawaz) nearly swept Punjab in 2013 elections and now enjoys an outright majority at the federal level.¹²

The Provincial Assembly of Sindh houses 168 seats for the province's 28 administrative districts. At present, 92 (55%) of these are held by the PPP, providing that party with an absolute majority. Another 51 seats (30%) are held by the MQM, thus nearly perfectly reflecting the relative proportions found in the NA. The MQM leads an opposition alliance that includes the PML-N, which holds eight PA seats.¹³

Total Sindh government expenditures for FY2013/14 were \$5.75 billion, nearly 7% higher than total revenue (and up from a 2% deficit the previous year). By comparison, Punjab's provincial government spent \$8.8 billion in the last fiscal year, and Baluchistan's spent \$1.6 billion. Sindh's provincial

¹⁰ Accounting for only 3% of Pakistan's population from 1947 to 1971, Mohajirs held 21% of government jobs, were prominent in the army, and controlled 7 of the country's 12 largest business interests (Mohammed Wasem, *Politics and the State in Pakistan* (Lahore: Progressive Publishers, 1989)).

¹¹ Stephen Cohen, *The Idea of Pakistan* (Brookings Institution Press, 2004), p. 216.

¹² Election Commission of Pakistan.

¹³ *Ibid.* The opposition alliance also includes eight members from the Pakistan Muslim League - Functional (an offshoot associated with religious leader Pir Pagara) and four from Imran Khan's Tehreek-e-Insaf party.

government expenditure was nearly identical to that of the North Dakota state government's (\$5.8 billion) in 2013, but for a population more than 50 times as large.¹⁴

Sindh Chief Minister Syed Quam Ali Shah is also the provincial president of the Pakistan People's Party and holds a parliamentary seat from the north-central Sindhi city of Khairpur. He was trained as a lawyer and, having been born in the 1920s, is among the most senior of living PPP members. With the exception of a six-week hiatus for the 2013 national elections, he has served as provincial chief minister since April 2008. He also served a 14-month stint in the same office for the government of Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, and as industries minister in the federal cabinet of her father and PPP founder, Prime Minister Z.A. Bhutto, during the 1970s. At present, Shah's office comprises 24 cabinet ministers, 13 special assistants, 5 parliamentary secretaries, 4 coordinators, 3 advisers with portfolios, and a political secretary.¹⁵

Sindh Governor Ishratul Ebad, in an appointed office that represents and reports to the federal government in Islamabad, was seated in 2002, when he became the youngest-ever Sindhi governor at age 39. He began his political life as an MQM student activist during his training as a physician in Karachi and later held ministerial posts in the provincial government. Upon the 1992 launch of the Pakistan Army's operations against the MQM (see below), Ebad sought and was granted political asylum in Britain, along with many other MQM leaders, party chief Altaf Hussein among them. He reportedly remained close to Hussein until he was appointed to the governorship by then-Chief of Army Staff Pervez Musharraf, himself a Mohajir, who had declared himself President of Pakistan following a bloodless 1999 military coup (Musharraf's party had made a power-sharing arrangement with the MQM following 2002 national elections). With the MQM chief remaining in apparently permanent exile overseas, Ebad has been able to amass considerable influence over the party apparatus during more than 12 years as governor, even as Pakistan's Constitution requires that governors be formally and officially nonpartisan.¹⁶

Economy, Demographics, and Employment

According to the Sindh Board of Investment, provincial economic activity accounts for 33% of the national GDP with only 23% of the country's population. It also collects fully 70% of the country's income taxes and 62% of its sales taxes.¹⁷ Nearly half (45%) of Sindh's employed labor force is engaged in agricultural work. The poultry sector alone employs some 1.5 million people.¹⁸ The province is home to 54% of country's textile units and 45% of its sugar mills. Textiles are Pakistan's leading export, both globally and to the United States. Sindh also accounts for about half of Pakistan's total seafood exports, up to one-third of its rice, sugar cane, mango, and vegetable crop production, and 25% of its cotton.¹⁹

Granite and marble are major provincial mineral resources. About 60% of Pakistan's oil fields and 44% of its gas fields are located in Sindh, and these contribute 56% of the nation's oil and 55% of its gas production. Sindh government sources also claim that Sindh is the site of one of the world's largest coal

¹⁴ These figures indicate that the Sindhi government spent an estimated \$137 per resident last year. By way of comparison, the Punjab government spent about \$87 per resident, and the North Dakota government spent \$7,825 (Pakistan Ministry of Finance, "Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-2014," at http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey_1314.html, and U.S. Census Bureau at <http://www2.census.gov/govs/state/g13-asfin.pdf>).

¹⁵ See the Sindh government website at <http://www.sindh.gov.pk>.

¹⁶ "Profile: Dr Ishratul Ibad, the Sole Survivor," *Dawn* (Karachi), December 27, 2014.

¹⁷ Sindh Board of Investment website at <http://www.sbi.gos.pk/sindh-economy.php>.

¹⁸ Sindh Board of Investment, "Sindh Investment Handbook," at http://www.sbi.gos.pk/reports_publications.php.

¹⁹ Sindh Board of Investment website at <http://www.sbi.gos.pk/sindh-economy.php>.

reserves of 185 billion tons, which would account for one-fifth of the world's total reserves. However, these claims are not supported by independent assessments, which generally find Pakistan as a whole possessing just above 2 billion tons of reserves, the vast majority of these in Sindh.²⁰

At 5.0% in 2012-13, Sindh's official unemployment rate was fully 1.2% lower than the country's overall rate, and also bucked a nationwide trend by decreasing slightly over the previous year. (see **Table 1**).²¹

Table 1. Unemployment Rate by Percentage

	2010-2011			2012-2013		
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
Pakistan	6.0	5.1	8.9	6.2	5.4	9.0
Sindh	5.2	4.8	7.2	5.0	4.4	8.2

Source: "Population, Labor Force, and Employment," Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-2014, at www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_14/12_Population.pdf.

Sindh's primary school enrollment rate (for ages 5-9) was 52% in 2014, 5 points lower than the national rate and 10 points lower than Punjab's. Less than half of the province's girl children (48%) attend primary school. Female disadvantage also is illuminated in literacy rates: for ages 10 and above, Sindh's was 60% last year, the same as the national rate and only 2 points below Punjab's. However Sindh's female literacy rate trailed Punjab's by 7 points (see **Table 2**). Data also show that, while overall education rates among Sindh's urban residents track almost perfectly with those of urban Pakistan overall, the province's rural populace is notably less likely to ever enroll in school, 22% of Sindh's rural female population has ever attended school, as compared to 37% of rural Pakistani women overall (see **Table 3**). Sindh, along with the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, has been singled out for faring poorly in official assessments of primary education performance, with one study finding less than one-third of its 5th-year students able to perform 3rd-year-level math and one-quarter able to read at the 2nd-year level.²² More than one-third of the Sindh government's expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 2015 (38%) were devoted to "education affairs and services," up from 36% the previous year. In absolute terms, such spending increased by 21%, from \$975 million to about \$1.2 billion in the most recent fiscal year.²³

Table 2. Literacy Rate (10 years and above, by percentage)

2012-2013

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Pakistan	82	69	76	64	37	51	71	48	60
Sindh	84	70	77	59	22	42	72	47	60
Badin	62	38	51	47	17	33	50	21	36

²⁰ Ibid. The U.S. Energy Information Agency reports Pakistan's proven coal reserves at 2.3 billion short tons in 2011.

²¹ "Population, Labor Force, and Employment," Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-2014, at www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_14/12_Population.pdf.

²² "Education," Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-2014, at http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_14/10_Education.pdf.

²³ Sindh Finance Department data at http://fdsindh.gov.pk/site/cms.php?page=budget_analysis. By way of comparison, the state of Rhode Island spends roughly the same amount on education for a population about 2% the size of Sindh's.

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Thatta	72	45	60	44	19	32	48	23	36

Source: "Education," Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-2014, at http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_14/10_Education.pdf.

Table 3. Percent of Population That Has Ever Attended School
2012-2013

	Urban			Rural			Total		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Pakistan	84	70	77	66	39	53	72	50	61
Sindh	85	70	78	57	22	41	72	47	60
Badin	61	36	49	52	19	36	54	23	39
Thatta	68	48	59	46	19	33	49	23	37

Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey 2012-2013, at http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/pslm/publications/pslm_prov_dist_2012-13/education/2.1.pdf.

Some statistics suggest that Sindhis' general health is slightly poorer than is Pakistan's overall (see **Table 4**). About 11% of the Sindh government's expenditures for the fiscal year ending March 2015 were devoted to health services, down from 12% the previous year. In absolute terms, such spending was essentially static, from \$341 million to \$347 million in the most recent fiscal year.²⁴

Table 4. Percentage Distribution of Population Under 5 Years Fallen Sick or Injured

Sickness or injury occurred within two weeks of the 2012-2013 survey

	Male	Female	Total
Pakistan	13.9	12.9	13.4
Sindh	15.8	14.4	15.1
Badin	20.4	18.9	19.7
Thatta	14.0	12.9	13.5

Source: Pakistan Social and Living Standards Measurement Survey 2012-2013, at http://www.pbs.gov.pk/sites/default/files/pslm/publications/pslm_prov_dist_2012-13/health/3.2.pdf.

The 700-mi Karachi-Lahore Motorway project, a top-tier effort of Prime Minister Sharif, is set to cost the federal government \$3 billion, including \$600 million for land acquisition, and be complete by the end of 2017. About one-third of its total length runs through Sindh.

²⁴ Sindh Finance Department data at http://fdsindh.gov.pk/site/cms.php?page=budget_analysis.

Feudalism

Much of rural Sindh is regularly described as having a feudal economy, and fully one-quarter of its PA seats are held by members designated as “landlords” by profession.²⁵ In general, feudal systems are marked by “unfree” labor (in that laborers are “bonded,” or tied to the land through obligation to its owners); a fusion of economic and political power; a subsistence economy at the village level; and “simple reproduction” in which surpluses generally are consumed by the landowner class rather than deployed toward capital accumulation, as in capitalist systems.²⁶

Following the British Empire’s annexation of Sindh in 1843, titles for huge tracts of farm land were awarded to those *mirs* (tribal leaders) considered most useful to the region’s new rulers. At independence, 80% of Sindh’s land was held by large- and middle-scale landowners, most of whom are referred to as “feudals” even today. One often cited, large-scale study found that 5% of Pakistanis own 64% of the country’s farm land, and that Sindh is home to more than one million bonded laborers.²⁷

An editorial piece in *Dawn*, Pakistan’s most popular English-language daily, lays out the central factors:

[W]e don't find feudals who maintain private armies or collect taxes, but what we definitely find is large landholdings, bonded labor as well as total allegiance of peasants in return for economic support and personal protection. As a result there is a very strong control of “feudals” in all parts of Sindh who have a direct influence on the economic life of the poor and also enjoy control over the “official machinery” in the province. Due to the colossal power base of the “feudal,” no one can dare to raise his voice against the “land-lord” for fear of being economically crippled or facing the wrath of terror which can be unleashed at any time. ... The feudal undertakes to fulfil his basic requirements of food and shelter in return for total allegiance (including that of his family) to him. This means the peasant has to give his life for the feudal if need be.

The editors also make the representative contention that feudal landowners see a direct interest in keeping their “peasantry” uneducated, and so unskilled and dependent.²⁸ This claim is supported by the education statistics discussed above.

Karachi

With an estimated 20 million residents, the megacity of Karachi typically is listed as the world’s 7th most populous and is by far Pakistan’s largest, accounting for roughly 10% of the country’s entire population and more than half of its commercial activity. Karachi’s two major ports are the only ones in the country, and so are critical for Pakistani commerce and importation.²⁹ The Karachi Port Trust oversees 30 multipurpose berths that handled about 40 million tons of cargo in 2013-14. Port Qasim, established further inland on the river delta about 15 miles from the Karachi Port, handled another 25 million tons. By way of comparison, India’s Mumbai Port, 550 miles to the southeast of Karachi and that country’s largest,

²⁵ Provincial Assembly of Sindh website at <http://www.pas.gov.pk/index.php/members/stats/en/31>.

²⁶ S. Akbar Zaidi, *Issues in Pakistan’s Economy* (Oxford University press, 2000), p. 14

²⁷ Cited in “Give Me Land, Lots of Land,” *International Business Times*, October 11, 2013.

²⁸ “Feudalism Keeps Sindh Backward” (editorial), *Dawn* (Karachi), June 7, 2004.

²⁹ The new, Chinese-funded and -operated Gwadar port—first opened in 2007 about 330 miles west of Karachi and only 75 miles east of the Iranian border in Baluchistan—continues to see operations hampered by poor land connectivity, and did not launch its first commercial export ship until May 2015 (“First Export Ship to Embark on Journey from Gwadar Port,” *Express Tribune* (Karachi), May 10, 2015).

moves more than twice as total much cargo annually.³⁰ The Karachi Stock Exchange, Pakistan's largest, was established in 1949 and currently lists 559 companies. The exchange was the world's fourth-best performer in 2014, with an overall gain of nearly 27% (only Argentina, China, and India had better performing markets last year).³¹ The decades-old Karachi Nuclear Power Plant is the smallest of three in the country (the other two are in Chashma, Punjab), with a modest generating capacity of 100 MW. In late 2013, ground was broken for a Chinese-funded project to build two new reactors near Karachi that would add a projected 2,200 MW.

Pervasive political, ethnic, and sectarian violence in Karachi has some analysts fearful that nuclear facilities near the city would be subjected to attack by militants.³² In recent years such violence has escalated to the point that, in 2014, the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan issued a statement that, "Violence in Karachi has become so commonplace that reports of ever more gruesome excesses against the citizens are usually taken in the stride."³³ The interplay of the city's ethnic-based political parties and heavily armed organized crime networks has only worsened with a large Pashtun migration into Karachi from western Pakistan. Attacks range from targeted killings to mass bombings, and minority Shia Muslims are often the intended victims.

According to data from the New Delhi-based South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP), a trend of increased violence in the Sindh capital has been continuous since 2011.³⁴ The SATP reports that Karachi accounted for more than 96% of Sindh's 1,180 terrorism-related fatalities in 2014, two-thirds of which were civilian deaths. Killings of political party activists—targeting the PPP, MQM, and Pashtun-based Awami National Party—reportedly have taken nearly 400 lives since 2011.³⁵ An operation by the paramilitary Pakistan Rangers was launched in 2013 to rid the city of terrorists and criminal gangs. This effort has largely failed to meet those goals, but it is ongoing, in 2015 focusing in part on the MQM itself. In addition, the Islamabad government notes that the poor security situation in Karachi has hampered a federal supplementary immunization program there.³⁶

Unique Provincial Challenges

Table 5 shows that, in 1998, Sindh's population was more urbanized, more heavily male, and more rapidly growing than Pakistan's overall—characteristics that appear to continue. As noted above, Sindh historically has possessed many of the trappings of a modern nation-state. Yet it exists in a circumstance wherein its autonomy (and that of Pakistan's other "minority provinces") is significantly restrained by a politically and demographically dominant Punjabi province and ethnicity. Sindh thus operates in a

³⁰ "Transportation and Communications," Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-2014, at http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_14/10_Transport_and_coms.pdf.

³¹ "Best Performing Global Markets 2015," CNN.com (undated).

³² The region is also vulnerable to earthquakes and tsunamis ("Outcry and Fear as Pakistan Builds Nuclear Reactors Near Dangerous Karachi," *Washington Post*, March 5, 2015).

³³ See the January 9, 2014, statement at <http://hrpc-web.org/hrpcweb/hrpc-slams-horrors-in-karachi-turf-wars>.

³⁴ In mid-2011 four days of mayhem left up to 95 people dead and prompted the Sindh government to issue "shoot on sight" orders to security forces. Another spasm of violence that year brought the 2011 death toll to more than 1,000 and elicited calls for army intervention. ("Violence Escalates in Pakistan's Karachi," *Jane's Intelligence Weekly*, May 18, 2012).

³⁵ SATP sees the worsening situation in Karachi exacerbated by the presence of a wide range of sectarian-terrorist outfits operating in the city. These prominently include TTP, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), Sipah-e-Sahaba-Pakistan (SSP), Jundullah, Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), Sunni Tehreek (ST) and Sipah-e-Muhammad Pakistan (SMP), among many others. See "Sindh Assessment – 2015" at <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/sindh/index.html>.

³⁶ "Health and Nutrition," Pakistan Economic Survey 2013-2014, at www.finance.gov.pk/survey/chapters_14/11_Health_and_Nutrition.pdf.

seemingly permanent state of disadvantage, and is seen by some to be unlikely to meet its full social and economic potential in the absence of major qualitative changes to the Pakistani state.³⁷

Table 5. Selected Indicators for Pakistan, and the Provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan³⁸

Indicator	Pakistan	Sindh	Baluchistan
Population (1998 Census)	132,352,279	30,439,893	6,565,885
Population (updated estimates)	199,086,000 (2015 est.)	60,000,000 (2010 est.)	8,500,000 (2014 est.)
Population Growth Rate	1.5%	2.8%	2.4%
Male/Female Distribution (2012-13)	Male: 51.4%	Male: 53.3%	Male: 53.4%
	Female: 48.6%	Female: 46.7%	Female: 46.6%
Rural/Urban Distribution (2012-13)	Rural: 66.3%	Rural: 52.5%	Rural: 75.7%
	Urban: 33.7%	Urban: 47.5%	Urban: 24.3%
Distribution by Age (2012-13)	0-14 years: 40.8%	0-14 years: 41.6%	0-14 years: 48.4%
	15-24 years: 20.6%	15-24 years: 20.5%	15-24 years: 16.4%
	25-54 years: 30.9%	25-54 years: 31.7%	25-54 years: 30.6%
	55-64 years: 4.4%	55-64 years: 4.3%	55-64 years: 3.4%
	65 and over: 3.2%	65 and over: 2.0%	65 and over: 1.2%
Literacy Rate	47.4%	50.1%	40.9%
No formal education (2012-13)	0.6%	0.6%	2.7%
College degree, post-graduate, or Ph.D. (2012-13)	3.4%	4.5%	1.5%
Unemployed Civilian Labor Force Distribution (aged 10 years and over) (2012-13)	Total: 6.2%	Total: 5.2%	Total: 3.9%
	Male: 4.2%	Male: 3.9%	Male: 3.1%
	Female: 2.1%	Female: 1.3%	Female: 0.8%
Population by Religion	Muslim: 96.3%	Muslim: 91.3%	Muslim: 98.7%
	Christian: 1.6%	Christian: 1.0%	Christian: 0.4%
	Hindu: 1.6%	Hindu: 6.5%	Hindu: 0.5%
	Others: 0.5%	Others: 1.2%	Others: 0.4%
Geographical Area (area in millions of hectares)	79.61	14.09	34.72
Cultivated Land Area as Percentage of Total Area (2012-13)	28.3%	22.9%	2.7%

Source: Prepared by CRS using information from the CIA *World Factbook 2015*, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, governments of Sindh and Balochistan, and U.S. Census Bureau

³⁷ CRS interview with a former Pakistani Ambassador to the United States, Washington, D.C., May 22, 2015.

³⁸ This table prepared by Hussein Hassan, Information Research Specialist, x7-2119.

The website of Sindh's current governor lists a host of key challenges faced by the province:

The testing challenges included the eradication of the rural-urban acrimony, inter-sectarian hostility, issues of governance, demographic diversity, low literacy percentage, low agricultural productivity, scant and deteriorating industrial units leading to low productivity and galloping unemployment. More importantly, in the post 9/11 scenario, the formidable menace of extremism and terrorism and the Madrassa-based religious bigotry had created an alarming situation.³⁹

Some of these problems are linked to the province's oftentimes dysfunctional relationship with Punjab, one in which Sindh's residents tend to feel used and underserved by their national government. Federal expropriation of Sindhi farmland for the use of non-Sindhis is a central historic and ongoing source of friction between Sindh and Punjab, as discussed above. Water disputes leave Sindhis feeling abused by their upper riparian neighbors. Although Sindh contains vast acreage of fertile farmland and is relatively rich in oil and gas resources, many of its residents find themselves suffering under "the prevalence of internal [Punjabi and Mohajir] colonialism" that seeks to "systematically exploit" their indigenous resources and perpetrate "an environmental injustice" resulting from Sindh's "subordinate and peripheral status in Pakistan."⁴⁰ Another notable challenge for Sindh continues to be improvement of its education system, especially for females. This may fuel a host of other problems. In the words of one author and longtime student of Pakistan,

[T]he population is growing ever bigger, largely because of lack of education for women; and the water is ever diminishing, largely because the people are too uneducated, apathetic, conservative, divided along tribal lines, and distrustful of one another and of the authorities to improve their agriculture or build their own local water infrastructure. If this goes on, and is not reversed by increased monsoon rains due to climate change, there is a real chance that Sindh one day will cease to exist as an area of large-scale human habitation.⁴¹

Thatta and Badin

Thatta and Badin are two of Sindh's four coastal districts (Karachi and Tharpakar are the others, see **Figure 2**). According to a USAID estimate for 2010, each district is home to about 1.6 million people, but Thatta, with a land area nearly three times as large as Badin's, has a considerably lower population density.⁴² Thatta covers nearly 7,600 square miles, making it about the size of Connecticut and Delaware combined. Badin's 2,600-square-mile land area is slightly larger than Delaware's alone. Each district holds 5 of the Sindh legislature's 168 seats, or about 3%. In Thatta, three of these are held by PML-N members and two by the PPP. In Badin, all are held by PPP members.

A 2005 World Bank assessment found fully 86% of the two district's residents consider themselves to be poor, a sentiment particularly strong among the nearly half of them living at or near the Arabian Sea coast. Decreased fresh water flows from the Indus have pushed the region's already fishing-heavy economy further toward reliance on that sector as crop and livestock farming decreased in recent decades. Greater dependence on an unreliable economic activity and diminishing fish stocks has left the agriculture sector mostly undeveloped. Land ownership is highly skewed: in Badin, 9% of households own more than 80% of the land. Only one-third of households were reported to have a separate sanitation facility (toilet)

³⁹ Official Sindh Government website at <http://www.governorsindh.gov.pk/the-governor>.

⁴⁰ Abdul Hadi, "Environmental Injustice: Exploitation of Sindh's Natural Resources in Pakistan," *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies* 4, 1, March 2015.

⁴¹ Anatol Lieven, *Pakistan: A Hard Country* (New York: Public Affairs, 2011), p 235.

⁴² See the ReliefWeb map at <http://reliefweb.int/map/pakistan/pakistan-sindh-thatta-population-density-map-september-2014>.

or access to electricity, and the great majority used wood as cooking fuel. Both districts are highly vulnerable to natural disasters, having experienced cyclones, droughts, floods, and earthquakes in recent years. Citizens commonly rue a lack of access to health and education facilities, and to sufficient supplies of drinking water.⁴³

Table 2 shows that Thatta's and Badin's overall literacy rates of 36% are notably lower than the 60% of both Pakistan and Sindh. The rates among females—at 23% and 21%, respectively—fall even further behind those of Pakistan, at 48%. Some 17% of Badin's rural females are literate, and Thatta's 19% rate in this demographic is only marginally better. **Table 3** further illuminates the situation: While 70% of both Pakistan's and Sindh's female populations have had some level of formal education, less than half of Thatta's women and one-third of Badin's women have ever attended school. In these districts' rural areas, the rate is less than one in five. **Table 4** shows that residents of Thatta and Badin also are notably more likely to report illnesses.

U.S. Foreign Assistance

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) operates projects and programs throughout Pakistan, including several dozen within Sindh communities. Infrastructure projects aimed at boosting development, economic security, and enhancing general society, include restoring electrical power stations, replacing inefficient equipment in water and waste facilities, and constructing schools and a hospital. Several programs provide grants or supplementary income to community groups, micro-entrepreneurs, farmers, and needy families, thereby building independent institutions and families, and enriching civil society. Education programs include awarding scholarships based on merit and need, and developing new university degree programs in teacher education. Programs in health are designed to improve health services for mothers and children, make contraceptives easier to obtain, and build up public health services. Other programs assist farmers, local governments, scientists, and small businesses.

USAID has a history of assisting Sindh in times of drought (2014-2015), flood (summer 2010, September 2011-March 2012), and measles outbreak (May 2012-December 2013). The agency works with international organizations to provide food, shelter, clean water, and other services to populations under the duress of natural or manmade disasters. USAID also assists Pakistan in supporting Afghan refugees who have settled in Sindh. USAID claims to be deeply invested in making Pakistan a more independent country in the future. See the **Appendix** below for a listing of U.S. assistance projects in Sindh.

⁴³ World Bank, "Socioeconomic Study and Proposal for Livelihood Improvements: Badin and Thatta Districts, Sindh, Pakistan," April 25, 2005, at <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPAKISTAN/Resources/SocioeconStudyBadinThatta.pdf>.

Appendix: Current Major USAID Projects in Pakistan

Location	Project Timeline	Project Title and Sector	Total Obligation	Project Objective
USAID Projects in Sindh				
Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	7/7/2011 – 7/6/2015	Agriculture Policy Project: Agriculture and Food Security	\$22,713,134	To improve the capacity of local decision makers to analyze and make policy on issues related to economic growth and poverty reduction.
Sindh	9/22/2010 – 9/21/2015	Anti-Fraud Hotline Project: Democracy, Human Rights and Governance	\$2,964,668	To prevent fraud, waste, and abuse in USAID projects by engaging citizens in oversight and watchdog activities.
Pakistan-wide	7/1/2009 – 9/30/2013	Benazir Income Support Program: Democracy, Human Rights and Governance	\$160,000,000	To ensure that Pakistan's neediest families receive income supplements to meet basic human needs.
Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	3/26/2009 – 3/31/2014	Energy Efficiency Project: Economic Growth and Trade	\$41,985,301	To reduce peak electricity use through the replacement of inefficient water pumps in the public and industrial sector.
Sindh, Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Gilgit Baltistan, Azad Kashmir, and the Islamabad Capital Territory	10/10/2008 – 1/31/2015	Energy Policy Project: Economic Growth and Trade	\$91,269,969	To strengthen Pakistan's energy sector by improving the country's power generation and transmission capacity.
Sindh, Baluchistan, Punjab, Islamabad Capital Territory, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	5/7/2009 – 12/31/2014	Firms Project: Science, Technology and Innovation	Not provided	To increase the profitability and incomes of small and medium-sized enterprises throughout Pakistan.
Sindh, Punjab	4/4/2011 – 8/4/2014	Grain Storage Project: Agriculture and Food Security	\$2,500,000	To support the establishment of public-private partnerships for managing, handling, and storing strategic grain reserves in Punjab and Sindh.
Sindh	5/20/2010 – 12/31/2013	Guddu Power Station Project	\$19,123,730	To restore the efficiency of the power plant lost due to aging equipment.
Sindh, Punjab, Islamabad Capital Territory, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	1/14/2011 – 4/14/2014	Health Care Management Program: Global Health	\$9,261,555	To strengthen public health services in Pakistan in the aftermath of the devolution of power from the federal to the provincial level.
Sindh	7/21/2008 – 3/31/2013	Health Services Academy Support Project: Global Health	\$5,010,532	To improve institutional capacity in Pakistan's public health sector through human resource development, collaboration with national and international universities, and evidence-based policy development.

Location	Project Timeline	Project Title and Sector	Total Obligation	Project Objective
Sindh, Punjab, Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPk), Gilgit Baltistan, and Azad Kashmir	9/2/2011 – 9/2/2012	Health Supplies Distribution Project: Global Health	Not provided	The Health Supplies Distribution Project (formerly known as DELIVER) seeks to enhance the Government of Pakistan's procurement, distribution, and logistics management systems for contraceptives.
Sindh	5/20/2010 – 3/31/2014	Jamshoro Power Station Project: Economic Growth and Trade	\$19,329,150	To restore 150 megawatts of power generation capacity at the Jamshoro Thermal Power Station.
Sindh, Baluchistan, FATA, ICT, and KPk	10/19/2007 – 6/30/2012	Links to Learning Project: Economic Growth and Trade	Not provided	The Links to Learning Project seeks to improve the quality of middle- and secondary-school education.
Pakistan-wide	6/22/2009 – 8/31/2014	Pakistan Trade Project: Economic Growth and Trade	\$37,118,147	To increase trade by facilitating improvements in Pakistan's international and regional trade environment.
Sindh, Baluchistan, Punjab, ICT, and KPk	7/15/2011 – 7/14/2016	Political Parties Development ; Democracy, Human Rights and Governance	\$21,500,000	To develop the institutional capacity of Pakistan's political parties to respond democratically and effectively to constituents' concerns.
Pakistan-wide	8/31/2010 – 8/31/2015	Small Grants and Ambassador's Fund Program: Democracy, Human Rights and Governance	\$49,988,052	To empower grassroots organizations and community groups working to strengthen civil society in Pakistan. This is accomplished through giving small grants to community organizations, allowing them to build capacity, while improving their ability to manage projects.
Pakistan-wide	9/1/2008 – 5/30/2014	Teacher Education Program: Education	\$51,923,519	Improve systems and policies that support teachers, teacher educators, and educational managers; provide support to Pakistan's Higher Education Commission and provincial departments of education, colleges, and universities in developing two new degree programs; and improve, revise, evaluate, and standardize curriculum and modules for pre-service teacher education and institutionalize the new degree programs for under-training and existing teachers.
Sindh, Baluchistan, Punjab ICT, and KPk	9/17/2010 – 9/16/2013	USAID Power Distribution Performance Improvement Program: Economic Growth and Trade	Not provided	The Power Distribution Program works with Pakistan's nine government-owned electric power distribution companies to improve their operational and financial performance.
Sindh	9/1/2011 – 1/1/2019	Sindh Basic Education Project	Not provided	increase student enrollment in primary, middle, and secondary schools in seven districts of northern Sindh and in Karachi.

Location	Project Timeline	Project Title and Sector	Total Obligation	Project Objective
Sindh, Punjab, Azad Kashmir, Baluchistan, FATA, ICT, and KPk, Gilgit Baltistan, and KPk	7/1/2004 – 3/1/2016	Merit and Need Based Scholarship Program (MNBSP): Education	Not provided	MNBSP has two key objectives: Provide learning opportunities through scholarships to disadvantaged students who meet the academic criteria for admission to 31 partner universities; and build the capacity of these universities and the Higher Education Commission in designing, implementing, and evaluating the scholarship program in a transparent and equitable manner.
Sindh, Baluchistan, ICT, KPk, Punjab	6/1/2005 – 6/1/2018	Pakistan-U.S. Science and Technology Cooperation Program: Education	Not provided	Increase the strength and breadth of cooperation and linkages between Pakistani scientists and institutions and their counterparts in the United States; improve the quality, relevance, or capacity of education and research at Pakistani institutions of science and technology; and improve the well-being of ordinary Pakistani people through innovations in science and technology.
Sindh, Baluchistan, KPk, Punjab	6/1/2009 – 9/1/2014	Entrepreneurs Project: Economic Growth and Agriculture	Not provided	To increase the incomes of micro-entrepreneurs (predominantly women) by at least 50% on average, by promoting the production and marketing of selected agricultural and nonagricultural commodities.
Sindh, Azad Kashmir, Baluchistan, Federal Capital Territory, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab	7/1/2011 – 7/1/2015	Agriculture Innovation Project: Economic Growth and Agriculture	Not provided	The program enhances food security by improving the productivity of the agricultural sector through agricultural research and innovation and dissemination of modern practices for cereals, annual and perennial horticulture, and livestock.
Sindh, Azad Kashmir, Baluchistan, Federal Capital Territory, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab	7/1/2011 – 7/1/2015	Pakistan Strategy Support Program (PSSP): Economic Growth and Agriculture	Not provided	To to strengthen economic policy capacity in key institutions in the Government of Pakistan.
Sindh, Baluchistan, ICT, Azad Kashmir, Gilgit Baltistan, FATA	11/10/2011 – 11/9/2016	Agribusiness Project: Agriculture and Food Security	\$89,412,942	The project seeks to expand investment, revenues, and employment opportunities in the agribusiness sector.
Sindh, Azad Kashmir, Baluchistan, FATA, ICT, Gilgit Baltistan, KPk, Punjab	5/1/2011 – 5/1/2016	Citizens' Voice Project: Resilience	Not provided	Foster citizen engagement with federal, provincial, and local government institutions on issues of public policy and good governance.

Location	Project Timeline	Project Title and Sector	Total Obligation	Project Objective
Sindh, Azad Kashmir, Baluchistan, Federal Capital Territory, Gilgit Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab	8/1/2010 – 8/1/2015	Gender Equity Program: Resilience	Not provided	Enhancing gender equity by expanding women's access to justice and women's human rights; increasing women's empowerment by expanding knowledge of their rights and opportunities to exercise their rights in the workplace, community, and home; combating gender-based violence; and strengthening the capacity of Pakistani organizations that advocate for gender equity, women's empowerment and the elimination of gender-based violence.
Sindh, Azad Kashmir, Baluchistan, FATA, ICT, Gilgit Baltistan, KPK, Punjab	10/1/2011 – 10/1/2016	Municipal Services Program: Resilience	Not provided	To strengthen the capacity of those provincial governments that are focused on water, sanitation, and solid waste management service delivery in the vulnerable areas, to better manage these services and meet citizens' basic needs through infrastructure upgrades and operational reforms.
Sindh, Azad Kashmir, Baluchistan, FATA, ICT, Gilgit Baltistan, KPK, Punjab	9/1/2012 – 5/1/2017	Maternal and Child Health Program: Health	Not provided	To improve the health status of Pakistani women and children by increasing access, availability, and utilization of key health services, as well as strengthen the health system as a whole.
Sindh	9/1/2011 – 10/1/2015	Health Infrastructure Improvement: Health	Not provided	Building a new hospital in Jacobabad to provide quality healthcare services for more than one million people in northern Sindh and neighboring districts of Baluchistan; building facilities to provide quality neonatal and maternal health services to 30,000 to 35,000 patients per year; and constructing and repairing primary obstetric care facilities to increase access to quality basic health services.
USAID Projects Beyond Sindh				
Baluchistan	1/1/2009 – 12/30/2015	Baluchistan Agriculture Project: Economic Growth and Trade	\$25,400,000	Increase incomes of 14,300 households (approximately 94,000 people) by 20% in more than 700 poorer communities in the several districts of Baluchistan located within 100 miles of the Afghan border.
Islamabad Capital Territory	10/1/2008 – 4/30/2012	Construction of Parliamentary Services Building: Democracy, Human Rights and Governance	\$11,391,497	To enhance the work of Pakistan's elected parliamentarians and the staff of the national parliament and national assembly by funding a purpose-built structure for the Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services.
Punjab	7/15/2011 – 7/14/2014	Dairy Project: Agriculture and Food Security	\$14,018,777	To increase the productivity and incomes of small dairy farmers in Punjab.

Location	Project Timeline	Project Title and Sector	Total Obligation	Project Objective
FATA	1/1/2010 – 12/31/2014	FATA Infrastructure Project: Working in Crises and Conflict	\$631,629,308	To improve conditions for the long-term development of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, or FATA, by constructing or rehabilitating public service infrastructure in water, energy, and irrigation systems and roads.
FATA	1/1/2011 – 9/30/2013	Gomal Zam Dam Project: Economic Growth and Trade	\$40,000,000	To mitigate Pakistan's energy shortage by adding 17.4 megawatts to the national power grid through the construction of Gomal Zam Dam.
Islamabad Capital Territory	7/1/2009 – 3/31/2016	Higher Education Commission Support Program: Education	\$90,000,000	To stabilize the higher education sector with budgetary support to universities, financing for student scholarships, and the upgrade of resources for teaching and research.
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	3/26/2010 – 12/31/2014	KP Reconstruction Program: Working in Crises and Conflict	\$164,386,807	To enhance the stabilization and development of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa by rebuilding public infrastructure for education, health, water and sanitation and increasing the capacity of the provincial government.
Punjab	5/20/2010 – 12/31/2013	Muzaffargarh Power Station Project: Economic Growth and Trade	\$15,778,195	To restore 475 megawatts to Pakistan's national power grid by funding the modernization of the thermal power station at Muzaffargarh.
Baluchistan, FATA, and Azad Kashmir	4/16/2011 – 12/31/2013	National Disaster Management Authority Information Management Support Project: Working in Crises and Conflict	\$4,720,839	To develop the capacity of the National Disaster Management Authority in Information Management.
Gilgit Baltistan	1/1/2011 – 12/31/2014	Satpara Multipurpose Dam Project: Economic Growth and Trade	\$26,000,000	To mitigate the energy shortage in Gilgit-Baltistan by adding 17.6 megawatts to the local power grid.
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa	4/30/2010 – 12/31/2013	Tarbela Dam Project: Economic Growth and Trade	\$16,500,000	To mitigate Pakistan's energy shortage by adding 128 megawatts to the national grid through the rehabilitation of Tarbela Dam.
Punjab	7/1/2011 – 8/31/2014	Women's Hostel Project: Education	\$6,653,563	To expand access to higher education for Pakistani women, particularly those from remote areas, by providing them with residential opportunities at Foreman Christian College in Lahore.

Sources: USAID Interactive Maps, accessed at <http://map.usaid.gov/> and <http://www.usaid.gov/pakistan/interactive-map> on May 4, 2015.

Notes: All projects listed here are noted as “Active” in the project page, linked from USAID’s interactive map at <http://map.usaid.gov/>.