

# Insurgency in Balochistan

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## Context

Pakistani security forces has recently repulsed a militant attack on a complex outside its strategic port of Gwadar in Balochistan province.

## About

- Balochistan is the biggest Pakistani province and is moderately populated and impoverished as compared to the rest of the country.
- Its area in addition to abundance of natural resources, particularly oil, make it strategically vital for Pakistan.
- The province has been the site of a sequence of bloody insurgencies, brutal state repression, and an enduring Baloch nationalist movement since 1948.

## Background of the Insurgency

- At the dawn of India's Independence in 1947, the location now referred to as Balochistan was partitioned into 4 princely states: Kalat, Kharan, Las Bela, and Makaran.
- These states have been presented with three options: merge with India, be part of Pakistan, or hold their independence.
- Under the influence of Muhammad Ali Jinnah, Kharan, Las Bela, and Makaran selected to become a part of Pakistan but Kalat decided to remain Independent.
- On August 4, 1947, a meeting was convened in Delhi, and Jinnah supported Khan of Kalat's choice for independence.
  - On August 11, 1947, a treaty was signed between Kalat and the Muslim League,

recognising Kalat as an independent state, and promising that the Muslim League would respect Balochistan's independence.

- Despite conferences with Mountbatten and reputation of Kalat's popularity as an unbiased sovereign state, the British issued a memorandum mentioning that the Khan of Kalat was not in a role to undertake the international responsibilities of an independent state.
- On March 26, the Pakistan Army moved into the Baloch coastal area of Pasni, Jiwani and Turbat.
  - Khan had no option but to conform to Jinnah's terms to merge with Pakistan.

## Insurgency and Discontent

- The forceful integration of Kalat into Pakistan sowed the seeds of discontent and resistance among the Baloch people.
- Many Baloch nationalists considered the annexation as a betrayal of their autonomy and an infringement upon their cultural identity.
- The region saw many insurgencies for the Independence from Pakistan but the Pakistan state managed to suppress the resistance.
- Once a proud sovereign state, Balochistan is now the most-neglected and poverty-ridden province of Pakistan.
- Despite being the largest province and rich in minerals, Balochistan accounts for nearly 4 percent of Pakistan's economy.

## India's Stand on Balochistan

- India's role in Balochistan is complex and prompted by various factors including geopolitics, regional stability, and its relationship with Pakistan.
- India and Pakistan have a protracted-standing war over the region of Kashmir, and any overt involvement by India in Balochistan could improve tensions further.
- India has been accused by Pakistan of helping Baloch separatist movements, allegations that India has continually denied.
- India continues that it helps the right to self-willpower for the people of Balochistan but does not interfere in Pakistan's internal affairs.
- Overall, India's stance on Balochistan involves a delicate balance between expressing concerns about human rights violations and retaining diplomatic members of the family with Pakistan.
- Any sizeable shifts in this stance would probably depend on modifications in the geopolitical landscape of the region.

**Source: The Hindu**

### UPSC Mains Practice Questions

**Q.What is the importance of developing Chabahar Port by India? (2017)**

- a. India's trade with African countries will enormously increase.

- b. India's relations with oil-producing Arab countries will be strengthened.
- c. India will not depend on Pakistan for access to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- d. Pakistan will facilitate and protect the installation of a gas pipeline between Iraq and India.

*Ans: "c"*