Editorial of the Day – 07.02.2026

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1. Cycles of revolt- On Pakistan and the Baloch rebels (TH)

General Studies 3- Internal Security
Topic- Security challenges and their management in border areas.
Sub Topic- Linkages of organized crime with terrorism; Role of external state and non-state actors in creating challenges to internal security.

Introduction

Baluchistan, Pakistan's largest and most resource-rich province, is currently witnessing a severe intensification of its long-standing insurgency. The region has grabbed international headlines due to a series of coordinated militant attacks by separatist groups and heavy-handed military reprisals by the Pakistani state. This "Cycle of Revolt" is driven by a complex mix of historical grievances, economic exclusion from multi-billion-dollar projects like the CPEC, and allegations of severe human rights violations, posing a significant challenge to regional stability and strategic projects like the Gwadar port.

Geographic and Strategic Profile

Baluchistan is the strategic pivot of Pakistan's geography, offering connectivity to the Middle East and Central Asia.

Geography

Size- Largest province, covering ~44% of Pakistan's land area (~347,190 sq km).
Borders- Shares critical borders with Iran (West) and Afghanistan (Northwest), and has a long coastline along the Arabian Sea (South).
Topography- Diverse landscape featuring the Sulaiman and Kirthar mountains, Chagai hills (site of nuclear tests), and the arid Kharan Desert.
Climate- Arid to semi-arid with extreme temperature variations (hot summers, cold highland winters).
Resources- Rich in natural capital including Coal, Copper, Gold (Reko Diq mine), Chromite, and Natural Gas.

Strategic Assets

a. Gwadar Port- A deep-sea port that is the crown jewel of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).
b. Rivers- Dasht, Hingol, and Zhob (mostly seasonal).

The Current Crisis- Escalation of Violence

The province has seen a shift from low-level insurgency to high-intensity, coordinated warfare.

Recent Attacks (Jan 31)- The Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) launched coordinated strikes, resulting in the deaths of over 30 civilians and 18 security personnel.
Military Reprisal- The Pakistani military responded with large-scale operations, reportedly killing 150 Baloch fighters. However, these reactive measures have historically failed to secure long-term peace.

Tactical Shift

a. Consolidation- Rebel groups, including the BLA and the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), have formed an umbrella organization called Baloch Raaji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS) to execute unified operations.
b. Persistence- Despite operations following incidents like the Jaffar Express hijacking (March 2025), the insurgency remains resilient.

Drivers of the Insurgency

The unrest is fuelled by a combination of internal suppression and regional instability.

State Coercion- The Pakistani state's prolonged reliance on brute force rather than political engagement has hardened resistance.
The 'Taliban' Effect- The security situation along the tribal borderlands deteriorated significantly after the Taliban takeover in Kabul.
Operational Void- Baloch rebels and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) are exploiting the chaotic security environment to launch hit-and-retreat attacks.

Economic Grievances & Strategic Context

A sense of "relative deprivation" is central to the conflict; locals feel they are owners of a rich land but live in poverty.
The CPEC Dilemma- Baluchistan hosts the flagship $60 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Locals perceive CPEC as an exploitative project where jobs and resources go to outsiders (primarily from Punjab or China) while they face checkpoints and displacement.
Resource Exploitation- Disputes exist over the extraction of minerals (Gold, Copper) and proposed deals with foreign firms (including American companies). Lack of Transparency- There is a severe lack of transparency in how revenues from these projects are shared with the local population.

Human Rights & State Response

The state's counter-insurgency strategy has drawn international criticism.
"Kill and Dump" Policy- Crackdowns have led to widespread allegations of enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and arbitrary detentions of activists and students.
External Blame Game- Islamabad frequently blames India for fomenting unrest to deflect from its own governance failures, often without providing verifiable evidence.
Accountability Deficit- There is a near-total lack of internal accountability for military excesses in the province.

Historical Patterns

Recurring Conflict- Since accession in 1948, Baluchistan has witnessed five major rebellions.
Failed Strategy- The state's response has consistently been military-centric, which achieves only temporary lulls in violence before the next, more intense cycle of revolt begins.

Way Forward- The Path to Peace

To break the cycle, a paradigm shifts from "Security-centric" to "People-centric" is required.
Political Reconciliation- Prioritize dialogue with Baloch nationalist groups over military elimination.
Economic Inclusion- Ensure transparent development where local communities are primary beneficiaries of CPEC and mineral projects. Address the feeling of economic exclusion by guaranteeing a fair share of royalties.
Rule of Law- End the practice of enforced disappearances. Monitor and audit security operations to prevent human rights abuses.
Democratic Engagement- Encourage local participation in decision-making to reduce political alienation.

Conclusion

The turmoil in Baluchistan is a stark reminder that military action alone cannot extinguish an insurgency rooted in genuine political and economic grievances. Sustainable peace requires Pakistan to dismantle its coercive apparatus and adopt a strategy of inclusion, transparency, and accountability. Without a political solution that respects the rights of the Baloch people, the province risks remaining a zone of perpetual conflict, threatening the stability of the entire region.
Source- https-//www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/cycles-of-revolt-on-pakistan-and-the-baloch-rebels/article70600138.ece

2. Oil and beyond- With Russia, India has to balance old ties, new realities (IE)

General Studies 2- International Relation

Topics- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

Sub Topic- India's Foreign Policy – Strategic Autonomy and Balancing Power Blocs.

Introduction

The delicate balance between India's Energy Security and Global Geopolitics has come into sharp focus following recent US claims linking tariff reductions to a potential halt in India's Russian oil imports. While India has significantly benefited from discounted Russian crude since the Ukraine conflict, evolving geopolitical pressures and sanctions are reshaping its energy basket. The Indian government maintains that its policy is guided by "energy security and diversification" rather than political pressure, highlighting its commitment to Strategic Autonomy.

The Shift in India's Energy Basket

Pre-Conflict Status- Before the Ukraine war, Russian oil accounted for less than 2% of India's total crude imports due to high logistics costs.

Peak Dependence (2025)- Driven by deep discounts, Russia's share surged to 35–40% of India's oil imports at its peak.

Current Status (Jan 2026)- Russia remains the largest supplier, accounting for ~22% of imports, though volumes are declining.

Economic Buffer- Cheap Russian oil played a crucial role in-

a. Managing domestic inflation.
b. Reducing the fiscal deficit.
c. Keeping fuel prices stable during global volatility.

Recent Decline- Sanctions & Market Trends

The decline in imports is driven more by operational constraints than a shift in policy.

Sanctions Impact- US sanctions on major Russian entities like Rosneft and Lukoil have complicated payments and shipping, causing imports to drop from 2.09 million barrels per day (bpd) in June 2025 to ~1.16 million bpd in January 2026.

Locked-in Contracts- Despite pressure, immediate cessation is impossible as Indian refiners have booked cargoes through March–April 2026.

Future Projections- Analysts predict a "calibrated reduction" rather than a total halt, with imports likely stabilizing around 500,000 bpd (approx. 10% of total imports).

Structural Dependence- Nayara Energy, which processes 400,000 bpd and is partly owned by Rosneft, remains structurally dependent on Russian crude.

Challenges in Replacing Russian Oil

Replacing Russian crude is not just a geopolitical decision but a technical and economic challenge.

Crude Compatibility- Russian/West Asian Oil- Mostly Medium-Sour crude, which Indian refineries are designed to process. US Oil- Mostly Light-Sweet crude, which yields different by-products and may not optimize Indian refinery margins.

Logistical Costs- Shipping oil from the US to India takes much longer and costs double compared to routes from the Persian Gulf or Russia.

Supply Constraints

a. Venezuela- While its crude is suitable, production is capped at ~1 million bpd with high US domestic demand.
b. West Asia- Reliance on traditional suppliers (Iraq, Saudi Arabia) risks concentration risk and reduced bargaining power.

Strategic Autonomy & Geopolitical Balancing

India's stance is a textbook example of Realpolitik.

Sovereign Decision Making- India resists external coercion, maintaining that energy purchases are sovereign economic choices essential for a country importing 85% of its oil needs.

Balancing Act

a. With the US- India manages relations to avoid secondary sanctions while negotiating on tariffs.
b. With Russia- Maintaining energy ties preserves a long-standing defence partnership and prevents Russia from drifting entirely into China's orbit.

MEA's Stance- The Ministry of External Affairs emphasizes "Diversification without Dependence," rejecting alignment-driven exclusion of any specific country.

Way Forward- A Multi-Pronged Strategy

Calibrated Reduction- India is likely to pursue a gradual, market-driven reduction in Russian imports rather than an abrupt political halt.

Diversification- Expanding long-term contracts with diverse suppliers (e.g., Brazil, Guyana, Africa) to mitigate supply shocks.

Infrastructure Upgrade- Increasing Refinery Flexibility to process a wider range of crude types (including US light sweet).

Strategic Reserves- enhancing Strategic Petroleum Reserves (SPR) to buffer against geopolitical volatility.

Green Transition- Accelerating the shift to Renewable Energy to reduce long-term dependence on fossil fuel imports.

Conclusion

India's energy strategy is a pragmatic exercise in survival and sovereignty. While geopolitical currents are forcing a reduction in Russian oil imports, India's approach ensures this transition is market-driven rather than politically coerced. By prioritizing affordability and reliability, India continues to uphold its strategic autonomy, proving that in a multipolar world, national interest supersedes alliance politics.

Source- [https-//indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-global/oil-and-beyond-with-russia-india-has-to-balance-old-ties-new-realities-10516168/](https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-global/oil-and-beyond-with-russia-india-has-to-balance-old-ties-new-realities-10516168/)