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Baloch - Pakistan Issue

Why in news?

The Majeed Brigade of the separatist group Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) has claimed responsibility for recent attack on a complex outside Pakistan's strategic Gwadar Port.

Why Balochistan remains problem in Pakistan?

Balochistan, in Pakistan's southwest, is the country's largest and most sparsely populated province.


- **Population-** Ethnic Baloch live in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, the Baloch nationalism traces its roots to the early decades of the 20th century, when new international borders came to be drawn in the region.
- **Accession of Balochistan-** At the time of Partition, Balochistan was composed of multiple chieftdoms under British influence. Ahmed Yar Khan, chief of Kalat, sought independence for his people but was compelled to accede in 1948 after Pakistan's invasion of Kalat.
- **Insurgency-** The forced accession of Balochistan led to a series of insurgencies characterized by violent confrontations between Baloch nationalists and the Pakistani state.
- **State repression-** Pakistani security forces have been accused of brutal repression, including extrajudicial killings, torture, and enforced disappearances of Baloch activists, journalists, and civilians.

Amnesty International report from 2011 highlighted the use of 'kill and dump' strategies by Pakistani forces

- **Ethnic differences-** The conflict's persistence can be attributed to ethnic differences as Balochistan's people have a distinct history, language, and culture, which sets them apart from Punjabis or Sindhis.
- **Power imbalance-** Pakistan's formation is based on religion led to skewed power dynamics among different Muslim ethnicities this could be witnessed from Punjab landlords as they held significant influence over the bureaucracy.
- **Economic injustice-** Despite Balochistan's significant natural resources, including oil reserves and strategic locations such as Gwadar Port, the Baloch people have not

reaped the benefits.

- **Marginalization-** Economic disparities, including unemployment and preferential treatment of outsiders in job opportunities, have fueled resentment among the Baloch population.
- **Growing militancy-** Baloch nationalist groups, including the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), have formed alliances with Islamist organizations like the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Islamic State.
- **Political turmoil-** In 1974 then Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was assassinated as he was unwilling to grant significant autonomy to Balochistan situation, this marked the significant violence for nationalism.
- **Majeed Brigade-** It is a dedicated suicide squad within the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) which has been responsible for carrying out high-profile attacks targeting security personnel, government officials, and infrastructure, including Chinese interests in Pakistan.



BALOCHISTAN FACTS

Accession

The rulers of the princely state Khanate of Kalat, a major constituent of Balochistan, refused to join Pakistan in 1947. It was annexed to Pakistan in a military operation in 1948 and Yar Khan, the then ruler, signed the treaty of accession while his brothers and followers declined to surrender

Insurgency

After the 1948 military action, rebellion crisis erupted in 1958, in 1962-63 and 1973-77. Pakistan has even used its air force against the Baloch people to counter insurgency. Fresh tensions started with General Pervez Musharraf coming to power in Pakistan in 1999. There were large scale military build-up in the region which rebels fought against

Strategic Importance

- Balochistan is a mineral rich state and holds immense revenue potential for Pakistan
- China has proposed economic corridor to link Pakistani port of Gwadar with Kashgar, a trading hub in western China
- Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline is planned to go through Balochistan

Separatist Groups

- Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA)
- The Baloch Republican Party
- Baloch Liberation Front

Source: Media reports

KBK Infographics

Why India's role is significant in Baloch-Pakistan issue?

- **Strategic location-** Balochistan is a region that spans across Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, and has a strategic position at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, a vital waterway for global oil trade.

- **Maritime connectivity**- Balochistan also has access to the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean, making it a potential hub for maritime connectivity and trade.
- **Geopolitical dynamics**- Balochistan is home to Baloch minority which is strategically important for the global powers that are competing for influence in Central Asia and the Middle East.
- **New great game**- It refers to the rivalry and competition among regional and global powers for influence and resources in Central and South Asia, especially in Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries.
- **China factor**- China has a strategic interest in Gwadar, a port city in Balochistan, as part of its Belt and Road Initiative and its naval ambitions in the Indian Ocean.
- **Security concerns**- Balochistan's proximity to Afghanistan, where the [Taliban regime](#) has recently taken over, adds to the complexity and uncertainty to the regional security dynamics.
- **Change in foreign policy**- India as a rising power with growing economic and security interests in the region, needs to rethink its traditional neutrality and passive approach in the Middle East and Central Asia.
- **Chabahar port**- It is situated in Iran, the port is developed by India, it directly competes with Pakistan's China funded Gwadar port, keeping a check on growing China's influence in the neighbourhood region.

Quick facts

Gwadar port

- **Location-** It is situated on the Arabian Sea at Gwadar in Balochistan province of Pakistan.
- It is the nearest warm-water seaport to the landlocked, but hydrocarbon rich, Central Asian Republics, as well as Afghanistan.
- **Strategic connectivity-** It is deep sea port that connects South Asia with Central Asia, Middle East, Africa and Europe.
- **Operational control-** China since 2013.



- **Significance-** It is the lynchpin of [China-Pakistan Economic Corridor](#) (CPEC) plan, and is considered to be a link between the Belt and Road Initiative and the Maritime Silk Road projects.
- **CPEC-** It aims to connect the deep-sea Pakistani ports of Gwadar and Karachi to China's Xinjiang province and beyond by overland routes.

References

1. [Indian Express- Attack on Gwadar port](#)
2. [Indian Express- Majeed brigade carried out Gwadar attack](#)



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