

How Have Structural and Precipitant Factors Contributed to the Expansion of the Baloch Insurgency Over Time?

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the interaction between long-lasting structural conditions and short-term precipitant processes to support the growth of the Baloch insurgency in the medium term. Based on structural violence, relative deprivation, and resource mobilization theories, the study posits that whereas structural factors, including political marginalization, economic exclusion, extractive resource governance, and weak institutions of the state, constitute a sustainable pool of grievances, organizational consolidation, tactical innovation, state repression, and changes in geopolitics of a region, represent the trigger factors of insurgent growth. Relying on qualitative process tracing and an analysis of peer-reviewed literature, datasets of conflict, and plausible institutional reporting, the article reveals that the resurgence of Baloch militancy after 2019 is a result of the interaction of unfixed structural inequities with enabling conditions of precipitancy, especially the dynamic of the security environment in the region and the coalescence of insurgency alliances. The results highlight the need to have a two-pronged policy response to the structural causes of conflict as well as the immediate precipitants of violence.

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Introduction

There is hardly any single causal factor that can lead to the appearance of insurgencies or their further development. Rather, they are normally the aggregation of structural situations over a long period of time and immediate precipitant events

that transform latent grievances into systematized violence (Crenshaw, 1981; Pilat, 2009). An example of such a dynamic is the Baloch insurgency in Pakistan. The Balochistan conflict, which lasted over seven decades, has gone through several stages of growth and retreat, as well as showing both the unchanging grievances and the changing political, organizational, and regional conditions (Kupecz, 2012; International Crisis Group [ICG], 2018). Although in some cases, insurgent violence has subsided, most notably in the early 2000s and once more after 2019, it is still fundamentally questionable why the war is taking so long and why it starts ramping up once again.

Balochistan is a Pakistani province that is caught in a paradoxical situation. It hosts the most strategically significant part of the country, and it is the largest province in terms of area, valuable natural resources, and a long coastline on the Arabian Sea, and major construction of infrastructure related to the interconnectivity of the territories, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Chatham House, 2024). However, Pakistan is the least developed province in terms of the majority of socioeconomic indicators, and a major share of poverty, low rates of access to state services, and low rates of institutional capacity (UNPO, 2023). These differences have always been at the focus point of Baloch nationalist discourse, where the relationship between the province and the federal state is perceived as a type of exploitation, political marginalization, and forceful subjugation (Gurr, 1970; Kupecz, 2012).

This new Baloch militant activity since 2019, however, cannot be attributed solely to structural grievances. Many of the complaints that the Baloch nationalist movement capitalized on, including the right to self-determination, resource ownership, and political representation, are several decades older than the recent explosion (ICG, 2018). The key distinction between the period that followed the year 2019 and the one that existed before is not in the new grievances but in the shift of the already existing discontent into more frequent, coordinated, and deadly violence (ACLED, 2024; PICSS, 2023). This means that the precipitant factors which contributed to the mobilization resources of the insurgent groups, replenishment of leadership, maximization of the local security developments, and improvement of campaigns were being worked upon.

This paper responds to the following research question:

What has been the interaction of structural and precipitant factors leading to the growth of the Baloch insurgency over time, especially over the post-2019 period?

The main thesis that is promoted here is two-fold. To start with, the structural conditions, which precondition the continued susceptibility of Balochistan to the insurgent mobilization, include the political marginalization of the population, economic deprivation, extractive resource control, poor state legitimacy, and disputed identity. Such circumstances foster long-term discontents and reduce the credibility of the state among the aggrieved societies, which results in a lax atmosphere of revolt (Galtung, 1969; Gurr, 1970). Second, precipitant factors, which include change of leadership, formation of insurgent alliances, tactical innovations, state repression, and regional geopolitical changes, are triggering factors that transform the latent grievance into the active insurgency and influence the course of violence in the long run (Crenshaw, 1981; Pilat, 2009). The 2019

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escalation is a combination of unresolved structural imbalance and facilitating precipitating factors, namely, organizational consolidation among Baloch militant groups and a shift in the regional security environment due to the developments in Afghanistan (CTC West Point, 2025; ICG, 2024).

Such an approach of analysis is similar to the recent literature on insurgent resurgence in Pakistan and similar settings, which notes that both short-term and long-term explanations are important to be integrated, and one should not be prioritized over the other (Akhtar and Ahmed, 2023; Newman, 2006). Through this, the article aims to transcend the descriptive narratives of violence and provide a theoretically based explanation of the reasons behind the expansion of insurgency in Balochistan at specific times despite multiple counterinsurgency operations.

Historical Background: Baluchistan Cycles of Insurgency

To define the modern extension of the Baloch insurgency, it is necessary to put it into its larger historical context. The struggle between the Pakistani state and the Baloch nationalist forces can be traced back to the early days of the formation of Pakistan, when the princely state of Kalat was incorporated in 1948, which is a process that is still disputed in the Baloch historical memory (Kupcz, 2012). The next rebellions were in 1958-59, 1963-67, and the most notable was the comprehensive rebellion in 1973-77 after the provincial government was dismissed and the central one established (ICG, 2018).

Similar pre-conditions were associated with all these insurgency waves they desired greater provincial autonomy, access to the local resources, and they did not feel satisfied with the perceived political domination of the federal center (Kupcz, 2012). Although military operations managed to subdue those rebellions, no political solution was offered to fix the structural issues that created the reasons for dissatisfaction. In this way, insurgent networks' generations, collective memory of struggle, and victimization stories went on (Galtung, 1969; Qureshi, 2021).

The recent phase of the insurgency that began in the early 2000s was an enormous change in the scale and manner. This decision of the new resources and growing use of exploitation projects along with the growth of security operations and the assassination of the high-profile Baloch leader, Nawab Akbar Bugti, in 2006, only intensified the dissatisfaction and caused the recruitment to militant groups (Jamestown Foundation, 2019; ICG, 2018). The groups of new insurgents, such as the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) and the Baluchistan Liberation Front (BLF), imitated the methods of guerrilla operations, infrastructure attacks, and their actions extended beyond the province (Verma et al., 2024).

Although the militant violence has died down somewhat in the mid-to-late 2010s, primarily due to an extended security operation and internal disorganization of insurgent groups, the structural circumstances remained largely the same (ICG, 2018; Chatham House, 2024). The new intensification, which has been experienced since the year 2019, is, thus, not the action of a new conflict, but rather a new phase of an old conflict that has been established through the combination of old grievances and new stimuli.

Conceptualizing Structural and Precipitant Factors

Analytically, this paper draws a distinction between structural factors and precipitant factors; the distinction that has also been used extensively to study terrorism and insurgency (Crenshaw, 1981; Pilat, 2009). Structural factors are long-term, systemic states that are entrenched in political, economic, and social institutions and create chronic grievances and diminish state legitimacy. These are the tendencies of political exclusion, economic disparity, failure of governance, and marginalization in regard to identity (Galtung, 1969; Ross, 1993).

Precipitant factors, in their turn, are the short- to medium-term processes or phenomena that cause or promote the violent mobilization. These can be leadership assassinations, organizational realignments, changes in state repression, tactical innovations, or changes in the regional security environment (Crenshaw, 1981; Pilat, 2009). Although precipitant factors do not generate grievances, they influence when, how intense and what violence of the insurgents will be.

This difference is especially helpful in terms of understanding why insurgencies grow at some point in time even though complaints were made over a long time. Structural factors are relevant to the Baloch case, as explaining why insurgency is a persistent possibility, but precipitant factors explain why violence increased in 2019 as opposed to earlier or later (ACLED, 2024; PICSS, 2023).

Literature Review: Explanation of Insurgency and Separatist Violence

The nature of the study of insurgency has been a long-time focus of the connection between the state structures and the peripheral populations. Both classical and modern theories narrow down to the point that insurgent violence is hardly the result of ideology but is a consequence of long-standing political and socioeconomic inequalities inherent within the state-society relationships (Gurr, 1970; Ross, 1993; Newman, 2006). It is specifically the peripheral regions, with weak political incorporation, extractive economic structures, and coercive governance, which are particularly subject to rebellion since these conditions lack legitimacy between the state and potentially lead to the mobilization of non-state actors (Galtung, 1969; Fearon and Laitin, 2003).

As part of this general literature, Balochistan is often discussed as a model example of a center-periphery struggle in a postcolonial state (Kupecz, 2012; Qureshi, 2021). Scholars highlight the fact that the federalism of Pakistan has long failed to assimilate Balochistan on equal political and economic grounds, instead, basing it on centralism and domination by the military, as well as on the co-optation of elites of choice (ICG, 2018). The result of this mode of governance has created a chronic lack of legitimacy, which makes the province structurally susceptible to the mobilization of insurgents (Galtung, 1969; Newman, 2006).

Structural explanations of the Baloch insurgency

There is a significant body of literature that explains the existence of the Baloch insurgency by structural factors, especially economic marginalization and political foreignation. Kupecz (2012) holds the view that the recurring patterns of rebellions in Balochistan represent unanswered questions of autonomy and sovereignty since the inception of Pakistan. In the same vein, Qureshi (2021) argues that the exclusion of Baloch political actors at the federal level in meaningful decision-making is a system supporting the views of colonial-like domination.

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In these structural explanations, economic grievances are given a center stage. Researchers point out the paradox of the situation in Balochistan: it is surrounded by enormously rich natural resources and yet the province is underdeveloped to the point of being a typical instance of in-country resource colonialism (Ross, 1993; Chatham House, 2024). The mining of minerals, the extraction of natural gas, and mass infrastructure have traditionally served more federal institutions and outside forces than the locals, which has contributed to the feeling of exploitation and dispossession (UNPO, 2023; Verma et al., 2024). This dynamic is consistent with the resource curse literature that opines that resource-endowed areas in a weak institutional framework have a higher likelihood of being plunged into a violent conflict because of rent-seeking, inequality and failure of governance (Ross, 2004).

Scholarship rooted in human rights supports the point of structural argument further by recording the social impact of extended militarization. The cases of forced disappearance, extrajudicial murders, and collective punishment in Balochistan are described by the Human Rights Watch (2020) and the U.S. Department of State (2023) and contribute to alienation and radicalization. These practices are forms of institutionalized violence in terms of structural violence and they make coercions customary and disregard the moral legitimacy of the state (Galtung, 1969).

Although these works are convincing in showing why Balochistan continues to be fertile territory of insurgency, they provide scanty information about **why insurgent violence grows at certain instances**, including the post-2019 one. Temporal changes in insurgency cannot be accounted by structural issues alone since most of these grievances have existed over decades with the different variations in violent levels (Pilat, 2009).

Explanations of precipitate and insurgent resurgence.

To have a degree of attention to the dynamics in time, scholars tend to concentrate more on the precipitant factors, which are short-term developments that trigger violence. Crenshaw (1981) defines the precipitants as events or processes that change latent grievances into active insurgency such as leadership assassinations, political repression, changes in organizations and external intervention. Pilat (2009) also points out that the violence is influenced by the intensity of precipitants and not the motivations.

Among the Baloch, a number of studies point out the main precipitant events that are associated with insurgent escalation. The assassination of Nawab Akbar Bugti in 2006 is considered by many to be a tipping point that radicalized parts of the Baloch society and drove militant recruitment into higher gear (Jamestown Foundation, 2019; ICG, 2018). In more recent reports, organizational changes and, especially, the establishment of militant groups, including the Baluch Raji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS) are identified as enabling factors of increased insurgent activities (Verma et al., 2024; CTC West Point, 2025).

There is a different line of literature that makes special stress on regional geopolitics as a precipitant factor. The transformation of cross-border militant dynamics due to changes in the security environment in Afghanistan, in particular, the resurgence of the Taliban to power in 2021, has enabled the permissible environment of the different non-state actors, including Baloch insurgent groups (ICG, 2024; ACLED, 2024). Although the ideological approaches used by Baloch militancy differ from

Islamist movements, the scholars observe that the overlapping logistical spaces, arms markets, and havens can work in an indirect manner to increase operational capacity (CTC West Point, 2025).

Further support of the role of precipitants in quantitative conflict studies is provided. The records of ACLED (2024) and PICSS (2023) show that there are sharp variations in frequency and lethality of attacks in the Balochistan region following recognizable shocks, including changes in leadership, increased security activity, or destabilization of the region. These results support the premise that the mediation of grievances to violence is mediated by precipitants.

Limitations of Scholarly Research

Although current research is quite abundant, there are three major gaps.

In the first place, a large part of the literature considers structural and precipitant factors separately, but does not investigate their interaction over time. It is common in structural analyses to deemphasize the agency, organization, and timing, whereas precipitant-based studies are prone to underestimating the underlying basis of insurgent legitimacy (Newman, 2006; Pilat, 2009).

Second, the systematic analysis of the **2019 growth** of the Baloch insurgency through the prism of an integrated theoretical framework is carried out in relatively few studies. Although reports on recent policies are recording an increase in violence, they tend to be descriptive, with no clear theoretical basis (PICSS, 2023; PIPS, 2025).

Third, there is an under-use of comparative lessons of existing literature on insurgency as a whole, especially in the theories of structural violence and resource mobilization to analyse Baluchistan. This restricts the explanatory capacity of the available accounts and their applicability to larger discussions on resurgence by insurgents.

These gaps are discussed in this article, where structural and precipitant explanations are combined within a single framework of analysis and implemented into recent events in Balochistan.

Theoretical Framework

This study will use a **multi-theoretical approach** to describe how the Baloch insurgency has grown over the years using structural violence theory, relative deprivation theory and resource mobilization theory. The combination of these methods can be used to understand the continuation of insurgency violence and its subsequent peaks every now and then.

Structural Violence

The social, political, and economic structures that disadvantage some groups are other forms of structural violence, which was developed by Galtung (1969) to conceptualize the social, political and economic violence as not necessarily present in physical forms. Structural violence in Balochistan is experienced in the form of endemic underdevelopment, political marginalization, and authoritative governance practices restricting access to life opportunities and dignity (UNPO, 2023; Human Rights Watch, 2020).

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This framework states the reason why the grievances are long-lasting and intergenerational in Balochistan. Structural violence does not necessitate a continuous repression to occur; instead it is recreated by institutions and policies which legitimize inequality (Galtung, 1969). In this regard, even the times of decreased violence do not exclude insurgent potential as the grievances are still not addressed.

Relative Deprivation

The relative deprivation theory supplements the structural violence by providing a way in which the perception of injustice is converted into collective action. The argument used by Gurr (1970) is that groups are most likely to rebel when responses to the expectations and actual socioeconomic or political results are perceived as a gap. In Baluchistan, autonomy, equitable distributions of resources, and development, especially after major projects are announced like CPEC, have been missed, a factor that fuels perceptions of deprivation (Chatham House, 2024; Verma et al., 2024).

Relative deprivation comes in very handy when it comes to explaining why development initiatives are at times the source of conflict and not elimination. Unfulfilled promises trigger more anticipations than deliveries, and this further frustrates and predisposes people to militant accounts (Gurr, 1970; Ross, 2004).

Resource Mobilization and Organizational Capacity

Although the grievance-based theories are useful to explain motivation, they fail to explain the insurgent capacity. Resource mobilization theory fills this gap by considering the organizational structures, leadership, funding, and networks that can be used to create a sustained collective action (McCarthy & Zald, 1977). When applied to insurgency, where the alliances, tactical learning, and availability of resources are essential, grievances can lead to efficient violence or not (Horowitz and Potter, 2014).

The unification of militant organizations under umbrella formations like BRAS in the Baloch case is an important change in the mobilizations of resources, making it possible to not only coordinate and achieve tactical sophistication, but also geographic expansion (CTC West Point, 2025). This aspect of the organization is crucial in explaining the post-2019 rise.

Integrating the Framework

Each theory, taken separately, completes a piece of the puzzle. By joint effort, they give a detailed explanatory account:

- The presence of grievances can be explained by structural violence.
- Relative deprivation describes the emotional and cognitive processes between inequality and mobilization.
- Resource mobilization is the reason why insurgency capacity grows at specific times.

It is this combined model that provides a delicate examination of the interaction of structural and precipitant factors that ultimately lead to insurgent growth with time.

Research Methodology

The paper utilizes a process tracing, qualitative design to examine how the interaction between long-term structural and short-term precipitating factors has over the years contributed to the spread of the Baloch insurgency. Process tracing is especially suitable to this question, as it allows the systemic discovery of causal processes between permanent political, economic, and governance-related arrangements and momentary propelling dynamics leading to the manifestation of results (George and Bennett, 2005). The study does not test and isolate variables, but in fact, reconstitutes sequences of events, institutional configurations, and transformations of the organization that together explain the rise of insurgent violence. The secondary data come in the form of triangulated secondary data based on multiple valid sources, including peer-reviewed academic literature on insurgency, nationalism, and political violence in Pakistan and other countries, conflict and security datasets such as ACLED, PICSS, and PIPS to identify trends and changes in militant activity, especially since 2019, and policy-oriented research published by leading think tanks, including the International Crisis Group, Chatham House, the Jamestown Foundation, and the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point. These are supplemented by the reports of human rights and governance submitted by such organizations as Human Rights Watch, U.S. Department of State and the affiliated to UN organizations, which record practices in states and their impacts on society and the carefully chosen reporting by reputable international media, which are only utilized to support major incidents and chronicles. The cross-source triangulation would increase the rigor of the analysis as well as reducing the bias, which is particularly important in light of the politically controversial and information-limited environment of the Balochistan.

Analytical Strategy

The analysis is done in two phases. It looks back at the **structural factors** as long-term background conditions that create a constant grievance and reduce the level of insurgent mobilization. Second, it links such structural conditions with **precipitant factors**, which trigger and enhance violence. This is the progression process in which the theoretical framework presented above has a focus on interaction and not causal exclusivity (Pilat, 2009; Newman, 2006).

Structural Factors behind the Baloch Insurgency

i. Political marginalisation and center-periphery government.

One of the long-term structural principles of the Baloch insurgency is political exclusion. The formation of Pakistan has been marked by the centralized administration of power, the intermittent suspension of the elected administrations, and the disproportional contribution of the security establishment in the political decision-making (Kupecz, 2012; ICG, 2018). The practices have compromised the formation of representative institutions and disempowered the people in the constitutional grievance redress mechanisms.

Recurring provincial government dismissals, mostly in the 1970s, and the perpetual supremacy of federally appointed administrators led to a solidification of the idea that Baloch political agency was conditional and revocable (Qureshi, 2021). Although the impact of the reform in Balochistan was constrained by gaps in implementation and federal dominance over the main resources, even after the 18 th

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Constitutional Amendment that formally gave provincial autonomy, the 18th Constitutional Amendment sufficiently enriched provincial autonomy (ICG, 2018; Chatham House, 2024).

Structurally, there is institutionalized violence in which such governance structures are arrangements of denying political voice and autonomy (Galtung, 1969). In the long-run, this undermines the legitimacy of the state and legitimises resistance instead of an alternative form of political expression, especially by the youth who view electoral politics as unproductive (Newman, 2006).

ii. Unequal economic development and poverty

Economic marginalization is the key in both the Baloch nationalist rhetoric and academic accounts of insurgency. Though Balochistan is a large province with resource endowments, it is always last in the ranking of Pakistan provinces in terms of income, access to education, healthcare, and infrastructure developments (UNPO, 2023; World Bank, 2022).

Nor is it only a matter of geography or population density that results in this deprivation, but most often seen as the result of chosen policy decisions that favor extraction at the cost of local development (Ross, 2004; Chatham House, 2024). The discovery of natural gas in Balochistan in 1950s contributed to the industrialization in other provinces way before any major parts of Balochistan were even allowed gas access, which solidified exploitative narratives (Kupecz, 2012).

This is especially educative in relative deprivation theory. The development expectations increased strongly with the news of mega-project development, like CPEC, but the visible effects on the lives of the local citizens in terms of jobs, education, and services remained minimal, particularly in the rural districts (Gurr, 1970; Verma et al., 2024). This expectation and actuality disparity enhanced impatience, and insurgent accounts in which development is subject to neo-colonial expropriation became more convincing.

iii. Resource exploitation and CPEC complaints

Resource governance is one of the pillars, through which economic and political grievance collide. Balochistan contains major mineral reserves and major infrastructure developments such as Gwadar Port, which is at the heart of the Belt and Road Initiative by China (Chatham House, 2024). Although federal officials discuss CPEC as a development program of transformation, it may seem like an exclusionary and securitizing development to the local communities.

Research also shows that a lot of CPEC developments depend on foreign workers, provide few jobs to the locals, and are surrounded by massive protection efforts, which supports the idea that the state is more focused on strategic and foreign interests than local well-being (UNPO, 2023; Verma et al., 2024). These relations are consistent with the literature on the resource curse that suggests that resource-abundant areas with underdeveloped institutions contribute to the increase in the risk of conflict owing to rent-seeking and distributive injustice (Ross, 2004).

Notably, insurgent gangs aiming to disrupt CPEC-related infrastructure and Chinese citizens have become the most symbolic in their logic of operation, indicating the centrality of the grievances about resource extraction (CTC West Point, 2025). This

targeting approach explains the manner in which the structural economic grievances have been transformed into militant goals.

iv. Militarization, repression, and violation of human rights

The other highly important structural factor is the long-term militarization of governance in Balochistan. These reactions to insurgency have been a steady state response involving security operations that are documented by human rights organizations as patterns of forced disappearance, extrajudicial killings and collective punishment that were part of these campaigns (Human Rights Watch, 2020; U.S. Department of State, 2023).

From a structural violence perspective, this institutionalizes fear and exclusion, which reinforces the perceptions of the state as an occupational entity but not as an authoritative body (Galtung, 1969). Empirical research on insurgency indicates that the indiscriminate repression usually backfires by making civilians more supportive of insurgents and making it easier to recruit (Kalyvas, 2006; Ward, 2020).

Loss and injustice have been unresolved in Balochistan, where these practices persist and cause grievances to their families and communities (Human Rights Watch, 2020). Such experiences are fixed in the collective memory and continue to promote insurgent legitimacy even in the gaps between instances of less violence.

v. Collective memory, identity, and nationalism

Baloch nationalism is a strong structural force that determines the interpretation and mobilization of grievances. Baloch identity is anchored on a common language, tribal organization and historical accounts of independence that date back to preceding the establishment of Pakistan (Kupcz, 2012). These narratives are very popular among insurgent groups since they are able to make their struggle look like a national liberation and not an economic protest.

The memory of previous insurgencies and state repression creates a feeling of historical injustice, which helps militants to place modern grievances in a larger context of resistance (Qureshi, 2021). This type of framing based on identity reduces the recruitment barriers by associating individual suffering with the fate of the people, a process that has been well-known to occur in nationalist insurgencies around the world (Gurr, 1970; Horowitz and Potter, 2014).

vi. Structural opportunity, geography, and demography

Lastly, the geographical location of Balochistan presents a geographical opportunity for insurgency. The large size and low population density of its land, mountainous nature, and porous frontiers make it harder to monitor the state and easier to move militants (Fearon & Laitin, 2003; CTC West Point, 2025). Although geography in itself is not the cause of insurgency, it reduces the cost of operations and increases the survivability of the insurgency after the violence has broken out.

The transethnic connections of the province across borders with Baloch in Iran and Afghanistan simply complicate the control of the province and the formation of transnational support networks, which is one of the reasons why the insurgencies are resilient to date (ICG, 2024). These geographic and demographic factors form one component of the structural environment that makes the insurgent's survival over time easy.

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Interim Assessment

The structural analysis shows that the Baloch insurgency is entrenched in the systemic political, economic, and social situations. These reasons are **why Balochistan has continued to be a continuously at-risk province to insurgency**, yet they do not, in themselves, explain **the timing and magnitude** of growth, especially since 2019. In the study of escalation, it is important to study precipitant factors in which these structural grievances are activated and intensified.

Precipitant Factors and the Post-2019 Escalation of the Baloch Insurgency

The evidence and literature indicate that precipitant factors are proximate triggers that transform structural grievances that have traditionally existed in the past into new and extended insurgent violence. The operation of these precipitants has taken various forms in Balochistan over the recent path that the region has taken. I also discuss each of the categories of precipitants below, based on conflict-tracking, human-rights reporting, organizational studies of insurgency, and regional security analysis.

i. Organizational merger, coalition, and hierarchy.

The consolidation of hitherto divided Baloch groups into more coherent organizations, especially the creation and formalization of umbrella ones, such as the Baloch Raji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS) and collaborative organization between the BLA, BLF, and BRA, along with minor groups (Jamestown Foundation, 2019; Verma et al., 2024), is one of the primaries facilitating enablers of the post-2019 growth. There are three reasons why the idea of organizational consolidation is important:

- **Pooling of scarce resources:** Fragmented groups are stricken by logistic issues, acquisition, and maintenance of weapons. Alliances facilitate economizing (weapons, safe houses, finance), augmentation of operational velocity (Horowitz and Potter, 2014; McCarthy and Zald, 1977).
- **Division and specialization of labor:** Within coalition forms, groups can be specialized (e.g., sabotage vs. assassination vs. propaganda), which makes campaigns more complicated and decapitated (Horowitz and Potter, 2014; Verma et al., 2024).
- **Strategic coherence and signaling externality:** Combined media releases and combined assaults exert propaganda on their ability to do more and recruit individuals, as well as politically stress the state (CTC West Point, 2025).

Data on conflict and security reporting also show that the rate of multi-site, coordinated attacks increased since 2019 as groups became more coordinated, which is also empirically aligned with the resource-mobilization literature (ACLED, 2024; PICSS, 2023). Process tracing reveals that the formation of alliances was made before waves of high-impact operations, thus indicating causality with organizational capacity as a precipitant (Fearon and Laitin, 2003).

ii. Political faction and realignment

Change in leadership may be catalytic. The groups can be re-oriented by charismatic leaders or strategically capable ones, intra-factional conflicts can be defused, and strategic targeting that elevates the public profile can be prioritized (Freeman, 2014;

Humphreys and Einstein, 2003). When mid-level commanders can reconcile and give allegiance to a central figure or council, the insurgency usually shifts towards continued campaigns (Horowitz and Potter, 2014). Security analyst reports record re-alignment patterns of Mehsud and other tribal networks in the neighboring situation; by analogy, the performance of the Baloch leadership reconciliation in relation to BRAS-type coordination significantly increased the effectiveness of the campaign (Jamestown Foundation, 2019; Verma et al., 2024).

iii. Operational learning and tactical innovation

The introduction of new strategies- better IED design, combined arms ambush, suicide bombing cadres, remote-detonation tactics and cyber-enabled propaganda is an immediate precipitant since tactical innovation is a variable that changes the calculus of attackers and the defenders (Kalyvas, 2006). Training camps, observation of the battlefield, or even outside training often spread tactical learning all over the movements (Steinberg, 2002; CTC West Point, 2025). In Balochistan, the analysts have reported the significant rise of complex and multi-vector attacks and the discriminative application of suicide attacks in destroying high-value infrastructure (PIPS, 2025; Reuters, 2024). Tactical innovation performs two precipitant functions: (a) creating the shock effects that make the perception of control by the state unstable, and (b) forcing the state to initiate mass security operations that can produce a counterresponse within the community and recruitment (Kalyvas, 2006; Ward, 2020).

iv. Cross-border sanctuaries and regional security shifts (Afghanistan and beyond)

Power politics in the area will be powerful external precipitants. When the U.S. started withdrawing from Afghanistan (2021), the Taliban returned and established the sanctuary dynamics of the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan (ICG, 2024). The motivation and agenda can be different, yet under the aid of safe havens, historically marginalized groups have a chance to reestablish the training, logistics, and weapons transit (Byman, 2020; CTC West Point, 2025)

Key mechanisms include:

- Secure rear-based training and rest with allowance of riskier operations into Pakistan (ICG, 2024).
- The movement of arms and ammunition, such as unspent materials of the past campaigns and black markets across borders (ACLED, 2024).
- Even tacit tolerance or non-intervention of neighboring authorities, which proves to be inadvertent and even tacit due to political goodwill, can serve as a catalyst (ICG, 2024; UN reports).

Empirical incident mapping reveals that there are clusters of intense attacks in districts with close cross-border paths in months after significant developments in Afghanistan, and this is also clear in the case of operational surges made possible by the sanctuary (PICSS, 2023; ACLED, 2024).

v. State Negotiation Games, Truces, and Their By-products

Deliberate or accidental efforts to reach negotiated settlements or to declare unilateral truces can also backfire as precipitants of accelerants when they (a) give legitimacy to insurgents, (b) allow them to regroup, and (c) create asymmetrical

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gains (Toros, 2008; Basit, 2021). Elsewhere, ceasefires have led to groups re-equipping and reorganizing command, and the Baloch case follows the same pattern: periodic negotiations and political detainee releases led to a temporary decline in violence, which was inevitably followed by a greater one in the event of a trust failure (ICG, 2018; Jamestown, 2019).

The operational-political mechanism in this case is the **negotiating window** by which there is less pressure on operations, which allows the insurgency to accumulate resources and reposition itself; failure of which the insurgency forms back with greater capacity (Crenshaw, 1981). The process of counterinsurgency has long acknowledged this dynamic, and it can be observed in the process tracing of Baloch violence cycles (Newman, 2006; Pilat, 2009).

vi. Disappearances, coercive counter-insurgency and the recruitment feedback loop

Investigations of human rights reveal that **brutal security** actions such as forced disappearances, killings with no trial, and general raids are acute precipitants because they amplify the level of community grievances and trigger their recruitment processes (Human Rights Watch, 2020; U.S. Department of State, 2023). This process of repression-recruitment has been observed in conflict zones: the state abuses lead to moral outrage, and insurgents get strong recruitment stories (Kalyvas, 2006; Ward, 2020).

In Balochistan, there are recorded trends of no due process arrests and disappearances, which have only exacerbated family-level grievances that result in retaliatory mobilization and increased sympathy to militant groups- further adding to insurgent ranks and thus allowing more operations (Human Rights Watch, 2020; UNPO, 2023). Quantitative conflict analysis demonstrates that indiscriminate repression is positively correlated with further spikes in insurgent events, which are also reflected in the local databases (PICSS, 2023; PIPS, 2025).

vii. Dispossession events, economic shocks, project-level grievances (CPEC)

Infrastructure or extractive projects may also be precipitated in the event that the deployment causes some local displacement, land rights disputes, or a sudden alteration in livelihoods with little compensation (Ross, 2004; The Diplomat, 2021). The role of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is complex: the prospects of development have led to expectations on the local level, and the perceived failure to deliver local jobs, transparent contracts, and environmental protection has been seen as dispossession, which is an acute precipitant (Chatham House, 2024; Verma et al., 2024).

Land appropriation notices, conflicts with company security information or bloody scenes involving contractors are events that often trigger local anger and may even lead to armed sabotage in case grievances are organized into action by the insurgents (CTC West Point, 2025; The Diplomat, 2021).

viii. Funding, criminal economy, and the illegal resource nexus

Irregular economies frequently play a role in insurgencies, including extortion, smuggling, criminal rents, and so forth (Bueno de Mesquita and Dickson, 2007). Precipitants can be sudden increases in criminal income (e.g., by controlling the

transit routes of narcotics or illegal mining) because they allow increasing the capacity of operations qualitatively (Phillips, 2014). To demonstrate that in Baluchistan, the insurgents charge taxes on the local actors of the economy or dominate some extraction fields, which have been associated with the periods of heightened attacks owing to the immediate enhancement of the amounts of cash due to weapons and logistics (Jamestown Foundation, 2019; Verma et al., 2024).

ix. Diaspora militancy, foreign lobbying, and globalization

Diaspora financing and foreign-level political campaigning are precipitant multipliers since it offers finance, diplomatic reach, and media presence (Purdah, 2022). A more important mobilization of the diaspora may embolden insurgent groups and globalize grievances, piling pressure on the actors of the home state and occasionally triggering a backlash of violence, which leads only to the further mobilization of the diaspora (Horowitz & Potter, 2014; Purdah, 2022).

x. Accelerants of the information environment, social media, and narrative

Grievance digitalization, live postings of abuses, live-streaming of funerals, and viral storytelling are a new-fangled precipitant. Outrage cycles and recruiting can be accelerated with the help of fast, emotive distribution of alleged rights abuses, which reduce the informational and coordination costs incurred by mobilizers (Tilly and Wood, 2009; Horowitz and Potter, 2014). Images. In the case of the Baloch, there is an amplification of local events into large-scale mobilizations as a result of social media interactions and diaspora outlets, which pressure insurgent groups to intensify and the state to act in a precipitous manner (Qureshi, 2021; Verma et al., 2024).

Process tracing: the combination of the precipitants in 2019-2024.

When the above causal mechanisms are applied to the window of 2019-2024, it exhibits a sequence. The latent pool was the structural grievance (historical, political and economic marginalization); the pool was transformed into the coordinated capacity through the **organizational consolidation** (BRAS, 2019-2021) (Horowitz and Potter, 2014). The shock events of 2019-2022 were the result of **tactical innovations** and **target selection**, which necessitated securitized responses. The **Taliban change** in Afghanistan (2021) increased the scope of protection and provision, enhancing areas of operation (ICG, 2024). Periods of negotiation and brief truces were taken advantage of to rest, (Pilat, 2009), **repressive countermeasures** (disappearances, raids) increased the ranks (Human Rights Watch, 2020). At the same time, the occurrence of CPEC-related dispossession and the activism of the diaspora increased grievances to larger political scales (Chatham House, 2024; Purdah, 2022). These processes all had a synergistic effect on each other- this is why the surge was more prolonged and spread across more geographical regions than the previous cycles.

Discussion

The broadened scrutiny of precipitant elements proves that **timing, capacity, and opportunity** are effective explanations of insurgent growth in terms of monocausal structural explanations. Precipitants work through discrete processes, which are resource pooling, access to sanctuaries, tactical change, repression-feedback loops, and narrative amplification, that work in interaction with structural grievances. This combined causality is why the Baloch insurgency has been re-spiked every now and then despite frequent security campaigns: in case the structural base is not addressed,

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any mix of positive precipitants can open up new expansion (Crenshaw, 1981; Pilat, 2009; Horowitz and Potter, 2014).

Most importantly, the discussion identifies pitfalls in policies: reactive heavy-handedness or ad-hoc arrangements of amnesty without institutional reforms will give short-term relief but will precondition more severe future waves. The statistics indicate a severe state-action paradox: **in short-term coercion, the activity is inhibited, but the risk rises in the medium term** when the coercion is exercised without the rights-respecting protection and when it is not accompanied by political inclusion (Kalyvas, 2006; Human Rights Watch, 2020).

Policy implications:

According to the integrated structural-precipitant analysis and the comparative evidence, the following policy package, which is informed by research, will be recommended.

- i. Harmonizing political reform (institutional guarantees + revenue sharing):** It has been established that to realize long-term stabilization, there has to be transparency, legally binding revenue-sharing policies, and local participatory governance (ICG, 2018; Ross, 2004). The perceptions of relative deprivation are alleviated, and the recruitment insurgency narratives are undermined with an authoritative formula (statutory royalties, local procurement quotas, and independent auditing).
- ii. Targeted, intelligence-led operations with rights safeguards:** Studies show that the precision operations (related to leadership/finance nodes) and the strong accountability are likely to lower the collateral grievance (Kalyvas, 2006; Ward, 2020). Provide checks and balances (having a judiciary, ombudsman) in order to avoid abuse and interrupt the repression-recruitment circle (Human Rights Watch, 2020).
- iii. Sanctuary using multilateral diplomacy:** Cross-border sanctuaries are precipitant facilitators; the diplomatic, intelligence, and developmental involvement with other neighboring states causes a reduction in sheltering ability (ICG, 2024; ACLED, 2024). Multilateral surveillance systems and information exchange can restrict the movement of weapons and manpower.
- iv. CPEC and extractive conflict-sensitive development:** There is evidence that participatory environmental/social impact assessment, the employment assurances of the locals, and transparent contracting minimize the triggers of dispossession (Chatham House, 2024; Verma et al., 2024). Invest in local human capital (skills, support of small businesses), to transform projects into visible local benefits.
- v. Community reconciliation, transitional justice, and reparations:** Truth programs, Reconciliation programs, and restitution of families that vanished are a way to legitimize and negate grievances in the long run (ICG, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2020). Community-level restorative justice includes piloting.
- vi. Digital resilience strategy and counter-narrative:** As precipitant shocks spread faster and further through social media, state and civil society ought to develop together with plausible information campaigns, quick reaction redress

sources, so the cascades of rumors may be avoided (Horowitz and Potter, 2014; Qureshi, 2021).

vii. Economics of deradicalization: encourage defections and reintegration:

Demobilization studies accentuate that the experience of security offers, together with livelihood packages, education, and psychosocial support, lowers recidivism (Steinberg, 2002). Conditional reintegration of low-level fighters.

Conclusion

The growth of the Baloch insurgency since 2019 can be most fully understood as a combination of structural grievances that led to the development of the constellation of precipitant triggers that augmented organizational capacity, tactical potency, external support, and recruitment. The structural drivers include marginalization, exclusion of resources, and poor governance, which form the background of continuous insurgent potential, but the precipitants are events that trigger the realization of the potential. The policy implication is obvious: without long-term, rights-based political and economic reforms that take into account structural injustice, the successes of security will hardly be long-term, and every new set of precipitant conditions will produce further growth opportunities.

This study highlights the fact that a combined counter-insurgency approach can be employed to help diminish the opportunities of precipitants (sanctuaries, illicit finance, organizational consolidation) and also in the process, tackle structural fault lines (revenue sharing, political inclusion, community development). The structural-precipitant model needs to be operationalized in future scholarly research to conduct quantitative tests (time-series analysis of incident drivers, causal pathway modeling) as well as broaden comparative studies across resource-abundant peripheries. To policymakers, the evidence suggests long-term coordinated reforms as opposed to occasional security bursts.

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