

OMAN

Dhofari

Activity: 1962-1975

General notes

NA

Movement start and end dates

- Minahan (2002: 529f) reports Dhofari rebellions in the late 19th century as well as the late 1950s, but it is not clear whether these rebellions had separatist motives. The first evidence for organized separatist mobilization we could find is in 1962.
 - o According to Jones & Ridout (2016: 138), 1962 is when Dhofari tribesmen formed the Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF), which made claims for an independent Dhofar and proceeded to lead a Dhofari rebellion against Omani rule.
 - o According to Minahan (2002: 529), the DLF was formed only in 1963.
 - o Owtram (1999: 161), on the other hand, suggests that DLF was formed only in 1964. However, according to Owtram, precursor groups including “disgruntled mountain tribesmen” begun activities in 1962, followed by more organized groups such as the ‘Dhofar Benevolent Society’, the ‘Dhofar Soldier’s organisation’ and the local branch of the ‘Arab Nationalists’ Movement’. According to Owtram, the DLF then emerged in 1964 as a result of a merger of the previously mentioned groups. The DLF subsequently held its first conference in central Dhofar in 1965, issuing “a manifesto calling for the overthrow of the sultan and an end to foreign influence” (Owtram 1999: 161; Beckett & Pimlott 1985: 28). This is also further confirmed and corroborated by Peterson (Peterson 2007: 193ff).
 - o Overall, Minahan would suggest a start date of 1963, but the more detailed narratives in Jones & Ridout (2016) and Owtram (1999) both suggest a start date of 1962.
- A rebellion ensued these events, and in 1975, the Omanis crushed the Dhofari rebellion with the aid of Britain, Jordan, and Iran (Owtram 1999: 21). Minahan (2002: 530) suggests that reforms initiated in the 1970s “have muted support for separatism but have not ended the Dhofari demands for political, cultural, and economic autonomy.” However, while noting that separatist sentiment remains present, Minahan does not report any evidence for organized separatist activity after 1975 and we found no evidence in other sources, either. 1975 is coded as the end date. [start date: 1962; end date: 1975]

Dominant claim

- The Dhofar Liberation Front (DLF) demanded independence for the Dhofari. Jones & Ridout (2016: 138) also suggest that the dominant claim in the early days of the Dhofari movement was for an independent Dhofar. [1962-1975: independence claim]

Independence claims

- As highlighted above, independence claims were made during the Dhofari revolution, by the DLF. An article by The Baghdad Observer from 1971 confirms that DLF was making independence declarations during the reported period (1971: 1-8). [start date: 1962; end date: 1975]

Irredentist claims

NA

Claimed territory

- The territory claimed by the Dhofaris consists of the Dhofar province in southwestern Oman (Minahan 2002). We code this claim based on the Global Administrative Areas database.

Sovereignty declarations

NA

Separatist armed conflict

- In the mid-1960s, a group called the PFLO (al-Jabha al-Shaabiya li-Tahrir Uman; Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman), which grew from the DLF, started an insurgency which initially was very low intensity, with sources consistently suggesting that the death toll was below 25 (UCDP/PRIO; SSW).
- The PFLO first reached the 25 deaths threshold in 1969 according to UCDP/PRIO and remained ongoing until 1975. Sambanis & Schulhofer-Wohl (2019) include this case as a civil war between 1971-1975, though noting that the casualty rates are borderline (around 500 in total). They also provide detailed casualty statistics for the period before 1971, drawing from Peterson (2007: 222): 7 in 1967, 84 in 1968, 63 in 1969, and 27 in 1970. On this basis, we code LVIOLSD in 1968-1970 and HVIOLSD in 1971-1975.
- UCDP/PRIO suggests that PFLO was a Marxist/Socialist group whose primary objective was overthrowing the central government. Yet, according to Minahan (2002: 529f), the rebellion at least initially also had partly separatist motives. Therefore, we mark both the LVIOLSD and the HVIOLSD phases as “ambiguous”.
- [1962-1967: NVIOLSD; 1968-1970: LVIOLSD; 1971-1975: HVIOLSD]

Historical context

- Dhofar is the southernmost region of Oman, with Yemen at its western border, and is effectively cut off from the rest of Oman by a desert region, the Jiddat al-Harasis karst, inhabited mainly by Bedouin (Jones & Ridout 2016). In the 17th century the Dhofaris erected an independent sultanate, which fell to Oman the 19th century (Minahan 2002; Jones & Ridout 2016: 135). Minahan (2002: 529) suggests that the Dhofaris suffered religious and cultural discrimination under Oman and rebelled several times during the closing 19th century.
- Starting ca 1940, the Omani sultan began to bring Dhofar under central control, but Dhofar remained neglected and underdeveloped. Dhofar was disadvantaged economically, with higher taxes and tariffs imposed (Jones & Ridout 2016: 136f; Hazelton 2021).
- Minahan (2002: 529) reports that repression was rampant in Oman in the 1950s and 1960s, with newspapers, various forms of clothing (e.g., trousers), dancing, and smoking banned; these are, however, not ethnic rights restrictions as defined in the codebook.

Concessions and restrictions

- A coup d'état took place in 1970. The new Sultan proceeded to increase investment in public resources such as wells or health clinics in Dhofar (Jones & Ridout 2016: 150). UCDP suggests

that the new Sultan also gave Dhofar a measure of autonomy; however, we found no supporting evidence in the much more detailed accounts by Jones & Ridout (2016) and Hazelton (2021). The latter explicitly states that “reforms in Dhofar were limited to nonexistent” and even that the new Sultan refused to let Dhofaris participate in the provincial government.

Regional autonomy

- Minahan (2002: 530f) suggests that the Dhofari “control tribal and town councils” and that the Dhofaris do have a certain amount of autonomy on a de facto level because of government neglect; but also that “the real political power rests with the wali, the governor appointed by the Oman government.” [no regional autonomy]

De facto independence

- Dhofari rebels controlled substantial parts of Dhofar between 1968 and 1970 (Minahan 2002: 530), but it is not clear whether the criteria for de facto independence are met. Dhofar is not listed in existing datasets of de facto independent states (Caspersen 2012; Florea 2014). [no de facto independence]

Major territorial changes

NA

EPR2SDM

<i>Movement</i>	Dhofari
<i>Scenario</i>	No match
<i>EPR group(s)</i>	-
<i>Gwgroupid(s)</i>	-

Power access

- Minahan (2002: 530) suggests that Dhofar was generally neglected and we found no evidence for meaningful representation. Oman’s new sultan increasingly brought tribal leaders into government after 1975, but this is after the movement ended. [powerless]

Group size

- Minahan (2002: 527) suggests that there were approx. 250,000 Dhofaris in Oman in 2002. Meanwhile, the WB pegs Oman’s population at 2.3 million in 2002, suggesting a relative group size of a bit over 10%. Similarly, Hazelton (2021) suggests that Dhofar had a population of ca 50,000 compared to Oman’s 400,000, or 12.5%. We rely on the latter estimate as it refers to the 1960s and 1970s, when this movement was active. [0.125]

Regional concentration

- Minahan (2002: 527) suggests that the Dhofaris made up 79% of the population of the Governate of Dhofar in 2002, where >85% of all Dhofaris in Oman lived at the time. [regional concentration]

Kin

- The Dhofaris are Sunni Arabs (Minahan 2002: 527f) while the Oman's majority group are Ibadi Arabs (Minahan 2016: 126). Oman is the only country on earth where the Ibadi Muslim school dominates (MRGI). We code transborder ethnic kin with Sunni Arabs in other countries, such as UAE, Yemen, and Saudi Arabia. Notably, the Dhofaris have especially close ties to the Mahra, a Sunni Arab group across the border from Dhofar in Yemen (Minahan 2016: 256). [kin in neighboring country]

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