



Insurgency, Geopolitics, and the Security of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Balochistan

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Abstract: The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship project within China's Belt and Road Initiative, aims to establish a strategic link between Western China and Pakistan's Gwadar Port in Balochistan. While CPEC holds considerable promise for regional economic advancement and the strengthening of Sino-Pakistani relations, its implementation has encountered substantial security obstacles, notably within Balochistan. This study investigates the efficacy of security measures implemented to protect CPEC projects, specifically focusing on Gwadar Port, and assesses the extent to which these policies have achieved their intended outcomes. Employing a qualitative methodology based on secondary data sources, the analysis examines the strategic significance of Gwadar Port, Pakistan's security endeavours, and persistent threats to the corridor. Findings indicate that despite the deployment of extensive security measures, internal insurgencies and geopolitical tensions continue to pose a challenge to CPEC's stability, emphasizing the need for adaptable and robust security strategies. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between infrastructure development and security considerations within politically sensitive regions.

Key Words: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Gwadar Port, Balochistan, Security Policies, Economic Development, Sino-Pak Relations.

Introduction

Although the concept of "corridor" as a practical and urban development approach has a long history dating back to the 1880s, economic corridors have gained a lot of popularity in the recent three decades as a means of achieving sub-regional financial growth (Priemus & Zonneveld, 2003). It is because of their capacity to encourage equitable development between areas within nation-states with common borders, as well as between territories within nation-states with significant regional disparities in income. The phrase "economic corridor" has also been used by economists to refer to the economic interconnectedness between major cosmopolitan cities (De & Iyengar, 2014). Following China's intention to create the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)," which is anticipated to connect "Western China to the Arabian Sea" through Pakistan as a showpiece project of its "One Belt, One Road initiative," economic corridor development in Asia acquired more impetus (Athukorala & Narayanan, 2018). Under this project, China will invest over \$55 billion in Pakistan for energy and other employment-related substructure development projects over a period of 5 to 15 years. The establishment of the "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)" or "One Belt, One Road (OBOR)" offers China and its associated countries a number of benefits, and CPEC is a crucial component of OBOR. CPEC is an economic corridor that connects China's landlocked autonomous region of Xinjiang to Pakistan's southwestern Gwadar Port in Balochistan (Rafiq, 2017). A 3218-kilometer corridor made up of pipeline networks, railroads, and highways is to be constructed as part of CPEC (Z. Ebrahim, 2016).

Although the project was first proposed by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang during his May 2013 visit to Pakistan, it was formally introduced in April 2015. The US\$46 billion initial investment aims to increase Pakistan's energy generation capacity and expand its infrastructure (Rafiq, 2017). The CPEC plan is broken down into short-, medium-, and long-term projects that are scheduled to be finished in 2020, 2025, and 2030, respectively (Akhter, 2022). A total of US\$75 billion is anticipated to be spent on the CPEC, of which US\$46 billion will be used until 2020 to guarantee the economic corridor's operationalization; the remaining funds will be used for industrial zones and energy projects in subsequent

stages (Z. T. Ebrahim, 2015). Seeing how stability and safety of structures and investments have a direct impact on the confidence of investors and continuity of projects as well as regional development, it is understandable that security is one of the primary hindrances to successful CPEC implementation, particularly in Baluchistan. The following is the question that this study is going to attempt to address: To what extent have security policies implemented to secure CPEC projects in Baluchistan, namely Gwadar Port, been effective in achieving their mentioned goals? This study will be aimed at finding the answer to the question of the effectiveness of security policies in protecting CPEC projects in Baluchistan and, specifically, Gwadar Port. It also assesses the impacts of the policies on the regional development and the stability of the locals and gives recommendations on how to improve security agencies to ensure the success of the project.

Methodology

The geopolitical theory and the theory of security dilemma can be useful in the study of international relations as they concentrate on the way the activity of states, and the landscape of the region may cause both collaboration and hostility. The security dilemma hypothesis posits that governments are the ones who unintentionally bring insecurity to other individuals as they strive to increase their security, and this is normally done by amassing more military power. This could result in mistrust and arms race that culminates into war. On the other hand, the geopolitical theory puts more focus on how geography shapes state behavior by asserting that the power of a state and its strategies in security relies on the natural resources and strategic positions and closeness to adversaries. Together, these concepts demonstrate that governments can be defensive or offensive in response to perceived threats and territorial position and that this affects stability and power distribution in the world.

The geopolitical theory directs the examination of the regional impacts of CPEC, and the location of Gwadar Port and the infrastructure of the CPEC has a significant impact on the strategic alignment in South Asia. This paradigm will direct the study to analyze secondary data in order to have a deeper understanding of the geopolitical ambitions of China and Pakistan and the concerns of other countries, particularly India, which considers the CPEC as a strategic infiltration. In order to evaluate these strategic reasons in an orderly manner, articles which emphasized the physical location of Gwadar and its economic impact in the region were divided into "Geopolitical Implications."

The theory concepts the study of security practices in Pakistan in Balochistan including Task Force-88 and Special Security Division that were instituted to safeguard the infrastructure of CPEC are guided by theory. The analysis of the secondary sources which described the regional conflicts and Baloch insurgencies presupposed the use of this strategy. Their categories of Security Responses and Security Escalation gave a more detailed image of the defensive operations that could lead to increasing local and regional tensions by categorizing information on regional political response to the security response, as well as local insurgent response to the security response, and Indian support of separatist the activities.

Data analysis was done in terms of qualitative content analysis that involved coding and sorting of the data collected in the secondary sources to determine patterns, trends, and other salient themes (Kim, Sefcik, and Bradway, 2017).

Gawadar Baluchistan of Strategic Value

Gwadar, a port city located on the south western coast of Pakistan has attained a lot of attention within the recent years due to its strategic location and promising economic opportunities. It is a country with a unique geopolitical location, being located between the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf, which gives Gwadar a unique geopolitical location and making it a gateway in China Belt and Road Initiative and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (Afridi, Khan, and Jamil, 2017).

The construction of Gwadar port in the CPEC program may greatly expand the trade possibilities of Pakistan through the sea transport sector, reducing its dependence on the existing dominating port of Karachi, which is located closer to the Indian coastline (Ali Gholizadeh, Seyedashkan Madani, and Saba Saneinia, 2020). Also, the geographical location of Gwadar on the western shoreline, which is near the Iranian side of the Middle East, presents a crucial

geopolitical edge to Pakistan in the area. This influence can possibly give Pakistan power over the world energy nexus and intervening in the Persian Gulf, where it is required (Ali Gholizadeh et al., 2020).

The deep-sea port infrastructure in Gwadar makes the city a potential maritime trade hub, especially the energy and logistics industry. The development of the port will create a substantial amount of resources to be used in the infrastructure development and act as an economic boost to Pakistan. Furthermore, it can contribute to the creation of a peaceful and stable regional atmosphere by joint activities and finding amicable solutions to political issues (A Gholizadeh, S Madani, and S Saneinia, 2020).

The Gwadar-Kashgar Economic Corridor (GKEC) can be described as a project, which has enormous possibilities to change the Pakistani economy and strengthen its strategic alliances in the future. Kashgar-Gwadar Economic Corridor (KGEC) can bring about economic rejuvenation in Pakistan, and can bring about prosperity in the western part of China. Gwadar Port is an excellent strategic asset to Pakistan with its natural deep sea port, geostrategic location, dependence on landlocked CARs China, and the evolving international nexus in the area (Perveen & Khalil, 2015).. Establishing economic corridors connecting the related regions can facilitate commerce and development. They attract both domestic and foreign investors, which can strengthen the economic engine in strategically important areas. The Kashgar-Gwadar Economic Corridor (KGEC) has the potential to provide riches to the western part of China and economic recovery to Pakistan. This geostrategic corridor is advantageous for regional growth as well as Pakistan-Sino ties, which would ultimately benefit all neighboring nations that join the link. Infrastructure development, the establishment of industrial production facilities, shorter transportation routes that result in lower communication costs, faster product delivery times, and lower inventory costs are some of the advantages of KGEC. KGEC is a strategic strategy with a multibillion dollar master plan that will be implemented by 2030. It will cover a wide range of cooperation sectors, such as technological and economic cooperation, building road and rail connections, fiber optic cable projects, industrial zone development, and advantages to regional nations that will strengthen ties (Sheikh, 2014). The deep harbor of Gwadar served as the primary conduit for trade and communication between India and the Gulf States. Gwadar Port was supposed to be connected to Afghanistan and, via Afghanistan, to Central Asia via road linkages in cooperation with China. In the case of the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea, Gwadar Port is what enables China to balance the Indo-US dominance (Munir, 2018). One of the main CPEC plans is the development and building of the Gwadar Deep Sea Port, which might be advantageous for Pakistan both strategically and economically (Mujahid, 2022).

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Significance for China

For China, the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) via the Pakistani port of Gwadar will provide a convenient and affordable gateway to the "Indian Ocean" as well as other parts of Africa and the Middle East. By reducing the land journey from Kashgar to Gwadar⁹³ by 3000 kilometers, the "CPEC" commerce route will shorten the current 12,000-kilometer marine distance between Beijing and the Persian Gulf (M. Ali, 2020). Great China will be able to acquire vital commodities like oil from the "Middle East" and "Africa" in 10 days instead of 45 days due to the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) project (A. Ali, 2015). Additionally, it is predicted that the new route will cut transportation costs by a third of what they are now. If China adopts the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) route for even half of its oil imports, it may save around \$6 million USD per day, or \$2 billion USD annually. Furthermore, the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) will assist China in securing its future energy and commerce supply channels. China is the world's top oil importer, and Gwadar's Pakistan is situated closer to the "Strait of Hormuz."

(Bhattacharjee, 2015). Additionally, China can effortlessly control their energy supply, which supplies almost one-third of the global oil trade. Through the Pakistani port of Gwadar, the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) provides a safe, cost-effective, and alternate transit route that connects China to the "Indian Ocean," avoiding pirates and solving the "Malacca Dilemma" hazards and inclement weather. The "Strait of Malacca," the second-busiest waterway in the world, is used by China to import between 80 and 85 percent of its oil, which might eventually become a choke point. The conflicting interests of the several regional and international actors, notably China, in the South China Sea might lead to this possible issue (Markey & West, 2016). Likewise, China intends to use economic development to allay domestic security concerns in its restless western region of Xinjiang (Ritzinger, 2015). through the "China-Pakistan

Economic Corridor" (CPEC) Beijing understands that trade and significant investment will support regional stability and economic prosperity (Bhattacharjee, 2015). is the nearest seaport to its landlocked western area, Gwadar Port, can significantly reduce socioeconomic disparities. As a result, China adopted its "Look West Policy" (LWP) to expand its western borders. As the strategy aims to open the country's west by establishing economic and cultural ties with its six "Central and South Asian Muslim" neighbors—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan—Xinjiang plays a crucial role in putting this policy into practice. China will be better able to manage its internal objectives in the western area if a favorable external regional environment is so created (Burki, 2011). In addition to security and economic stability in the western area, Gwadar port gives China a strategic location in the Caspian region, which is rich in energy. Through the port of Gwadar for commerce and energy exchange (Perveen & Khalil, 2015). Furthermore, China prioritizes fostering relationships with its neighbors and developing nations since it supports the non-interference and constructive engagement policy in the area. In addition to proving China's dedication to the "Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) and finishing other connectivity projects, the completion of CPEC will contribute to enhancing China's reputation as a development partner and non-interfering friend (Ramay & Jun, 2022). China's private sector and businesspeople will also have the chance to reach the fastest-growing economies in the world through Pakistan thanks to the favourable perception (Irshad, 2015). According to Louis Ritzinger, who outlines the project's objectives, China's investment in Pakistan is driven by three factors: promoting commerce, supporting its longstanding partner economically, and establishing networks with the west to increase its influence. Since the Persian Gulf is the source of over 60% of China's energy imports, Gwadar Port allows China to monitor the Sea Lines of Communications (SLOC) (Ritzinger, 2015).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Significance for Pakistan

The 62 billion US dollar projects offer Pakistan a unique opportunity to address some of the major obstacles to its economic growth, such as limited foreign investment, the energy crisis, and poor communication infrastructure. The "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) is very important for Pakistan to overcome its current economic dwindling position. There is widespread agreement throughout society regarding the enormous potential of the CPEC to promote economic growth within Pakistan (Esteban, 2016). This corridor lies at the core of regional and global centres' consumption and supply. Therefore, it is expected that the economic corridor will alter the current economic situation in Pakistan's favor. The Corridor project will have immense impacts on Baluchistan province that has remained neglected over many years, as it will construct roads and railway connections, including Gwadar. Connectivity of highways will result in business operation, infrastructure development in the corridor between Pakistan and China will enhance socio economic harmony and the whole region will be better overall. With the foreign direct investment, the natural resources available in Baluchistan may be exploited further, a move that would bring high revenue to the overall development of the country. The given energy crisis in Pakistan makes the planned gas pipeline connecting Kashgar with the rest of the country a significant portion in addressing the energy requirements of the country, transforming the TAP pipeline into an Iran, Pakistan and China (IPG) gas pipeline and altering the Iran, Pakistan and China (IPC) pipeline projection (Takreem, 2013).

Additionally, by linking Pakistan to China, Central Asia, and the Middle East, the CPEC may be a catalyst for greater regional integration, opening the door for greater trade and economic collaboration between these areas, which could open up new business and industry opportunities for Pakistan. Additionally, the corridor may provide Pakistan with access to the lucrative Chinese market, which would significantly increase its exports (Ullah Khan, Hong, & Hussein, 2020). Besides, the planned routes would benefit Pakistan in terms of the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) that would emerge as competitive destinations of manufactured goods, agriculture and services sector, which would serve the process of ever-growing urbanization. The different zones are expected to focus on specific products and facilities within a specific area, where the focus is to use the local labor and raw materials (Nazir, 2016). By promoting socioeconomic development, the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) will improve the nation's overall peace and stability as well as that of the unrest-plagued and underdeveloped province of Baluchistan, making it more sustainable and profitable. Slogans against resource exploitation and deprivation have been a key tactic used by separatist and insurgent movements to mobilize the populace in favor of sub-nationalism. Building a foundational communication infrastructure

can help the local population's socioeconomic status by bolstering small, medium, and micro businesses. As a result, the local population's living standards, literacy rate, and unemployment rate are expected to improve. Improved socioeconomic circumstances for regular Baloch people would also aid in lessening the Sardars' stranglehold on resources (Perveen & Khalil, 2015). Additionally, by strengthening the capability of the law enforcement agencies, the investment would enable the state produce resources to further promote law and order (Markey & West, 2016). Although the 62 billion US dollar package of projects known as the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) is still in its very early stages of implementation, it is currently impossible to confirm the project's actual impact. However, in the long run, it is certain to have a positive impact on Pakistan's economy and create a better geostrategic environment. Even though the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) presents Pakistan and other regional states with a plethora of opportunities, regional dynamics have the power to restrict or increase these opportunities. Additionally, improved infrastructure and energy self-reliance would foster socioeconomic development and enrich underdeveloped areas (Wagner, 2016).

Challenges Facing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in Balochistan

The security issues in Pakistan's Baluchistan region are one of the main causes for worry about the CPEC project. A separatist insurgency, ethnic strife, and political instability have long afflicted Baluchistan, the region that is home to the Gwadar port, a vital part of the CPEC. A hazardous atmosphere has been created by the region's rough topography, porous borders, and the existence of many terrorist organizations, endangering the CPEC's effective execution. In their decades-long fight for more autonomy, Baloch nationalist organizations see the CPEC as a danger to their interests. They have attacked Chinese workers and infrastructure participating in CPEC projects many times, fostering an atmosphere of uncertainty and dread (S. Khan & Liu, 2019). Baluchistan province's other nationalist leaders, including Brahamdagh Bugti, the leader of the banned Baloch's Republican Party (BRP), are opposed to the CPEC and Gwadar port. They have called for a referendum to determine Baluchistan's destiny under the auspices of the UN. The Chinese workers' tankers bringing fuel to the Chinese firm operating on the mining project were abducted and killed by these criminals. They are attempting to attack a Chinese state-owned company's management (Malik, 2017). Moreover, the presence of terrorist groups such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and the Baluchistan The Liberation Army raises additional security issues. These organizations pose a serious danger to the advancement of the CPEC because they have been known to target both Chinese people and Pakistani security forces (Hussain, 2016).

Since 2013, CPEC activities have been underway; thus, since 2018, Pakistan has seen an increase in security concerns and threats. India has opposed the CPEC because it sees it as a danger to its economic and naval might as well as its geographical sovereignty. India has been attempting to interfere with CPEC's regular operations using both conventional and unconventional methods. The apprehension of Kulbhushan Yadav, an Indian spy allegedly affiliated with the Indian RAW (Javaid, 2016), arrested at the Baloch-Sistan border and suspected of providing financial support to Baloch rebels; these facts demonstrate the strong Indian engagement in the area. India has been forced to support the Baloch separatist groups and militants in the area since China and Pakistan have prioritized their megaprojects over Indian emotions. India has chosen to use insurgency organizations to start proxy wars in Pakistan. Chinese Consulates and Chinese nationals engaged in CPEC-related projects have been attacked by these rebel organizations. The military personnel of Pakistan have also been targeted. The reliability and security of CPEC are allegedly seriously threatened by all of these initiatives (H. U. Khan, 2019). The Pakistani defense secretary's 2016 in-camera briefing emphasized India's all-encompassing strategy to undermine the CPEC's operations (Mujahid, 2022). India uses humanitarian concerns as well as the Mumbai attacks as a pretext to defend its meddling in Baluchistan. Yadhav's declaration that he was holding meetings with Baloch terrorists for terrorist purposes was a blatant example of Indian hostility and concern for Baluchistan's security and the CPEC (Kheran, 2017). The complete sabotage campaign against CPEC by India is the reason behind the kidnapping and murder of Chinese workers and Pakistanis in Baluchistan. India has been actively involved in Baluchistan by providing financing to a number of rebel organizations (Shah et al., 2015). It has been reported that Indian intelligence services take advantage of the Indian consulates along the Iranian border to cause unrest in the region. India's overt strategies to cause financial upheaval and unrest in the province of Baluchistan are demonstrated by its complete backing of separatist party leaders like Brahamdagh Bugti by giving them citizenship and protection (Zainab Akhtar, 2018).

Pakistan's CPEC Security Measures

Pakistan took a number of security precautions in 2016 to safeguard CPEC workers and projects. Even while the nation's general security situation improved that year, terrorist group assaults, especially in Baluchistan, sparked worries about the safety of people working on CPEC projects.

Here are the main security measures that were undertaken:

Establishment of the Special Security Division (SSD): The SSD was established in large part by the Pakistan Army to protect Chinese workers on CPEC projects. At first, this division was supposed to have 15,500 soldiers spread among six infantry brigades, each of which had three infantry units and an intelligence unit. However, due to logistical and budgetary difficulties, smaller provinces' worries over their CPEC share, and the requirement for input from many security authorities, the entire deployment of SSD personnel was not accomplished in 2016. Eventually, the SSD's goal strength was boosted to about 32,000, with a sizable increase (more than 13,000) by 2016. The remaining soldiers were to be recruited from other branches of the military, such as special units, police, and paramilitary. Different lead forces and support organizations were used in different provinces for the SSD deployment. At a cost of more than Rs23 billion, the SSD was able to build nine composite infantry battalions and six civil armed forces wings by September 2016, bringing the total number of security troops to over 4,500(Sial, 2016).

Deployment of Security Personnel: About 3,800 Chinese laborers in Punjab were protected by more than 6,300 security guards. Likewise, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, some 2,000 workers were tasked with protecting more than 700 Chinese engineers engaged in 19 projects. In Sindh, more than 2,640 armed soldiers guarded more than 1,140 Chinese workers across 103 projects, while 3,200 security personnel were deployed in Baluchistan to safeguard 600 Chinese workers working in eight projects. Additionally, 439 police officers guarded some 900 Chinese engineers working on six large-scale projects in the Islamabad Capital Territory(Sial, 2016).

Navy's Task Force-88: The Pakistan Navy formed Task Force-886 to guard Gwadar Port and its waterways. For security operations at sea and in the vicinity of Gwadar, this maritime force included ships, rapid assault craft, speedboats, planes, drones, and marines. With an emphasis on safeguarding CPEC, the fourth Pak-China naval drill, which took place in November 2016, strengthened maritime security cooperation even further.

Other Security Initiatives: In addition to the SSD and Task Force-88, other security measures included:

In order to protect Chinese laborers, Sindh formed a special squad of 2,000 people, including former army men. The army of Sindh hired and trained 4,000 additional police officers for CPEC security responsibilities. The Special Protection Unit (SPU) was established by Punjab to protect CPEC officials, infrastructure, and international specialists. The Pakistan Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (Suparco) intends to use satellite surveillance of CPEC routes in order to pinpoint regions that are susceptible to criminal activities and terrorist strikes(Sial, 2016).

Despite these initiatives, several challenges and issues remained, including:

Chinese Security Firms: Pakistan considered having Chinese security firms in projects of CPEC, but chose not to do so due to several political, sociocultural and administrative issues. In the entirety, in 2016, Pakistan increased security of CPEC projects and individuals. The establishment of the SSD and Task Force-88 and other provincial and national initiatives was aimed at solving a number of security issues. The effectiveness of operations and long-term sustainability of the SSD, its compatibility with existing security systems, as well as any external project risks, remained debatable, though.

Conclusion

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has the potential of transforming both China and Pakistan to a great extent, and it aims to enhance their connectivity, trade, and strategic collaboration by developing Gwadar Port and the associated infrastructure. However, it has a high level of security risk particularly within the Balochistan region where

separatist movements, geopolitical tensions, and instabilities in the region have continued to be a challenge to the project stability. Still, the implemented security operations, including special security forces creation and collaboration with the local police, do not shine out the prominent cases of infrastructure and personnel attacks that testify to the existing gaps. The paper demonstrates that, despite the fact that the security system at CPEC has been useful in the efforts of ensuring a safer business environment, a more flexible and inclusive solution is required to address the internal and external threats. Such a more holistic approach to security would aid in making the local acceptance more accepting, enhance socio-economic performances and ultimately achieve regional stability and regional cooperation in the long term. This is what makes this paper conclusive makes it more appealing academically.

Recommendations

Strengthening Local Partnerships: The consultation procedures and development programs help CPEC projects to be accepted more and face less opposition by taking into account the socioeconomic imbalances in the region and engaging the local stakeholders in the projects.

Improved Intelligence and Surveillance: The enhanced use of the latest surveillance equipment, i.e., real-time threat analysis applications and satellite surveillance can strengthen the response rates and eliminate any type of attack.

Overall Counter-Insurgency Programs: Collaboration with the local leaders and the community organization can facilitate the counter-insurgency strategies that can be used to solve the socio-political grievances that lead to resistance.

Greater Economic Integration: You can advance the perception of the people and give them a chance to have jobs, as well as develop a safer environment to implement the infrastructure projects by establishing special economic zones (SEZs) along the routes of CPEC that would be useful to the needs of the local population.

Lasting Diplomatic Preparation: The reinforcement of the diplomatic connection with other nations in the region can be done through co-operation to ensure local security and reduce the possibility of cross border insurrections.

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