3.3.5. Balochistan nationalist groups

COMMON ANALYSIS
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Baloch nationalist groups continue to operate mainly across Balochistan province, with coordinated attacks also in Sindh province (see also Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army under Other armed groups). The separatist insurgency is driven by local perceptions of political marginalisation, economic exploitation of natural resources, and opposition to projects linked to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Estimates of the group's size range from around 4 000 to 5 000 militants, consisting of factions. Baloch separatist groups primarily target security forces, infrastructure, foreign investments, non-Baloch workers and settlers, including ethnic Punjabis. The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) are prominent Balochistan nationalist groups.

The BLA, banned in Pakistan since 2006, is considered the largest and most active militant organisation in Balochistan. It seeks independence from Pakistan and accuses the government of exploiting the province's resources and committing human rights violations against Baloch people. The organisation also expanded the role of women within militant operations, including participation in suicide attacks. The group operates through decentralised cells across Balochistan and increasingly uses sophisticated weaponry. It relies on hit-and-run tactics, such as suicide attacks (including suicide car bombings), IED attacks, ambushes, and blockades. Its activities mainly include attacks against security forces, Chinese citizens and investments, off-duty security personnel, and civilians travelling to Punjab. In March 2025, the BLA hijacked the Jaffar Express train with more than 400 passengers, including at least 100 members of the security forces, on board, travelling from Quetta to Peshawar, indicating an increase in the group's operational capabilities. The BLA-A, a faction of the BLA, traditionally weaker and less active, shows signs of renewed activity through suicide bombing, low-profile bombings, ambushes, as well as executions of alleged state collaborators and security force personnel.

The BLF is mainly active in central and southern Balochistan, including the Makran division and Awaran district. It focuses on guerrilla warfare and has expanded to include suicide attacks and the involvement of women fighters.

Another significant group, the Baloch National Army (BNA), emerged in 2022 and temporarily became the third strongest militant organisation in Balochistan. However, following the arrest of its leadership and surrender of its commanders in 2023, the organisation largely ceased to exist, and its members were recruited by the BLA and the BLF.

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