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## Drivers of Ethnic Terrorism: Case of Baloch Nationalist Movement (BNM)



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**Abstract:** *This research article examines the potential drivers of ethnic terrorism. The ethnic component has typically been ignored by terrorism academia, which has instead concentrated on developing theories that can explain all terrorist violence. The research does cover attributes of ethnic terrorism, whether it is a notion of nationalism or beyond depending on the case. This study focuses on the ethnic groups that why resort to violence to achieve their objective. The research tested the cause of ethnic terrorism based on three theoretical frameworks: political repression, economic grievances and elite competition. The research focuses on the factors driving the Baloch nationalist movement and the adoption of violence by Baloch separatist groups in Pakistan. In the case of Balochistan, three respective hypotheses are built and analyzed. The results demonstrate that political repression raises the risk of ethnic terrorism, although economic resentments or competitive elites are typically not linked to this type of violence.*

**Key Words:** Ethnic Terrorism, Baloch Nationalist Movement, Political Repression, Economic Grievances

### Introduction

In most parts of the world, ethnic conflicts have been a recurring challenge often motivated by identity politics, grievances and aspiration for self-determination (Carment, James, & Taydas, 2009). Balochistan is the largest province in terms of land area forming the south-eastern region of Pakistan but is the least populated. The province has witnessed a violent and persistent ethnic conflict in the form of the Baloch Nationalist

Movement (BNM). Since the early 20th century, the BNM advocated the idea of the 'Greater Balochistan' and the movement has been marked by sporadic violence and waves of insurgency. This movement is characterized by demands for control over resources and greater autonomy.

The BNM, which emerged as a struggle for greater autonomy and self-determination, resorted to acts of terrorism in recent years. This transformation of the Baloch resistance movement towards violent attacks caused

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significant damage and loss of life to various targets. The insurgency gained momentum in 2019 as the Baloch militants escalated their tactics and increased access to a wide range of armaments. Through 2020, Pakistan recorded 500 fatalities, of which 215 were alone from Balochistan. In accordance with the PIPS Annual Report 2021, almost 136 people were killed in 80 terrorist attacks. In 2022, three incidents point to the rising trend of insurgent attacks: On April 26, Baloch separatists affiliated with Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) killed three Chinese teachers in a suicide attack. On August 1, the Baloch National Freedom Front claimed to have used anti-craft weapons to down the military helicopter. On December 25, the BLA orchestrated five bombings in the cities of Gwadar, Turbat, Kahan, and Quetta, which was the most recent occurrence. This shows how Baloch militants' capabilities have rapidly increased.

More than one-third of all terrorist organisations worldwide support racial prejudices. The ethnic terrorist group poses a threat to the lives of several individuals, including government officials and members of other ethnic groups. In terms of victims and attacks, ethnic types of terrorism have been considered to be more common than ideological terrorism (Boylan, 2016). Ethnic terrorism has remained a subject of limited research despite its pervasiveness as compared to other ideological types of terrorism. The ethnic-nationalist movement in Balochistan, namely the Balochistan National Movement or BNM, has its own unique environment and territorial limitations leading to the adoption of coercive means. Balochistan's insurgency is not a recent phenomenon, and neither can it be blamed on any particular federal or provincial government body. It is partially the fault of later administrative and military administrations who failed to address the genuine concerns of the Baloch people. This research paper aims to consider what are the underlying factors that contribute to the BNM's adoption of terrorism as a strategy to achieve its objective. To what extent do repression, grievances or a combination of both serve as necessary conditions for the ethnic group to resort to terrorism? The first section of the article deals with explaining the concept of ethnic terrorism, the second section highlights the emergence of the Baloch nationalist movement and its historical context and the last section

examines the prospective derives of ethnic terrorism in Balochistan.

### **Ethnic Terrorism: Conceptual Framework**

Terrorism is a phenomenon that displays a significant range of differences in chronology, geography, and theme, it is characterized by the use of violence as a tactic to instil fear among groups of vulnerable individuals, with the aim of achieving political objectives and reshaping power dynamics (English, 2009). While the policy community today is fixated on the image of a deadly terrorist threat, they are overlooking another form of violence that is widespread: ethnic terrorism. The act of ethnic terrorism refers to the deliberate use of violence by a subnational ethnic group to achieve its political goal that sows fear in the public and persuades them to support an ethnic identity group. This group might or might not be in favour of the offender's objectives or methods. Members of groups are said to share a similar genealogy, choose a name for themselves, have a shared culture, share historical memories, feel a feeling of their shared ethnicity, and have a sense of territorial connection (Brown, 1993). Typically, this violence is aimed at either establishing a separate state or elevating one communal group's status over others. Ethnic terrorism strives to promote identity and achieve political objectives, frequently targeting symbolic targets.

Unlike other terrorist organizations, ethnic terrorists frequently have a captive audience inside their own social communities. Many aspects of ethnic terrorism resemble guerrilla warfare, and its practitioners frequently see it as a part of a proto-guerrilla movement (Byman, 1998). The difference between religious terrorism, ethnic terrorism, and other types of terrorism driven by an ideology must be made. Terrorists with ethnic motivations frequently prefer to cooperate with governments rather than overthrow them in an effort to fix a system they perceive to be dysfunctional (Borum, 2003). In contrast, religiously motivated terrorists carry out more lethal and destructive activities because they believe they are above or outside the system. Ethnic terrorists prioritise developing a distinct ethnic identity and fostering ethnic mobilisation while all terrorists want to influence opposing groups and governments.

The aims of ethnic terrorism can vary depending on the specific goals and context of the ethnic group involved. The following three situations highlight the psychological factors that contribute to ethnic terrorism: First off, ethnic groups who are dissatisfied with the political policies of the state and have objectives ranging from achieving independence to ending political discrimination may be the source of terrorism. Secondly, terrorism may follow when ethnic groups hold grievances related to economic inequalities and injustices. Thirdly, terrorism may develop when elites compete for control of the ethnic community (Romo & Soldevilla, 2018). Perceived discrimination along political, economic, or cultural lines might lead to ethnic terrorism because it may cause strong resentment. Along with the difficulties created by discriminatory policies, it also represents the exclusion of particular ethnic groups from the polity

Although the methods employed by these organisations are not new, the concept of ethnic terrorism as a whole is frequently dismissed, along with its distinctive features. Ethnic terrorists aim to create a communal identity through terrorist acts rather than accepting a state-proposed identity. These acts serve a dual purpose: firstly, they create bonds within the ethnic group through the retaliation of government or rival communities; and secondly, the subsequent persecution draws attention to their cause, increasing their numbers and financial support among the wider population. Ethnic terrorism is not limited to a specific geographic region or time period, and it has been prevalent worldwide. Examples of ethnic terrorist groups include the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) in Northern Ireland, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka, the Irgun in Palestine, the Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) in Turkey, the Basque separatist group Euskadi ta Askatasuna (ETA) in Spain, and the Baloch Nationalist Movement (BNM) in Pakistan (Bjørge, & Silke, 2018).

The notion of nationalism also provides a perfunctory explanation for why terrorism campaigns are launched by particular organizations belonging to some ethnic constituencies. Ethnic terrorism can be motivated by nationalist sentiments and a desire to promote the interests of a particular ethnic group or nation.

Indeed, nationalist feelings are at the heart of ethnic terrorism, yet this nationalist drive does not always lead to ethnic terrorism. It is crucial to understand what causes of nationalism tend to incite violence. Ethnic terrorism is a response to perceived injustices or discrimination against a particular ethnic group, and the goal of terrorism is to promote the interests of that group and to gain greater autonomy or independence. It can be used as a tool to advance nationalist goals, such as the creation of a new nation-state or the promotion of a particular political agenda (Khan, 2005). In some cases, ethnic terrorist groups may seek to overthrow an existing government and establish a new state that is more aligned with their ethnic or nationalist goals. Pakistan is a state with a diverse population, comprising various ethnic and linguistic groups. The emergence of nationalism in Pakistan's peripheries can be attributed to the discriminatory social, economic, and political systems that have been in place for several decades. The Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM), which is a prime example of Pashtun nationalism, can also be linked to discriminatory policies that stoked anti-state feelings. Collateral damage has been caused by tribal areas' lack of constitutionalism, especially in the context of the war on terrorism, which has had a negative impact on Pashtun society as a whole (Ahmed, & Khan, 2022).

### **The Baloch Nationalist Movement (BNM)**

Ethnic terrorism is a type of terrorism that is motivated by ethnic grievances and seeks to advance the interests of a particular ethnic group through violent means. The Balochistan province of Pakistan has experienced a long-standing insurgency, which has been characterized by ethnic grievances and has been associated with acts of terrorism. The Baloch Nationalist Movement or BNM is primarily driven by the Baloch ethnic group's desire for greater autonomy and control over the province's natural resources. Baloch nationalists argue that the Baloch people have been marginalized by the central government and that their natural resources have been exploited for the benefit of other regions in Pakistan. The Balochistan insurgency is marked by acts of terrorism, including bombings, assassinations, and targeted killings. Baloch separatist groups have targeted security forces, government officials, and civilians who are seen

as collaborators with the government. The Pakistani government has responded to the insurgency with a heavy-handed approach, including the use of military force and the detention of suspected militants. However, these measures have failed to address the underlying grievances of the Baloch people and have further fuelled resentment and distrust towards the central government. The grievances of Baloch nationalist groups include demands for greater political autonomy, recognition of Baloch culture and language, and an end to what they see as the economic exploitation and political marginalization of the Baloch people by the central government.

### **Historical Context: Balochistan and Its Struggle for Autonomy**

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Balochistan constitutes about 43% of Pakistan's land mass, and village people make up only 5% of the total Pakistani population. According to Pakistan's 2011 Census, the main ethnic groups in the province are the Baloch people and the Pashtuns who constitute 52% and 36% of the population respectively. The remaining 12% belongs to the smaller communities such as Brahuis, Hazaras, Sindhis and Punjabis (Shah, 2017). Balochis are Sunni Muslims and speak Balochi which is a northwestern Iranian language. Balochistan is immensely rich in natural resources including oil, gas, copper and gold. Pakistan is heavily dependent on the natural resources available in the Balochistan region, yet it has the highest rural poverty rate with more than 62% of its rural population living below the poverty line. Most of its population lives in poor housing conditions with little or no access to education, electricity or clean drinking water. The conditions are deplorable. The Baloch view their fight as one against this apathy and repression. Since Pakistan seized the independent Baloch state of Kalat in 1948, Balochistan has had frequent insurrections. As soon as the Khan of Kalat was compelled to sign the Instrument of Reversion in 1948, the insurgency began. In general, it has happened during five different eras. In 1948, 1958–1959, 1962–1963 and 1973–1977, the government launched military operations against Baloch insurgencies (Singh, 2016). Despite being heavily suppressed, the insurgencies left scars that might never fully heal. The most recent battle is the longest and most violent because it started in the

early 2000s and is still going on. The accumulation of the historic grievances and repressive measures taken by the Pakistani state has intensified anger and provided a strong foundation for the Baloch insurgency.

Balochistan has an oceanic coastline that stretches along with one of the world's busiest shipping lanes 'the straits of Hormuz'. It borders Afghanistan, Iran and the Indian Ocean. It has also been a site for the mining of gold, zinc, oil, copper, and gas. It is a province that functions because of its geostrategic position as a route for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and that has meant just millions and millions of investments from China that the Pakistani state, especially the military, is really dedicated to protecting. The protection of Balochistan's territory and numerous high-value and high-security projects has not extended to the people in the region. The CPEC will connect the western Chinese region of Xinjiang to the southern Pakistani port of Gwadar in Balochistan on the Arabian Sea. To increase the connection between China and the Middle East, plans are also included for oil pipeline, rail, and road links. The large political parties have termed it a conspiracy and vowed to resist it at all forums. Media reports about Pakistan's government plan to fence the port town of Gwadar for security reasons have also sparked controversies.

For 70 years, Balochistan has been providing the rest of Pakistan with natural gas meeting more than 50 per cent of the country's needs at times. However today fewer than half the cities in Balochistan have access to that gas. Many Balochs use wood and coal for heating and cooking. Balochistan's Separatist movement was born prior to Pakistan's creation in 1947 and has seen wave after wave of violence with the Pakistani military resorting to brutality to reign in the insurgency (Akhtar, 2018). There have been countless human rights abuses and enforced disappearances in the thousands of Baloch nationalists, activists, intellectuals, and journalists. Kiyya Baloch, a Baloch journalist in exile, states that 'Balochistan has been actually turned into an information blackhole.' He was among few journalists covering Islamic militancy, human rights abuses and the China-Pakistan economic corridor accompanied by mass enforced disappearances when nationalists opposed Chinese investment in Balochistan (Sareen, 2017).

The 18th Amendment to the Constitution of Pakistan aimed to grant greater autonomy and decentralize power to the provinces. Despite the constitutional provisions, the practical implementation of power devolution has faced challenges. The Baloch nationalist argues that the central government has not effectively transferred resources and power to the provinces. The Baloch dissidents highlight that the eighteenth amendment did not adequately address their demands for recognition of Baloch's language and culture. Moreover, the Baloch nationalist believes that the economic exploitation of resources by the central government has not been sufficiently addressed. The failure to effectively implement the devolution of power and equitable distribution of resources encompasses various factors including bureaucratic hurdles, political will, and ongoing security challenges. The province had developed internal and external fault lines as a result of its ongoing marginalisation and underdevelopment, which foreign and regional powers as well as dissident nationalists later exploited. The grievances of the Baloch people that are not being effectively addressed by the state are easily exploiting points for foreign elements. The problem of missing persons remains a major issue that needs to be resolved if long-lasting peace is sought. This is also one of the primary factors that BNM uses for their campaign.

### **Understanding the Baloch Nationalist Movement (BNM)**

The Baloch Nationalist Movement used nationalist rhetoric to justify their actions, arguing that they are fighting for the liberation of the Baloch people and the establishment of an independent Balochistan. Tahir Amin conducted groundbreaking research on the formation of ethnic-nationalist movements in Pakistan following 1971. Amin has researched three of these movements in particular: the Baloch, Jeay Sindh, and Pashtunistan movements. He claims that the Pashtun elite's political practices have expanded power-sharing with them, which has led to a fall in the Pashtunistan movement. On the other hand, the absence of Sindh and Baloch factions from power-sharing agreements has helped their respective ethnic communities' Jeay Sindh and Baloch movements grow (Amin, [1994](#)).

A closer examination of the present-day Baloch separatist movement indicates a stark contrast to its historical insurgency dating back to 1948. Notably, Baloch militant groups have significantly consolidated, especially after the Baloch Raaji Aajoi Sangar (Baloch National Freedom Front, or BRAS) was established in 2018. The BRAS alliance includes the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), Baloch Republican Guard, the Sindhudesh Revolutionary Army, which aims for Sindh province's independence, the Baloch Republican Army (BRA) and United Baloch Army (UBA) merged to form the Baloch National Army (BNA), as of 2022 (Nabeel, [2020](#)). These groups are united in their opposition to what they see as a Pakistani state dominated by the Punjabi ethnic group. They also have reservations about how the provinces of Sindh and Balochistan are being used to further the CPEC project. Additionally, they target Pakistani security forces as well as civilians, Chinese infrastructure and civilians, and Punjabi settlers. This alliance enables the synchronization of insurgent operations. Furthermore, the Baloch separatist movement has become more extreme due to Pakistan's oppression of the Baloch community and the persistent forced displacement of moderate leaders. The Baloch people feel that their culture, language, and traditions are being suppressed by the dominant cultures of their respective countries. Francesca Marino, author of "Balochistan: Bruised, Battered and Bloodied" says that Balochistan is the richest region in Pakistan and its population is the poorest in the country. People lack access to schools and hospitals, with a cultural genocide going on because they have been forbidden from speaking Baloch, singing their national anthem and expressing their culture (Marino, [2020](#)).

While the exact number and composition of these groups may vary over time and across different regions, some of the main groups involved in the movement include:

### **Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA)**

The BLA is one of the most active and militant Baloch nationalist groups, primarily operating in Pakistan's Balochistan province. They seek to establish an independent Balochistan and oppose what they see as the economic exploitation and political marginalization of the Baloch people by the Pakistani government. The current stage of

the Baloch insurgency and the drive for consolidation are mostly attributable to Aslam Baloch, a founding member of the BLA who took over as the organization's commander in 2017. He founded the BLA's Majeed Brigade, known for its expertise in fedayeen or suicide attacks. 2011 saw the Majeed Brigade launch its initial assault; however, it did not launch another attack until Aslam assumed leadership. Aslam played a crucial role in forming BRAS by taking the initiative with Allah Nizar Baloch, which united the major Baloch separatist groups. Even though he was assassinated on Dec. 25, 2018, his influence remains prevalent in the ongoing Baloch insurgency (Saleem, 2018). The group has carried out terrorist attacks against a variety of targets, including commercial, governmental, transportation, military, civilian, and educational institutions. Local police have recorded 25 significant attacks since 2005 in areas including Bolan, Kalat, Harnai, Turbat, Dera Bugti, Quetta, Hub, Kalat, Mach, and Karachi. Under the Specially designated Global terrorist category, BLA has been declared a terrorist entity (Yousaf, 2019).

### **Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF)**

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BLF has operated inside the province of Balochistan using sophisticated techniques of tactics. It has used both kinetic and non-kinetic techniques to take the state down. These tactics include the use of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), ambush assaults, kidnapping, bomb blasts, rocket-propelled, and targeted killings. The BLF has carried out roughly 43 major attacks since 2007 in which it attacked military convoys, military buildings, police stations, and vehicles. The majority of these incidents have been recorded in Gwadar, Pasni, Kech, Mand, Quetta, Buleda and other provinces in south Balochistan (Global Terrorism Database, 2022). In 2015, they carried out one of the deadliest attacks when 25 labourers from Punjab were gunned down in Turbat (Shahid, 2015). BLF and BLA became two of the province's most powerful insurgent organisations. They demand greater autonomy and political rights for the Baloch people and oppose what they see as the demographic changes that are taking place in the region.

### **Baloch Republican Army (BRA)**

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Brahamdagh Nugti served as the organization's head when it was founded in 2007. This group operates in Kech, Jaffarabad, Dera Bugti, Naseerabad, and Dera Murad Jamali. It targets limited aspects including police, military, transportation, utilities, and private persons. It employs different violent means including grenades, rocket launchers, landmines, IEDs, and small combat arms. Despite its modest size and resources, the group left a lasting impression on Dera Bugti (Global Terrorism Database, 2022).

### **United Baloch Army (UBA)**

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After having disagreements with Harbiyar Marri, the UBA group emerged under the leadership of Mehran Marri. This group is a breakaway faction of BLA. Since 2011, this group has been active and has utilized variant means to achieve its targets. It targets the military, property, police, private citizens, educational institutes, businesses and transportation. It operates in the districts of Dera Bugti, Sibi, Quetta Mastung, Dasht, Lehri, Dera Murad Jamali, Kohlu, Mach and Nuskhki. This group attacked two transportation buses in Mastung where 22 people were kicked out (Shahid, 2015). The BRA and BLA condemn these attacks because they believe that these strategies are ineffective.

### **Lashkare Balochistan (LeB)**

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LeB, which was founded in 2009, is regarded as having two primary leaders: Javed Nengak and Bahwal. The organisation has primarily been active in Turbat, Dera Bugti, Kachlak, Lotu, Karachi, Mustang, and Lahore in the province's central region. At least nine significant terror attacks have been documented since 2009; it recruits people through tribal ties and the Balochistan Student Organisation Azad (BSO-A), which also serves as a foundation for other insurgent groups' use of human resources (Global Terrorism Database, 2022).

### **Prospective Drivers of Ethnic Terrorism in Balochistan**

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Since 9/11, the body of literature has surged to study the phenomenon of terrorism or religious terrorism but the research on ethnic terrorism remains underdeveloped. Ethnic terrorist

movements cannot be adequately explained by the idea of nationalism. Therefore, it is unclear what causes different incidents to generally result in the use of violent terrorism as a tactic to further the goals of these organisations. This research delves into the realms of nationalism and its potential connection to ethnic terrorism by examining three distinct group-level factors: political repression, economic grievances and elite comparison (Boylan, 2016). It will also consider other crucial factors such as human rights abuses, cultural suppression and demographic changes. By lifting the veil on nationalism, the research aims to highlight these multifaceted factors that contribute to the understanding of ethnic terrorism.

### Political Repression

“H1: Terrorism is more specifically developed by ethnic groups when they face repression and discrimination within the state.”

Some research argues that the ethnic groups adopted the tactic of terrorism when they possessed grievances ranging from obtaining outright independence or ending political discrimination. An underlying factor in internal unrest or conflict is the discriminatory nature of political institutions (Brown, 2001). When nonviolent political routes are not available for dissidents to express their grievances and challenge the monopoly of state authority, some of them turn to violence. Political oppression along ethnic lines is particularly alarming. Political discrimination based on ethnicity can exacerbate ethnic grievances, harden ethnic identities, and even spark violent actions that try to draw attention to the group's suffering. The ethnic groups that utilise violence to protest prejudice are the ones that should be most worried about. When these rebel ethnic groups target civilians and their property, violence turns into terrorism and forces the state to fall. In order to legitimise their cause and disseminate information about the state's discriminatory practices to specific audiences, these groups coerce support from the ethnic community.

According to Inman and Davenport (2012), state repression includes restrictions on speech, personal privacy, security, integrity, assembly and due process in the adjudication and enforcement of the law. The concept of repression is tightly intertwined with conflict. Underlying resentments

are turned into overt and active hostilities by the repressive actions of host regimes. By giving rebels the confidence to encourage support for extreme forms of violence among some ethnic groups, the terrorist campaign is prolonged as a result of the early uses of terrorism being met with indiscriminate and harsh counterterrorist measures.

The Baloch people feel that they have been excluded from political power in their respective countries and that their voices are not being heard or represented in the national political systems. Due to their numerical inferiority, the Baloch People and numerous other ethnic identities have been totally isolated from the state. They are inadequately represented in the government's political and judicial systems. Despite being the largest province in Pakistan in terms of land area, Balochistan has only 14 seats in the National Assembly, which is less than 4% of the total seats. This underrepresentation in the political system has contributed to the Baloch feeling disenfranchised and excluded from decision-making processes. Dr Allah Nazar Baloch, leader of BLF, made a statement in an interview where he was asked why democratic means have not been used to resolve grievances within Pakistan. He states that "there is no democracy in Pakistan and the Baloch are compelled to rebel against oppression" (Sharma, 2019).

The Baloch people have a strong sense that the security services of various countries have committed a variety of human rights violations against them, including extrajudicial murders, torture, and forced disappearances. According to reports, the province's security forces kidnapped more than 8,000 people between 2003 and 2008. Cases of torture have been reported in unstable politics and a number of extremist groups such as Al-Qaeda as well as the Taliban have destabilized the region (Stanekzai, 2008). In January 2021, at least eleven coal miners of the Hazara minority were executed in the Machh area of Balochistan. Taliban, Islamic State, and other violent sunni muslim groups have repeatedly targeted Hazaras in both Pakistan and Afghanistan (Reuters, 2021). Karima Baloch was a human rights advocate who began her career in 2005 as a proponent of independence and human rights. In 2016, she escaped Pakistan out of fear for her life and sought asylum in Canada. She maintained her advocacy from Toronto and made considerable

use of her social media accounts to draw attention to issues like kidnappings, torture, fabricated disappearances, and other human rights violations that the government was subjecting Balochis to. Her body was discovered close to Toronto's lakefront (Baloch & Ellis-Petersen, 2020). Such repressive measures by the state such as human rights abuses, discriminatory policies, state violence and limited political freedoms are the leading cause of why marginalized groups resort to terrorism.

### **Economic Grievances**

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**“H2:** Economic deprivation creates an opportunity for the rebel groups to resort to violence.”

In addition to the political grievances, research demonstrates that economic injustice leads to political violence. The onset of civil war is generally associated with economic underdevelopment. Collier and Hoeffler (2004) have explained that in poor countries, recruits are readily available because of a lack of employment or economic opportunities. The leaders of insurgencies can also readily enlist supporters and take advantage of economic hardships by making promises of personal financial gain while appealing to their desire to fight for causes. When there is a severe economic disparity in a nation, the wealthy may use force as retaliation to prevent the poor from enacting redistributive economic measures and maintaining the status quo.

The inequitable access to economic opportunities and resources like capital and land as well as variations in living styles are characteristics of inequitable systems. Due to these circumstances, people become frustrated and angry, which might lead to civil unrest. According to Gurr's relative deprivation hypothesis, when a person's material situation falls short of their level of expectations, anger develops. Such feelings may spark social movements that, in some extreme situations, result in terrorism, war, or riots in an effort to meet these expectations (Gurr, 1970). Economic discrimination is seen to be a factor in the likelihood of terrorist attacks rising. Richardson contends that while inequality and poverty alone may not be sufficient for the use of terrorism as a tactic, they may incite the general population to support such activities.

Over the years, numerous ethnic groups have emerged in Pakistan that engage in political violence against the government. These ethnic groups are a result of the provincial government's failure to maintain social or economic stability and development. Balochistan currently ranks lower on the Human Development Index (HDI) than other Pakistani provinces, which is over 0.50% (Tahir, 2017). The Baloch people feel that their resources, particularly their natural resources such as gas and minerals, are being exploited by the central governments and multinational corporations without any benefit to the Baloch people themselves. The majority of the young population in Balochistan are poor, illiterate and unemployed and look for ways to escape by joining these insurgent groups. Ethnic terrorism in Balochistan may be traced to poverty, underdevelopment or low literacy rate, but it solely can't be a factor that the groups resort to terrorist acts.

### **Elite Competition**

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**“H3:** The ethnic groups compete against each other for control over the group and are likely to develop terrorism.”

The third potential factor in ethnic terrorism is rivalry among the elites who, rather than being solely driven by collective grievances against the state policies, claim to represent the ethnic community. The elite competition incorporates the concept of outbidding, wherein actions are taken to gain support and attention from the broader public, with the intention of eliminating the rival competitor. Within ethnic communities, internal conflicts and elite competition tends to merge when there is fragmentation. These highly fragmented communities are characterized by a multitude of competing groups or organizations vying for ultimate control over the future of ethnic groups, unevenly dispersed power of organizations and weak institutionalization (Bakke et al, 2012). Elites may unite at the beginning of a movement to pursue a common goal, but as the movement progresses, they frequently start to turn against one another in order to advance their own interests. These competing elites increasingly promote extreme nationalist platforms.

The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), Baloch Republican Army (BRA), United Baloch Army (UBA), and Lashkar-



e-Balochistan (LeB) are the five main rebel factions in the BNM. Along with that, there are also numerous other insurgent groups, such as Baloch Raaji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS), which collaborate with other organisations to conduct tactical operations (Raj, 2022). While other Baloch groups are led by their families or other Baloch Sardars, the BLF appears to be the only one that asserts support from the Baloch middle class. The BLF has demonstrated an inclination to work with other insurgent groups. Therefore, no such elite competition exists between the insurgent groups of BNM.

### **Conclusion: A Way Forward**

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Ethnic terrorism has been a long-standing and pervasive issue. The research has focused on terrorism, ethnic terrorism and provides explanations on why ethnic groups resort to terrorism. The BNM seeks to address historical grievances, advocate for greater provincial autonomy and resist perceived marginalization from the Pakistani state. The use of terrorism as a means to achieve these objectives is a reflection of the deep-seated frustration and the limited avenues for political expression available to the Baloch nationalist. The most convincing drivers of ethnic terrorism found in the research includes political repression, economic grievances and elite competition. In the case of the Balochistan National Movement, it can be noted that the ethnic groups resort to terrorism mainly due to political repression. The Baloch insurgent groups are more likely to engage in terrorist violence and have growing political discontent with the government. The claim that economic grievances or elite competition increase the possibility of

terrorism does not support the case for BNM and may not be enough to cause ethnic groups to commit acts of terrorism. The research findings suggest that Pakistan should attempt to address the factor of political repression. Economic growth may help the average person's issues, however, in Balochistan, the actual results of launching significant economic programmes are very unanticipated. The leadership of the nationalists is vehemently opposed to the development of the Gwadar port, which is crucial to the peace and stability of the province. Therefore, effective negotiations between the people and the federation are imperative if the state and province are to regain their prosperity and tranquilly. The internal law should be under the control and working of the civilian forces. There is a need to deal with nepotism and manipulation that exists in these institutions. Because of this political nepotism, the evil of corruption is present in the civil armed forces and agencies that create an environment of distrust. Efforts to address the Baloch nationalist issue should involve addressing the root cause of the movement, including addressing political repression, respecting human rights, improving economic conditions and promoting cultural diversity. addressing their demands for greater autonomy and engaging in a meaningful dialogue with Baloch leaders could help alleviate tensions and work towards a more equitable and inclusive future for Balochistan within the framework of a unified Pakistan. Only through an inclusive and comprehensive approach, long-lasting peace and stability can be achieved in Balochistan allowing for the prosperity and development of the region and its people.

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