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**The Balochistan Liberation Army's
Expanding Reach**

By
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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	Page 3
Introduction.....	4
Drivers of the BLA's Resurgence.....	4
Regional Dynamics and the Iran Factor.....	5
NOTES	6



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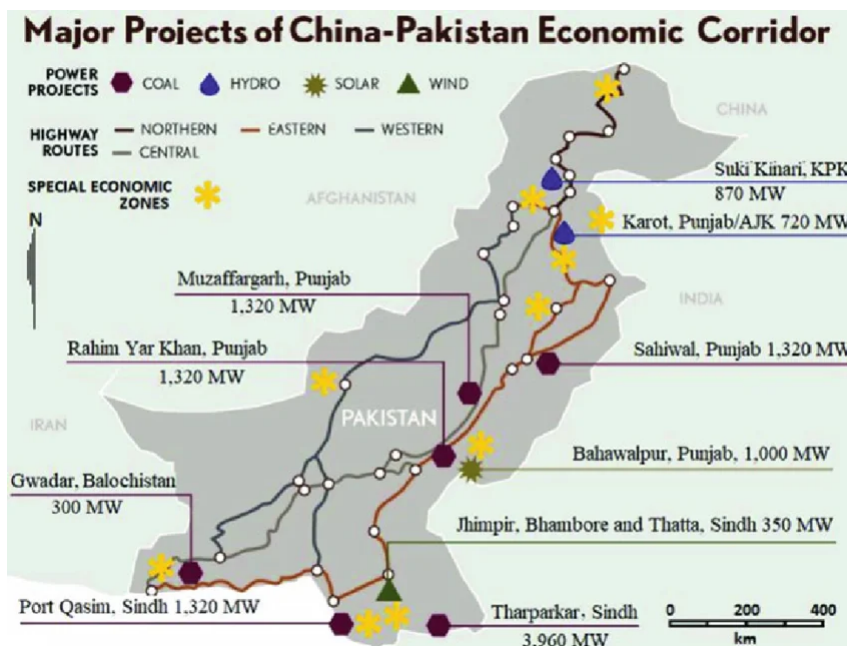
The Balochistan Liberation Army's Expanding Reach

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Executive Summary

- ✦ The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) has entered a new phase characterised by greater operational ambition and a wider geographic reach.
- ✦ Terrorist attacks in Balochistan increased significantly in 2025, reflecting a deteriorating security environment.
- ✦ The group is increasingly conducting high-profile attacks, including suicide operations and attacks beyond its traditional areas of activity.
- ✦ Longstanding grievances over political marginalisation, economic inequality, and resource extraction remain central drivers of support for the insurgency.
- ✦ Opposition to Chinese investments and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor continues to fuel nationalist resentment among many Baloch activists.
- ✦ Pakistani crackdowns on political activism and non-violent dissent may be creating conditions that aid militant recruitment.
- ✦ The post-2021 security environment in Afghanistan has potentially improved the BLA's access to weapons and logistical networks.
- ✦ Growing cooperation between the BLA and the Pakistani Taliban demonstrates increasing tactical convergence among anti-state militant actors.
- ✦ Instability in Iran could create new opportunities for Baloch militant groups operating across the Pakistan-Iran border region.
- ✦ The persistence of the BLA insurgency threatens Pakistan's economic ambitions, foreign investment prospects, and long-term democratic development.

Key Picture: Map of CPEC Infrastructure Across Pakistan



Source: [ResearchGate](#)

Introduction

A surge in violence is reshaping the trajectory of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA). The group's 24 May suicide attack on a train in Quetta, the capital of Pakistan's western Balochistan province, was part of a broader escalation in militant activity.¹ Balochistan witnessed more than 250 terrorist attacks in 2025, according to the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, representing a 26 percent increase from the previous year.² As the BLA has carried out dozens of deadly attacks since April, it appears to be transforming from a largely localised insurgent force into a more ambitious organisation seeking to extend its operational reach beyond Balochistan, including into Islamabad, while increasingly deploying women in high-profile attacks.³

The BLA, a militant separatist organisation that emerged around the turn of the twenty-first century, seeks to establish an independent Baloch state spanning territories currently divided among Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. The group's insurgency has been concentrated primarily in Pakistan's Balochistan province, a vast but historically marginalised region that has long served as a focal point for separatist unrest and armed militancy. Covering nearly 44 percent of Pakistan's landmass, Balochistan is the country's largest province by area and occupies a strategically significant position along the borders with Afghanistan and Iran, while also encompassing part of the Arabian Sea coastline.⁴ Yet despite its geographic size and strategic importance, the province is home to only around five percent of Pakistan's population and remains among the country's most economically underdeveloped regions.⁵ This disparity has helped fuel longstanding grievances and instability.

The BLA's insurgency is rooted in an ethno-nationalist ideology shaped by longstanding grievances over what many Baloch perceive as political marginalisation, economic exploitation, and state repression under Pakistan's federal government. Central to these grievances is the belief that Balochistan's vast natural wealth, including substantial reserves of natural gas, coal, gold, copper, silver, and other valuable minerals, has delivered few tangible benefits to the province's local population.⁶ The BLA and its supporters argue that the region's resources have been extracted largely for the benefit of external actors, leaving many Baloch communities economically disadvantaged despite living atop some of Pakistan's richest resource deposits.

Another major source of resentment is the growing foreign (mainly Chinese) presence in the province. This sentiment has intensified in the context of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship component of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has brought massive Chinese investment to Balochistan since the 2010s. For many Baloch nationalists, these projects symbolise further entrenchment of outside influence and the continued exclusion of local communities from decisions affecting their land and resources.

Drivers of the BLA's Resurgence

The recent intensification of BLA militancy and the expansion of the group's operational reach can be attributed to a confluence of interrelated factors. First, grievances arising from the Pakistani state's crackdown on political activism, civil society initiatives, and other non-violent forms of dissent have deepened resentment within segments of the Baloch population. These dynamics have heightened societal tensions and, in turn, created a more receptive environment for the BLA's narratives and recruitment efforts.⁷ Second, the botched U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021 left behind significant quantities of military equipment and weaponry, some of which has found its way into the BLA's hands.⁸ Third, despite their differing ideological orientations and objectives, the BLA and the Pakistani Taliban have demonstrated increasing levels of coordination, reflecting a pragmatic convergence of interests against the Pakistani state.⁹ Finally, the BLA has shown a growing ability to exploit social media platforms for propaganda, recruitment, and outreach, enabling it to amplify its message, attract new supporters, and extend its influence well beyond its traditional strongholds.¹⁰

The BLA has also benefited from an environment in which the Pakistani state's attention and resources have been increasingly stretched across multiple security and foreign policy challenges. As authorities in Islamabad grapple with tensions and disputes involving neighboring Afghanistan, navigate the diplomatic complexities

arising from regional crises, including efforts to position Pakistan in relation to the conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran, and confront the persistent threat posed by the Pakistani Taliban's ongoing insurgency, the state's capacity to devote sustained attention to the BLA has been limited. Such dynamics have created opportunities for the group to expand its activities, strengthen its operational capabilities, and exploit vulnerabilities in Pakistan's broader security landscape.

Regional Dynamics and the Iran Factor

A critical variable shaping the future trajectory of the BLA will be the course of the American-Israeli conflict with Iran and its implications for regional stability. Concerns that escalating turmoil within Iran could intensify the BLA threat constitute an important motivation behind Islamabad's diplomatic efforts to encourage a rapid de-escalation of the conflict. From the Pakistani government's perspective, a weakened or destabilised Iran would likely create a more permissive environment for insurgent and militant actors, including Baloch separatist groups, to expand their activities. This concern is particularly valid given the BLA's cross-border presence in Iran's Sistan and Baluchestan province, where diminished state capacity and weaker border enforcement could provide the organisation with greater operational freedom and logistical flexibility. Against this backdrop, a frequently overlooked dimension of Pakistani-Iranian relations is the two states' shared interest in preventing Baloch militant movements from advancing aspirations for a "Greater Balochistan" that would encompass territory on both sides of the border.¹¹ This common security concern has increasingly served as a basis for enhanced bilateral cooperation and intelligence-sharing, reinforcing Islamabad and Tehran's mutual commitment to countering separatist militancy despite broader geopolitical pressures and occasional tensions in their relationship.

Looking ahead, the security challenge posed by the BLA is likely to become an increasingly consequential concern for Islamabad. As Pakistan seeks to attract greater levels of Chinese and Western investment to stimulate economic growth and address pressing fiscal challenges, the persistence of violent separatism in Balochistan will continue to undermine investor confidence and complicate these ambitions. The insurgency not only raises concerns about the security of critical infrastructure, energy projects, and foreign personnel, but also underscores the enduring difficulties the Pakistani state faces in fostering political cohesion and maintaining national unity across its diverse regions. If the BLA's campaign of violence persists or intensifies, the ramifications are likely to extend well beyond the security sphere. Continued instability could further strengthen the influence of Pakistan's security establishment and military institutions in shaping national policy, potentially at the expense of civilian governance. In this sense, the trajectory of the BLA insurgency will have important implications not only for Pakistan's internal security but also for the future evolution of its political system and the prospects for deeper democratic development.¹²

Ultimately, the BLA's recent escalation signals the emergence of a more capable and ambitious insurgent group seeking to expand its influence beyond its traditional strongholds in Balochistan. Despite Pakistan's security forces remaining capable of imposing significant costs on the organisation, the persistence of political grievances, regional instability, and evolving militant networks may continue to provide the group with opportunities for growth. Islamabad is likely to face a prolonged challenge with implications for national security, foreign investment, and the country's broader political development. With many powers around the world having stakes in Pakistan's future, the BLA's activities will naturally become of greater interest to the international community at large, highlighting how the separatist faction's upticks in attacks are becoming more of a global, not solely domestic, issue in Pakistan.

NOTES

¹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm2pkd58xldo>

² <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/5/25/train-bomb-in-pakistans-baloch-region-why-violence-is-on-the-rise>

³ Ibid.

⁴ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cm2pkd58xldo>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <https://www.dw.com/en/balochistan-strikes-explained-resources-and-radicalization/a-68043705>

⁷ <https://theconversation.com/baloch-insurgency-suicide-bombs-and-uptick-in-violence-threaten-pakistan-regional-security-282513>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ <https://ctc.westpoint.edu/the-baloch-insurgency-in-pakistan-evolution-tactics-and-regional-security-implications/>

¹² <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2026/5/25/train-bomb-in-pakistans-baloch-region-why-violence-is-on-the-rise>