

**Pakistan's Mineral Investment Forum 2025; Tapping Balochistan's Minerals and
Advancing National Economy and Foreign Policy Choices**

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ABSTRACT

In a contemporary global economy, natural resources, especially minerals, are being used as critical instruments of economic diplomacy and statecraft.¹ Countries use the notion of minerals to enhance trade relations, establish strategic alliances, and project power in international political systems.² Pakistan is a mineral-rich country in terms of its geological sector.³ The province of Balochistan, Pakistan, has the potential for a vast untapped reserve of gold, copper, coal, chromite, and rare earth elements.⁴ While significant mineral resources exist, the province of Balochistan is left economically underdeveloped and Geo-politically sensitive because of various factors, including internal governance issues combined with external systemic challenges. Pakistan Mineral Investment Forum 2025 is a state-led initiative that is strategically positioned as a transformational opportunity to mobilize foreign direct investments into Pakistan, promote public-private partnerships, and establish a financially and structurally organic mineral sector in an integrated global economy.

Keywords: Global economy, Natural Resources, Balochistan

INTRODUCTION

Pakistan mineral investment Forum is committed to fulfilling two objectives: realizing Balochistan's mineral potential sustainably and positioning Pakistan in world markets as a capable mineral exporting economy.⁶ Both objectives align with Pakistan's broader goals of economic diplomacy, as the country seeks to pivot toward enhanced regional connectivity through initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and foster emerging strategic and economic relationships with mineral-hungry economies. While China, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey have demonstrated prominent interest, the Pakistan Mineral Investment Forum 2025 has also garnered attention from countries across Europe, including Germany, the United Kingdom, and France, alongside other global stakeholders such as the United Arab Emirates, South Korea, Australia, and Canada.⁷ With a shift towards a global energy transition, critical minerals are central to producing and developing everything from electric vehicles to semiconductors. Balochistan's resource-rich landscape allows Pakistan to regain economic agency in an ever-changing international order.⁸

The implications of the Forum are larger than just locally focused development. They reflect and merit considerations relating to resource security, geopolitical alliances, foreign direct investment flows, and/or autonomy, central themes of the International community. As competitors, including global powers, pursue a guaranteed mineral supply, there are opportunities for countries such as Pakistan to find new ways to exercise their agency in global governance frameworks. In addition, the role of the natural

mineral resources of a country in its foreign policy is well established. Countries that possess a great deal of strategic minerals can leverage their mineral resources through economic diplomacy, signing bilateral agreements, and foreign direct investment (FDI).^{9, 10 11}

The global mineral investment landscape has increasingly become a cornerstone of economic strategy, particularly as countries seek to diversify supply chains and secure critical raw materials.¹² International forums such as the Pakistan Mineral Investment Forum 2025 play a crucial role in this context by unlocking untapped mineral reserves and enabling transnational investment partnerships. By attracting global capital and technology to underexplored regions like Balochistan, such forums not only boost host economies but also contribute to the stabilization and expansion of global markets dependent on critical minerals.

Geographically, Balochistan has a distinct geopolitical position; it sits across from Iran and Afghanistan, and touches the Arabian Sea.¹³ It is a gateway to reach the Middle East and Central Asia. The Gwadar port, located at the centre of CPEC, is intended to be a logistics hub for exports of minerals from Balochistan.¹⁴ By developing infrastructure that connects Balochistan's economic future to global trading routes and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the province will remain open to international partners.¹⁵ The Commonwealth Trade Commission - exploratory studies into foreign strategic partnerships, with Gulf states, and China - which could lead to a strategy for mineral infrastructure development, environmentally sustainable extraction methods, and creates options for local workforce training led to a potential reduction in local unrest and secessionist movements, long witnessed in the province.^{16 17}

Theoretical Framework and Pakistan's Mineral Investment Forum

Institutionalist Liberalists would see cooperation mechanisms such as the Forum as a way to ameliorate social conflict by creating economic interdependence.²⁰ Realist authors would likely argue that the outreach to minerals is more of a tool for Pakistan to offset competing regional powers, such as India, or to provide bargaining leverage vis-a-vis its dependencies on Western aid.²¹ Constructivists may allude to the industrialization agenda as a change to the national identity narrative, wherein Balochistan becomes an important regional economy, moving away from being understood through propensities for grievance and victim politics, and moving towards development and human flourishing.

This initiative will also align with a growing global discussion about “green minerals”, which include lithium, cobalt, and rare earths, which are becoming increasingly important for renewable energy technologies. It may allow Pakistan to identify and develop these resources and join a new group of mineral-exporting countries that are instrumental in facilitating the global energy transition. Additionally, it may open new avenues of diplomacy, especially with Western countries seeking to reduce their reliance on China for these minerals.

The Pakistan Mineral Investment Forum 2025 represents more than a conference of economic activity; it is a strategic action within the realm of international political economy. For Balochistan, it provides the potential for economic integration, infrastructural capacity development, and conflict resolution through inclusive growth. In the case of Pakistan, it allows for characteristics to present themselves in the emerging global order where natural resources hold the same value as military alliances or digital technologies.

If Pakistan can position minerals as instruments of diplomacy and make investments in institutional transparency, environmental governance, and stakeholder participation, it could make mineral wealth a source of national security and economic sovereignty. Exploratory studies of resource-led economies and an International community's lens can provide a way to contextualize the Forum in a larger matrix of

power, cooperation, and global opportunity. As such, the Forum must not only be an event but a well-planned, strategic pivot in Pakistan's journey towards sustainable development and global relevance.

PMIF 2025 and the Potentials of Balochistan's Minerals

Mapping out Potentials of Minerals in Balochistan

While often overlooked due to its remoteness and developmental challenges, the province boasts substantial deposits of valuable minerals including copper, gold, chromite, lead, zinc, iron ore, marble, coal, barite, fluorite, and limestone. Balochistan, Pakistan's largest province by territory, sits on a trove of untapped natural mineral resources that have the potential to dramatically reshape both regional and national economies.²² While often overlooked due to its remoteness and developmental challenges, the province boasts substantial deposits of valuable minerals including copper, gold, chromite, lead, zinc, iron ore, marble, coal, barite, fluorite, and limestone.²³ Geological surveys suggest that Balochistan holds nearly 80% of the country's total copper reserves, predominantly located in the Chagai district, home to the world-renowned Reko Diq and Saindak copper-gold projects. The province also accounts for around 60% of Pakistan's total marble resources, with key deposits in Loralai, Khuzdar, and Chagai. Additionally, Duki and Musakhel are rich in coal, contributing significantly to Pakistan's reserves, while Khuzdar and Lasbela host large deposits of chromite, estimated to be over 40% of the national production potential. Iron ore, largely found in Chagai and Kalat, is estimated at more than 2 billion tons, while barite reserves in Khuzdar account for a significant portion of national output. These regional mineral distributions underscore Balochistan's strategic significance in Pakistan's resource-based economic future and its potential to emerge as a mineral export hub with targeted investment and development.²⁴ Not only are these minerals plentiful, but they are also well-positioned for the global demand explosion generated by tech advancement and green energy transition. The global thirst for critical minerals required to produce electric cars, advanced wind turbines, solar panels, smartphones, defense apparatus, and an array of digital inventions means that Balochistan has a strong opportunity to place mineral production at the forefront of its development strategy. These resources can be harnessed to create a mining hub that could reinvigorate the Pakistani economy.

Balochistan's abundance of natural resources has long been left untapped due to subregional underinvestment due to governance issues, security concerns, and political instability. However, with the world having shifted to clean tech and with expanding digital infrastructure, global stakeholders have begun to put a value on these resources as the provinces' resource deposits, which can now attract interest. As an example, China, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and other EU countries are eager to invest in mineral exploration and extraction, these countries see it as paramount for securing their supply chains. The usual transition to renewable energy systems requires "a fleet" of materials, i.e., copper, cobalt, and rare earths, all of which Balochistan has in abundance.

Developing a mineral sector in Balochistan would not only provide a temporary fix to immediate economic dependency, but it can result in a sustainable mineral industry and supply chains, refining, processing and the boost of export value that can create a degree of resilience to erratic global pricing escalation. Diversifying Balochistan's mineral supply chains can help to alleviate significant economic, social, political, and security risks. Undoubtedly, the fortunes of resource wealth present the people of Balochistan an opportunity for lifelong prosperity, security, and greater economic integration within South Asia and the global economy.

Tapping Mineral Resources in Balochistan

The mineral resources in Balochistan are spatially diverse, indicating a variety of rock types, ore genesis, and geological histories. The Chagai district, in particular, is rich in minerals, possessing world-class

reserves of copper and gold at the Reko Diq and Saindak mineral deposits.²⁵ The Reko Diq deposit has an indicated resource of about 5.9 billion tons of mineral ore with copper grades of approximately 0.41% and gold of about 0.22 grams per ton.²⁶ This single mine is expected to produce up to 200,000 tons of copper and 250,000 ounces of gold annually over a projected 40-year lifespan.²⁷ Not far off, chromite reserves found near Muslim Bagh and Khanozai in the Killa Saifullah district underscore Balochistan's importance to the raw materials needed for steel production and stainless manufacturing.

The province's mineral wealth continues in the Duki and Mach districts, which collectively are known to harbor more than 150 million tons of coal.²⁸ These coal deposits could fuel local power generation and support industrial projects aimed at mineral processing and value addition. Quartz, marble, and granite extraction opportunities are found in Khuzdar, Loralai, and Chagai, facilitating a vibrant natural stone industry already generating some domestic and export business. Additionally, barite and fluorite deposits in Lasbela and Kalat are emerging as low-volume but high-value minerals essential to the oil, gas, and chemical industries. Finally, significant iron ore reserves in the Mastung, Chagai, and Dalbandin regions potentially offer the raw material base for metal extraction and steel industries. Together, these geographically mapped resources present a strategic mosaic of mineral potential aligned with industrial trends and economic priorities.

Barrick Gold and Foreign Investment in Reko Diq

The \$10 billion Reko Diq project being developed by Canada's Barrick Gold Corporation in conjunction with Pakistan's Mineral Development Company is a flagship example of successful FDI in Balochistan.²⁶ The announcement to restart the project in 2022 was a major development, following years of legal clashes and protests from some investors. Under the new arrangement, Barrick and its partner companies plan to invest more than \$7 billion to commence construction and mining operations in phases, including mine development, smelting, and transport infrastructures. By the time the project is in full production, it is estimated to produce 200,000 tons of copper and 250,000 ounces of gold annually.³⁰ This project is expected to have a significant economic impact over the operational life of the mine, expected to be up to 40 years or more.

They anticipate creating approximately 7,500 construction jobs and 4,000 permanent jobs, including technical, operational, and administrative positions. Revenue forecasts suggest that Pakistan may receive billions of dollars in royalties, lease payments, tax revenues, and dividends from its 50-percent shareholding, depending on global commodity prices.³¹ The success of Reko Diq not only catalyzes further foreign direct investment but also signals a renewed international trust in Pakistan's ability to host large-scale, strategic mining projects. Countries such as China, with prior infrastructure investments through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Saudi Arabia, Canada, and Australia, are now actively considering entry into other Balochistan-based mining ventures. This renewed investor confidence is the linchpin for unlocking billions in further project financing and joint venture agreements.

Socio-Economic Development and Poverty Alleviation in Balochistan

If properly harnessed, the mineral boom in Balochistan could have a transformative impact on the province's socioeconomic landscape. Currently, more than 70 percent of the population resides below the poverty line, and unemployment rates exceed 40 percent, especially among youth and women.³² Mineral development that includes local employment quotas, revenue-sharing mechanisms, and community-driven models can address entrenched poverty and marginalization. According to estimates by Pakistan's Board of Investment and planning departments, over 100,000 direct and indirect jobs could be created over the next 5–7 years through large-scale mining operations, associated logistics, processing industries, and auxiliary services. On-site hiring and vocational training programs, especially in projects like Reko Diq and Saindak, can provide tens of thousands of stable employment opportunities, building a skilled

local workforce. Additionally, channeling mining royalties and FDI-generated revenue into education, healthcare, clean water access, and road connectivity can help bridge longstanding development deficits in rural and tribal communities. Over time, such measures can reduce economic exclusion, improve living standards, and empower local populations as stakeholders in the province's development.

Access to clean drinking water, road connectivity, schools, hospitals, and digital infrastructure depends on fiscal health, which mineral royalties can support. Balochistan can mitigate insurgency narratives, ethno-political alienation, and underdevelopment by setting aside a percentage of mining profits for social development funds to be used for community welfare. In the long term, academic partnerships, creating vocational institutes affiliated with the mining-related industries, will improve human capital, providing the local population with the training and/or qualifications to engage in emerging local industries. Minerals, in the end, are a source of not merely economic activity, but of regional cohesiveness, social inclusion, and longer-term political stability.

PMIF 2025 and Foreign Policy Opportunities

Advancing Foreign Policy Choices

Pakistan's mineral reserves, while crucial for provincial development, also provide significant geopolitical leverage for the country. International powerhouses, including China, the United States, the EU, Canada, Turkey, and the Gulf States, view access to production-critical minerals as critically important to national security and industrial competitiveness. Given this reality, Pakistan's mineral diplomacy could lead to foreign policy success in technology partnerships, trade agreements, and security agreements.

The congruence of Balochistan's development as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor highlights the attractiveness of Balochistan as a site for further regional initiatives around infrastructure and connectivity. Governmental interest in making investments from developing countries like Saudi Arabia and Turkey diversifies the capital inflows coming to Pakistan, reducing reliance on a single external partner and providing uncertainty in Pakistan's continued strategic autonomy. As Pakistan opens foreign direct investments from a multitude of international sources, Pakistan's diplomatic relationships undergo maturation, allowing for arms sales, parallel infrastructure projects, and intelligence sharing. As a result, mineral diplomacy in Pakistan amplifies its appearance in the international policymakers of being an investor-ready partner with an ample future supply of resources.

Minerals thus act as a strategic tool of economic diplomacy, fostering mutual interdependence between Pakistan and investing states. When nations become economically invested in Pakistan's mineral sector, especially through long-term extraction and infrastructure projects, a win-win relationship emerges. investors gain access to critical materials needed for their technological and industrial expansion, while Pakistan gains revenue, jobs, infrastructure, and elevated geopolitical relevance. This creates a situation where states are incentivized to maintain stable, cooperative relations with Pakistan, strengthening their position in international politics and contributing to regional stability.

PMIF 2025 and National Economy

Boosting National Economy by Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

The impact of mineral development in Balochistan on Pakistan's national economy cannot be underestimated. Independent economic models provide a conservative estimate that the mineral sector in Balochistan, when it comes fully on stream, could add anywhere from \$5 billion to \$8 billion every year to the GDP of Pakistan.³³ Current levels of foreign direct investment are about \$1.45 billion in FY2023

(State Bank of Pakistan) and are expected to double or triple to \$3 billion or more annually by 2025–2026, as projects such as Reko Diq, Khuzdar, Mach coal, and barite are developed.³⁴

Beyond raw mineral sales, Pakistan stands to gain from second-order economic benefits. The establishment of value-added industries, such as smelters, processing plants, and export-ready facilities, enables the retention of higher returns domestically. This shift would help reduce Pakistan's dependence on traditional export lines like textiles and agriculture and spread wealth across more resilient and diversified industrial sectors. Government revenues from royalties, taxes, and dividends can bolster federal and provincial forests, stabilize fiscal planning, support public spending, and service national debts.

This projection already bears evidence: in the first two years of Reko Diq's partial operations, Pakistan recorded a noticeable uptick in export revenues and special mining declarations.³⁵ These revenues fueled provincial budget surpluses while attracting land value and credit expansion. Sustained growth in the mining sector also increases employment and services in localities connected to extraction zones, from nearby towns to logistics hubs. However, the pathway to maximizing gains requires transparent revenue management, clear governance, and public accountability.

Balochistan is on the threshold of an economic renaissance based on its vast mineral deposits. With sound facilitative development of copper, gold, chromite, coal, marble, barite, and iron ore, the province has the potential to move from a state of frontier-hood to one of economic dynamism. This will require the cultivation of an ecosystem including infrastructure, predictable regulations, investment partnerships, training of labour, and an ability to share the benefits of wealth creation. If achieved, this mobilizing of minerals could alleviate poverty, generate hundreds of thousands of jobs, provide better public services, and ensure Balochistan is recognized as a fully integrated regional and global partner.

Moreover, the transformation of Balochistan has a national impact by contributing billions of rupees annually to Pakistan's GDP, bringing diversified FDI, stabilizing provincial budgets, reducing foreign debt, creating diversification in industry, and impacting Pakistan's position on the international political stage.³⁶ Through mineral diplomacy, Pakistan's foreign policy can be made stronger, strengthen all strategic partnerships, and raise its footprint in the shifting balance of international power. Most importantly, a mineral-led Balochistan can transition from the unwanted state of economic neglect to one of inclusion, and on this foundation, can provide a framework for peace, stability, and development that lasts for centuries.

Implications of Pakistan Mineral investment Forum 2025

Pakistan Mineral Investment Forum 2025 has the potential to be a truly transformative project that could shift Balochistan to a position of economic viability internationally and nationally from its position of historic marginalization. The forum is much more than a business initiative; it is an agenda-setting strategy of the Government of Pakistan to ensure that its province, rich in mineral resources, is found on the global investment map. The forum is a signal to the world regarding the potential of underdeveloped mineral resource opportunities in Balochistan, especially copper, gold, chromite, and rare earth elements, and engages foreign country governments, multinational companies, and investors to recognize and discover value-added opportunities.

The forum is held at a time of global competition for critical minerals, particularly for green technologies and advanced manufacturing. It would allow Balochistan's resource opportunities to align with international opportunities and demand. China, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey have already indicated the depth of their interest in Balochistan, demonstrating the geopolitical and geoeconomic weight of the initiative. While the forum certainly involves topical issues in resource development in Balochistan, by

foreign countries and multinational companies. Efforts by the Government of Pakistan will help to underscore Balochistan to the global marketplace not just as a historical resource base, but as a geoeconomic trade channel and regional node in the global supply chain, including in corridors like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

The forum is also important for strengthening Pakistan's international image. It highlights legal reforms, protections for investors, frameworks for public-private partnerships, and more effective and inclusive regulatory processes. These initiatives tackle many longstanding complaints about bureaucratic inefficiency, lack of transparency, and political instability. These improvements are essential for winning the trust of global investors who have been hesitant about the legal framework models governing the broad, opaque, and sometimes risky operations in Pakistan's mining sector.

In essence, the Pakistan Mineral Investment Forum 2025 is more than a showcase, it is a strategic communication and policy tool aimed at integrating Balochistan into Pakistan's broader economic development model and global mineral value chains. If the commitments made during this forum are effectively implemented, it could serve as a transformative blueprint for resource-led development, fostering economic decentralization, improving governance, and increasing Pakistan's soft power through resource diplomacy.

CONCLUSION

The Pakistan Mineral Investment Forum 2025 is an interesting idea that could potentially transform not only the national economic goals but also the purpose of regional development, especially for the resource-rich but very developing area of Balochistan. The forum allows for mineral collection and investment at an economic national level to allow for a systematic way to realize and exploit Balochistan's huge geological resources. Many of these minerals are globally sought after, particularly copper, gold, and rare earth elements. Extracting can easily create a continuous influx of economic dollars, foreign exchange, and promote the growth of industries that are transformed from manufacturing to construction, etc. If managed in the way intended with transparency and efficiency, the economic activity related to mineral research and investment will have a significant implication for the country's GDP, establish much-needed infrastructure in the provinces, and ultimately would challenge nail regional inequalities that have stifled the opportunity of inclusive economic growth.

It is worth noting that this forum represents a change in Pakistan's approach to geopolitical relationships. By soliciting and securing foreign direct investment (FDI) from countries such as China, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and the Central Asian states, Pakistan's use of the multilateral dimension of resource diplomacy establishes a multilateral direction to ensure stability and leverage in the strategic economic alliances being formed now by consolidating investment opportunities. Creating economic options through these partnerships in the province of Balochistan will assist in aligning Pakistan with global energy and technology transitions, thus providing it with options and leverage in foreign engagement on supply chains, sustainable mining, and trade corridors as it relates to its initiatives going forward. The investment forum is not only an economic project for Pakistan, but it is a diplomatic play creating a deeper nation-state connection to regional economic architectures such as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Pakistan Mineral Investment Forum 2025 presents a consequential pivot for the future not only of the economy of the province but also of the economy of Pakistan and, importantly, the country's foreign policy. It exemplifies both a moment whereby Pakistan is seeking to maximize its natural resources for national gain, whilst also positioning itself within an evolving global system. While Balochistan's narrative has historically been one of marginalization, it is now poised to become a central economic hub for Pakistan, if it is provided the proper mechanisms, authority, and voice to participate in an economically viable development. Moving forward, balancing economic ambitions with inclusive,

transparent, and environmentally sound practices will be essential to ensuring that mineral wealth translates into long-term, sustainable gains for both Balochistan and the broader Pakistani state.

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