

**Forum:** The United Nations Membership Council (UNMC)

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## **TOPIC 5: The Membership of Balochistan**

### **I. Introduction to the Topic**

Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan, forming 44% of the country's land mass. It is home to the Baloch people, majority of which are Sunni Muslims and speak Balochi. It is divided into 30 districts with Quetta as its capital. Historically, Balochistan used to provide a land route to the Indus Valley and Babylonian civilisations. Balochistan, formerly known as Kalat, gained independence from British colonial rule on 11th August 1947. The Indian Independence Act of 1947 gave all princely states the option of joining either India or Pakistan. Any princely state that did not make the choice by 15th August 1947 would remain autonomous, which Kalat eventually decided. However, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, governor general of Pakistan, threatened the Khan of Kalat, Yar Khan, to merge with Pakistan by using the Pakistani army. Although Yar Khan agreed, Pakistan forcefully took over after 18 days in late 1947. Yar Khan and Baloch leaders were all imprisoned. Balochistan was recognised as a Pakistani province in June 1948. However, Yar Khan's brother escaped to Afghanistan and began a violent conflict to regain independence leading to years of Baloch Insurgency.

Balochistan's international importance lies in Pakistan's economic corridor with China, one-third of which passes through Balochistan. China has invested more than \$60 billion in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Before that, China was already investing in projects in Gwadar Port and copper and gold mining projects in Chagai District. This has led to reports of exploitation. Baloch nationalists fear that China's increased involvement will lead to resource theft and the influx of outside workers can result in Balochs becoming a minority in their own homeland. However, the United Nations can interfere and lead Balochistan to self-authority as stated in Article 73 of the UN Charter, 'to develop self-government, to take due account of the political aspirations of the peoples, and to assist them in the progressive development.'

At a national level, Pakistan is seen to be highly dependent on Balochistan's natural resources which it is using for foreign projects with countries such as China and Canada, as well as to provide energy supplies to other provinces. However, despite this, Balochistan's GDP forms only 3.7% of the national income and the GDP per capita stands at \$710 annually. Moreover, poverty rates have increased from 48% in 2001 to 58% in 2017, signifying a missing link between Balochistan's rich resources and underprivileged population.

The local context of the case of Balochistan's independence is by far the most distressing and of utmost importance. The region suffers from numerous issues that have led Balochistan to be called 'a neglected province where the majority population lacks basic amenities.' Some of the deeply entrenched issues include abuse of human rights, enforced disappearances, violence against women, exploitation of resources, growing terrorism and a new insecurity due to China's direct involvement in the CPEC. Gaining independence can be a viable solution because it is argued that most of these issues are inflicted by the central government or the discontent Balochs.

## II. Definition of Key Terms & Concepts

### TOPIC 5: The membership of Balochistan

#### Definition of Key Terms

**China-Pakistan Economic Corridor:** The CPEC is a bilateral project between China and Pakistan that was established on 20th April, 2015. Its purpose is to develop Pakistan's infrastructure and transportation capabilities as well as make it easier for China to trade and reduce its dependence on the Middle East for energy supplies. The CPEC connects the ports of Gwadar and Karachi in Pakistan to Xinjiang in China.

Despite the expected profitability for both partners, this project has made the Baloch people even more alarmed and insecure about their treatment. Some of their concerns include damage to their fishing industries, resource theft and a possibility of Balochs becoming a minority if outside workers are invited. As a result, rebel groups like Majeed Brigade are working to weaken China's influence over the region. In order to protect China's investment, the Pakistan government is militarising Balochistan and Baloch nationalists are resisting again, fueling a dramatic humanitarian crisis.

**Insurgency:** It is when a group of people rebel against the central authority and try to gain authority over and control of a region.

Currently, in Balochistan's separatist movement, there are 3 main insurgent parties. [The Free Baloch Movement](#) held two protests in the UK and Germany to raise awareness about the 'Balochistan Occupation Day' on March 27, 2022. Another one is [Baloch Republican Party](#) that organised a campaign regarding human right abuses in Washington before Prime Minister Imran

Khan's US visit in 2022. Finally, the largest party, the [Baloch National Movement](#) called for the UN to send a fact-finding mission to Balochistan in the 51st session of the UNHRC.

**Human Rights:** The United Nations defines human rights as 'rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.'

Although the international human rights law requires all governments to maintain these human rights for citizens, the situation in Balochistan is very much different from the ideal despite being abundant in natural resources. The region has the lowest literacy and mortality rates in Pakistan. 71% of houses are poor compared to the national average of 37%. The Baloch people claim that the military deployed in the region loots homes, leaves dead bodies on streets and conducts airstrikes.

### **III. Key Stakeholders**

**China:** China has invested excessively in the CPEC and Gwadar Port projects. Gwadar holds strategic importance because it is an important route of oil supplies and is expected to serve as a transit of goods for Afghanistan, Central Asia and the Middle East. The CPEC connects Kashgar to the Xinjiang region in China and is expected to save \$2 billion for China if it imports half of its oil supplies via this energy channel. China has political reasons as well since it seeks to stop its dependence on energy supplies from the Middle East through the strait of Malacca which can be blocked by the United States. Investing in Gwadar can also help China succeed in their 'Open up the West' strategy where it seeks to develop its western regions like Xijiang by giving them access routes to global trade.

**Pakistan:** The CPEC is the largest direct foreign investment ever made in Pakistan and accounts for nearly 20% of its GDP. Ethnic minorities are discontent with Pakistan's division of investment opportunities and profits, which it mainly gives to Punjab, its more populous region. Pakistan is a crucial stakeholder because the government has a controversial past of exploiting and threatening the Baloch whether it be through its occupation, which Pakistan has denied; deployment of troops or human rights violations against the Balochs.

**Balochistan:** Balochistan is seeking independence for a series of different reasons. Firstly, the region feels marginalised since the Balochs have little to no say in the political and military

decisions made in Islamabad. Secondly, the citizens still claim that they were forcefully integrated into Pakistan and denied autonomy. Additionally, Balochistan suffers from socio-economic underdevelopment despite contributing significant reserves of natural resources. The military action by the Pakistan army to suppress pro-independence movements and China's rapid investment are also perceived as threats.

**Afghanistan:** 10% of the Baloch live in southern Afghanistan, 20% reside in southeastern Iran with 70% living in Pakistan. Many Pakistani Baloch are escaping the insurgency and going to the Afghanistan side. In their migration, the Asian Human Rights Commission has reported more than 100 bodies found in mass graves which may show the fatalities of military operations. One of the victims, Sharif, who fled to Afghanistan recalls his brother dying and his father going missing. Pakistan has denied these claims and states that only 17 bodies have been found. Many organisations including the International Committee of Justice, Amnesty international and Human Rights Watch have deplored Pakistan for abducting Baloch people.

**Iran:** Balochs have been victims to discrimination in Iran as well due to their ethnicity and for following Sunni Islam. Their leader, Molavi Abdolhamid, has recently voiced his frustration of the Iranian government killing Sunni anti-regime protesters and has proposed an independence referendum. On September 30, 2022, the Iranian forces violently suppressed the Baloch from protesting, killing 90 people in what came to be known as 'Bloody Friday'. In a report by Iran Human Rights, Baloch prisoners comprised 21% of the executions in 2021 even though they only form 2-6% of the Iranian population. There have been recent hints of Iran and Pakistan increasing cooperation to prevent Baloch nationalism. On November 26, 2022, 9 Balochi fighters were killed in a drone strike by the Pakistani Army. The Baloch Liberation Army has blamed Iran for supplying these drones.

**India:** Pakistan has accused India for giving material support and training to Baloch nationalists. In fact, in 2016, Indian naval officer, Kulbhushan Jadhav, was sentenced to death by the Pakistan government for allegedly aiding the formation of Baloch terrorist cells. India and Pakistan's differences have existed for decades but India has denied all accusations from Islamabad. Surprisingly, in his 2016 Independence Day speech, Prime Minister Modi had said 'people of Balochistan, Gilgit, Pakistan Occupied Kashmir have thanked me, have expressed gratitude, and expressed good wishes for me.'

#### **IV. Key Issues including Background Information**

**Baloch people's fear of the CPEC:** Baloch insurgents have begun to express their disagreement through violence by blowing up gas pipelines that brought resources to other parts of Pakistan and targeting Chinese workers. This has led to Islamabad trying to dominate the region through military action, increasing disappearances and extrajudicial killings. A new insurgent group called Majeed Brigade has been established and it aims to remove China from Balochistan which makes Islamabad fear losing the close ally.

**Resource Exploitation:** Balochistan was the largest producer of gas in Pakistan however most of it was supplied to Punjab and Sindh and the region received the lowest royalty rate in gas-producing provinces of Pakistan. Balochistan boasts the world's largest reserves of copper and gold and big stores of coal, oil and natural gas. However, for instance, the Metallurgical Corporation of China has been mining in the region since 2012 and takes 50% of the profits, 48% goes to the federal government and Balochistan receives just 2%. In return, Balochistan is having to pay for dangerous impacts including unhealthy workers, the lowest literacy and mortality rate in Pakistan, contaminated water and over-extraction of resources. In the Gwadar Port, most of the sea is controlled by China and the Pakistani Army for infrastructure construction and large-scale fishing, giving local fishermen very little space for their activities.

**Human Rights:** Due to military intervention by Pakistan in order to suppress pro-independence movements, the human rights commission of Balochistan released a shocking report in 2021. According to which, the Counter-Terrorism Department of the Pakistani Police had performed 47 fake encounters, 442 Balochs had disappeared and 336 people were killed. Students and activists were the primary target of this abuse especially because they sympathised with the independence movements. 170 of the missing people were released after being tortured however, 272 victims remained unknown. Furthermore, the Senate Standing Committee on Interior has introduced a law where if families of disappeared victims are not able to provide evidence to hold the state responsible, they can face 5 years in prison and a fine of PKR 10,000.

**Terrorism:** Terrorism is re-emerging in Balochistan as at least 20 soldiers have been killed in conflicts with suspected militants. The Balochistan Liberation Front killed 10 army soldiers at a security checkpoint on 28th January 2022. Terror groups have been taking advantage of the

Balochistan region due to several factors: it is very big, rebellion from Baloch separatists and loose control of borders. While Pakistan has blamed India for foreign intervention, Baloch leaders say that the Pakistan Inter-Services Intelligence is offering terrorist groups like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan a safe haven in Quetta.

## V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

### Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event
11th August 1947	A treaty is signed between the Khan of Kalat and the Muslim League recognising Kalat as an independent state.
15th August 1947	Kalat announces its independence. However, Mohammad Ali Jinnah sends the Pakistani Army to invade Kalat. Kalat accedes into Pakistan on 1st April 1948.
1948	Yar Khan's brother, Prince Abdul Karim rejects Pakistan's occupation and declares an insurgency with the support of many tribes. However Pakistan stopped this movement and imprisoned Karim.
October, 1957	Baloch leaders request the President of Pakistan to make Balochistan independent. The President refused, which started another insurgency that led to deaths of thousands of Balochs.
1973-1974	General Tikka Khan is sent to control the rising insurgency in Balochistan. He deployed 80,000 soldiers and killed more than 16,000 Balochs. He was named the 'Butcher of Balochistan'.
2008	The grandson of another pro-independence supporter, Akbar Bugti, Brahumdag Bugti starts the Baloch Republican Party but has self-exiled in Switzerland because he fears persecution.

## VI. Possible Challenges & Solutions

**Baloch people's fear of the CPEC:** Rebellion amongst the Baloch people can only be assuaged if they become the major recipients of the profits generated from this foreign project. Pakistan must create opportunities for Balochs to be equally involved in the project, its decision making as well as profit sharing. Doing so can not only secure Balochistan's interests, it can also put an end to conflict in the region such as when Chinese workers were being attacked.

**Resource Exploitation:** Pakistan's treatment of Balochistan and the profit it earns in return of working to supply energy and natural resources is unjustified. Pakistan has recently made an effort to improve this through an agreement with Barrick Gold corporation that promises 25% profit shares to Balochistan. Other actions are equally important and include creating tube wells to give access to clean water, job creation and necessary infrastructure construction for ensuring steady growth in the region.

**Human Rights:** The international community should have no tolerance of the abuse of any people worldwide and thus, the UN and member states must come together to build pressure on Pakistan to justify or remove military deployment in Balochistan. Peace-keeping missions and fact-finding missions are some other methods that the UN can adopt to seek further clarity and increase protective measures.

**Terrorism:** Since political unrest in Balochistan is a contributing factor of wide-spread terrorism, meeting the Baloch people's demands for sovereignty or improving living conditions and convincing the Balochs to agree on alternative solutions is key. However, in the meantime, the UN can refer to the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) to find effective ways of maintaining multilateral cooperation and enhancing border security.

## **VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing including Research**

During the resolution writing period as well as lobbying, the member states of China and Pakistan's close allies need to work together to argue against Balochistan's independence and consider approaches of developing the region to minimise the insurgencies. Other countries on the other hand can point to the obvious lack of human rights and exploitation in the region and use it as a guide to determining their stance. India will be expected to use this as an opportunity to weaken the country it has often been at war with. The USA may be especially interested in Balochistan's independence to use it as leverage against China and Pakistan

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## IX: Additional Resources

### China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

A planned \$62 billion China-Pakistan economic corridor will link Gwadar, Pakistan, to China's far-western Xinjiang district.



REUTERS

Source: Pakistan's Ministry of Planning, Development & Reform



[Source](#)