

## Development and Militarization in Balochistan, Pakistan

Shakoor Ahmad Wani 

**Abstract:** This article examines the interplay of development, militarization and culture of impunity in Balochistan. It contends that the State's pursuit of large-scale infrastructure projects is intensifying the conflict. Balochistan has increasingly been positioned as the potential fulcrum of Pakistan's economic revival due to its vast, untapped resources and significant Chinese investments. While this vision seems promising, it has heightened Baloch anxieties and resistance. Large development initiatives bring about socio-economic disruptions, fuelling existing anti-State sentiment. The article argues that the imperative to protect expanding economic assets has enabled the region's further militarization, engendering an environment wherein the security-intelligence apparatus employs force inordinately and arbitrarily with impunity.

**Keywords:** Militarization; Development; CPEC; COIED; Impunity; Accountability

### Introduction

Balochistan is the clichéd paradox of a large territory with a sparse population in an otherwise densely populated Pakistan. Its underwhelming demographics render it invisible at the federal level, but the geopolitical location and a history of rebellions against the central authority make it conspicuous in the State's strategic thinking. Pakistan's majoritarian democracy, wherein the smaller provinces send the least number of representatives to the National Assembly, means Balochistan's voice carries the least heft. This system also disincentivises major national political parties from sustained political engagement with Balochistan. Prominent political leaders rarely visit the province during elections or otherwise. The few times they do, it is usually to buy the allegiances of elected members as the province has a disreputable record of horse-trading. Balochistan, thus, remains perennially absent from the national political discourse, but dominates news about terror and resistance.

Balochistan's political marginalization is compensated by its geo-political location. Its international borders with Afghanistan and Iran and a sprawling coastline that sits astride the Strait of Hormuz make the province strategically significant. Its vast natural and marine resources, a deep-sea port and now the multi-billion dollar infrastructure project packaged as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), add to its economic profile. As an economically and strategically important region, but electorally insignificant at the national level, and part of a political culture in which elites scramble to trade their loyalties for patronage, Balochistan affords the

---

**Dr. Shakoor Ahmad Wani** teaches International Relations at Islamic University of Science and Technology, Awantipora, Kashmir. He holds a PhD in South Asian Studies from the school of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India.