# CPEC and the Baloch Insurgency

Click here for CPEC Part I and here for Part II

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## What is the issue?

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- The CPEC is a 15-year project between Pakistan and China, which aims to connect the ancient Chinese trading town Kashgar with Pakistan's deep-sea Gwadar port via PoK through a network of highways, railways and oil and gas pipelines and fibre optic cables.
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- Gwadar is the crown jewel of CPEC and Balochistan is the home to Gwadar port.
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- Yet Balochistan stands to gain little from the massive project, despite being in desperate need of economic opportunity.
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- The province's share in the CPEC is a mere 0.5%.
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## What are the administrative units of Pakistan?

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The administrative units of Pakistan consist of four provinces, one federal capital territory, two autonomous and disputed territories, and a group of federally administered tribal areas.

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## Who are Baloch people?

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- Baloch people are an ethno-linguistic group mainly found in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan.
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- Balochistan region covers Balochistan Province in southwestern Pakistan, Sistan and Baluchestan Province in southeastern Iran, and the Balochistan region of southern Afghanistan.
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- Baloch nationalism is a movement that claims the Baloch people in the region form a distinct nation.
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- The movement propagates the view that Muslims are not a nation and that ethnic loyalty must surpass religious loyalty
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- The Insurgency in Balochistan is a guerrilla war waged by Baloch nationalists against the governments of Pakistan and Iran in the region.
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## What is the reason for insurgency?

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- 70% of people in Balochistan live in poverty.
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- The maternal death rate in Pakistan is 278 per 100,000, whereas in Balochistan it stands at 785.
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- Natural gas was discovered at Sui in Balochistan, yet major parts of the province are still deprived of natural gas.
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- It’s important to understand that the violence in Balochistan is not just because of terrorism.
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- The insurgents are mostly local people longing for their constitutional rights and welfare.
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- Therefore most of the insurgent movements in Balochistan have been linked with deprivation and underdevelopment.
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- The division of CPEC benefits repeats the same mistake, where the people of

Balochistan are not allowed to benefit from the province's own advantages.
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## What is the problem in Pakistan's approach?

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- Pakistan's government has generally regarded Brahamdagh Bugti, the alleged leader-in-exile of the Baloch Republican Army, as the sole representative of the Baloch conflict, particularly pointing to Bugti's India-centric policy.
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- Also Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi made remarks on Balochistan last year.
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- Therefore the Pakistani government and military officials tend to blame the violence in Balochistan on Indian meddling in the province.
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- But to truly solve the problems in Balochistan, Pakistan's focus must be inward.
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## What should be done?

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- The state needs to differentiate sub-nationalists from the terrorist outfits operating from within Balochistan.
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- Terrorist organisations need to be dealt with accordingly as per the national counterterrorism strategies.
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- But the Sub-national groups should be encouraged to come into the **national fold** by addressing legitimate concerns.
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- If the violence still gets out of hand, then counter-insurgency (COIN) strategies can be employed.
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- The guilty should be subject to normal court proceedings.
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- Media coverage in the region should be increased rather than the current situation of reporters going missing from Balochistan.

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- Pakistani authorities must ensure that CPEC doesn’t repeat the earlier injustice meted out to the native Balochs. Balochistan must get its fair share of the economic corridor.
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**Source: Diplomat**

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