



Balochistan and CPEC: Analyzing the Indian Factor

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Article Info	Abstract
<p>Article History:</p> <p><i>Received:</i> April 30, 2022</p> <p><i>Revised:</i> June 28, 2022</p> <p><i>Accepted:</i> June 30, 2022</p> <p>Keywords: Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Economics, Geostrategic, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), Security</p>	<p><i>China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has promising economic and infrastructural developments for Pakistan. The stability and success of CPEC is dependent on the security and peace of Balochistan. Out of the multiple problems CPEC faces, the instability and chaos in Balochistan is one of the major issues. The role of India cannot be ignored in this case, because the development and prospects of CPEC are conflicted with India's national as well as regional interest. This paper explores the Indian direct and indirect intervention in Balochistan which is hampering the viability and potentiality of CPEC. This paper focuses on the geostrategic, economic, and security implications for Pakistan considering the rise in the activities of the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) to destabilize the internal security avenues of Pakistan. The lucid connection between the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and BLA to hinder the functionality of CPEC for the maintenance of the Indian Hegemonic power in the region is investigated. The possible policy options Pakistan can adopt to make the environment conducive in Balochistan for the safe and sound completion of CPEC is also discussed. This qualitative research uses descriptive and explanatory techniques to analyze the multi-faceted implications of the Indian involvement in Balochistan and its consequent impact on CPEC.</i></p>

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Introduction

Balochistan has a significant attraction because of its geographical proximity to Central Asia, the Middle East, and the Indian Ocean region. This makes Balochistan important as well as critical for Pakistan. The unique geostrategic position of Balochistan has attracted the attention of global and regional powers.¹ China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has enhanced the importance and significance of Balochistan as this project will revolutionize the socio-economic developments in Pakistan. CPEC is a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Pakistan which aims at expanding Pak-China relations and attracting trade and investment opportunities from all over the world. It is estimated that more than \$46 billion will be spent on the construction of CPEC and will strengthen the ties between the two states. CPEC aims at creating commercial connections between Pakistan and China to lower the trade cost and enhance the regional development with Pakistan. Economic interdependency and cooperation are the new means to establish ties with other countries in the 21st century. The construction and development of the Gwadar Deep Sea Port is a prominent plan of CPEC and the establishment of this port can prove to be economically and strategically beneficial for Pakistan.²

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), formerly known as the One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR) was acknowledged by the Central Committee of the Communist Party in their 13th 5-year plan. The BRI was envisioned by Xi Jinping in 2013 with its main agenda to create economic integration by involving multiple states. The main agenda of this initiative was to introduce "Institutional Discourse" and "Openness to the East and West" by enhancing global economic trade and stimulating cooperation with the countries that were a part of BRI. China aims at expanding its trade with the East and the West by magnifying its geopolitical and geo-economic relations through the construction of the Gwadar port as it is the closest to the Indian Ocean via the Arabian Sea. The success of CPEC will result in favor of Pakistan as it enjoys

¹ Umbreen Javaid and Javeria Jahangir, "Balochistan: A Key Factor in Global Politics", *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies* 30, no.2 (2015), 91-105.

² Anwar Ali et al., "Indian Factor in CPEC: Prospects and Challenges for Pakistan", *Pakistan Administrative Review* 3, no. 2 (2019): 62-73.

good relations with both China and the West and this will promote trade and economic growth in the country.³

The multibillion-dollar project of CPEC will boost the economy of Pakistan and will make it an economic and trade hub as the economic interdependence can result in political integration in the region. The interest of Central Asian States (CAS) and Russia to become a part of the BRI and to have access to the routes of CPEC will benefit Pakistan both politically and economically. Setting up of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) will amplify the industrial development in the country and enhance employment opportunities resulting in the generation of millions of jobs. The regional strength of Pakistan will be accentuated considering the reciprocity of interests of Iran, Turkey, and CAS, resulting in long-term economic benefits for Pakistan.⁴ The inhibiting factors in the success of CPEC cannot be ignored considering the volatile geostrategic location of Pakistan and its long-withstanding tumultuous relationship with its neighbor India, who is a common adversary of Pakistan and China. The efforts of India to destabilize the progress of CPEC are not unknown to anyone.

The inclusion of Pakistan's three other neighbors in CPEC is a light of hope for Pakistan's security and stability, but the Indian factor in the region has accelerated the isolation policy towards Pakistan; due to its key role against the development of CPEC. The issue of Jammu and Kashmir and the route plan of CPEC to pass through Gilgit-Baltistan is the issue raised by India as it considers it a disputed territory. The statement of Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj in 2018 speaks for the Indian antagonism against CPEC. The geostrategic position of Gilgit-Baltistan and Gwadar are economic and naval threats to India.

Indo-Pakistan hostility is not a new subject inceptioned after the birth of CPEC; it rather has a historical dimension to itself that has resulted in three full-fledged and one limited war between both the states. The Sino-Indian enmity is also a cause of India's resistance towards the development of CPEC even though India and China have fought only one war, the relations between the two states remained politically tumultuous due to their hard realist

³ Li Xiguang, "Building a New Civilization along the One Belt One Road Initiative", *China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Game Changer*, (Islamabad: Institute of Strategic Studies 2016), 1-13.

⁴ Malik Muhammad Ashraf, "China Pakistan Economic Corridor: Analyzing the Indian Factor", *China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Game Changer*, (Islamabad: Institute of Strategic Studies 2016), 73-85.

policies⁵, and the success of CPEC will diminish India's prominent position in the South Asian region. India's resistance to CPEC is a serious concern as it involves the regional actors with whom India does not share very cordial border relations, however, India and China both the countries try not to compromise their economic relations. The association of emerging global economies that include Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS) is an instance of their collective economic endeavors, but India's attitude towards BRI led CPEC is not welcoming primarily because New Delhi views this project as encircling of India by its neighbor Pakistan. The inclusion of territories in CPEC claimed by both Pakistan and India also raise the sovereignty concerns for the latter regarding CPEC related projects.⁶ The prospects and ambitions of CPEC aim to economically integrate the Eurasian and Middle Eastern countries, which will also result in economic and geographical consolidation.

That said, it is imperative to note that Balochistan has a significant role to play in the economic and geopolitical development of Pakistan at present due to CPEC, but the resistance shown by India is hindering the prospects of growth and progressive results for Pakistan. There is a need to explore and analyze the involvement of India in Balochistan in order to understand the threats and implications of India's antagonistic approaches towards the development of CPEC. The research focuses on the Indian involvement via its intelligence agencies and the back door channels that are restricting the milieu of peace and stability in Balochistan through direct and indirect avenues to obstruct the completion of CPEC. The spillover effect of India's efforts is needed to be investigated to have a comprehensive national plan for Pakistan to follow in order to retain the trust of the Baloch people and the Chinese officials for the peaceful and successful completion of CPEC. First, it is important to know the importance of CPEC for Pakistan.

Importance of CPEC for Pakistan

Over the years, economic cooperation has gained significance for establishing stable relations with states in a region; example of such international and regional economic operation plans are the Arab League, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Group of Eight (G8), and the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Such

⁵ B.M. Jain: "India-China relations: issues and emerging trends" *The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs* 93, No. 374 (2004), 253-269.

⁶ Daya Thussu: "BRI: Bridging or breaking BRICS?" *Global Media and China* 3, No. 2 (2018), 117-122.

an effort is adopted by Pakistan and China in the form of CPEC. CPEC is a comprehensive plan focusing on the infrastructure and development of Pakistan and the region. CPEC is the manifestation of the long standing Chinese dream to attain economic hegemony, and in this journey, the biggest beneficiary is Pakistan. CPEC aims at creating a route link between Gwadar port and Kashgar in China through railway tracks and trade routes to enhance the connectivity and communication for trade purposes. This will also ensure better logistical supply. The special economic zones will boost economic development as well as employment opportunities in the country.⁷

The Pak-China cooperation in the energy, IT, communication, and transport sectors will reduce the distance between Kashgar and Gwadar port. The Development of Gwadar as the main economic hub among Pakistan, China, CAS, and the Middle East will enhance the trade of oil and will accelerate the chances of China to use it as a naval base to magnify its presence in the Indian Ocean⁸. Infrastructural and industrial development is considered the measure of growth and development of any country. The joint venture of Pakistan and China will enhance industrial production in Pakistan giving rise to better living standards. Pakistan being an agricultural state, will get a boost through various CPEC sub-plans that include the construction of infrastructure that is conducive and beneficial for the agricultural stimulation of Pakistan.⁹

The investment of the big Chinese companies in the CPEC project will attract global investors whilst opening up better opportunities for the people of Balochistan. Samina Khalil argues that the interest of Chinese industries like Ctrip.com, Hengtong Optic-Electric Company, Jiangsu Yeuda Textile Group, and Shanghai Shaibang Machinery Company Limited, can boost the telecommunication and infrastructural needs and demands of CPEC.¹⁰ Similarly, Umbreen Javaid rightly states that Pak-China economic cooperation resulted in a shift from geopolitics to geo-economics. CPEC will

⁷ Atif Shan Makhdoom, Dr. Aisha Bashir Shah, and Dr. Kiran Sami, "Pakistan On The Roadway To Socio-Economic Development: A Comprehensive Study Of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)", *The Government: Research Journal of Political Science* VI, No. 6 (2017), 37-46.

⁸ Hasan Yaser Malik, "Strategic importance of Gwadar Port" *Journal of Political Science* 19, No. 2(2012), 57-69

⁹ Ghulam Abbas et al., "CPEC's Utility and Concerns under OBOR Initiative: A Pakistani Industrial Perspective", *Multidisciplinary Digital Publishing Institute* 7, No. 3 (2019), 90.

¹⁰ Samina Khalil, "CPEC: Mutually Beneficial Growth Opportunities for China and Pakistan", *Pakistan Journal of Applied Economics* 27, No. 1 (2017), 139-144.

act as a lucky charm for Pakistan to revitalize its geopolitical situation in the region by attracting foreign trade and normalizing its relations with its neighbors.¹¹

India's Hostility towards CPEC

India's hostility towards CPEC is rooted in China's ambition to become an economic giant in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). India is a country that is sandwiched between the two of its adversaries, which are China and Pakistan, and the inception of a megaproject like CPEC is no less than a geopolitical threat to India's status in the region. India's concerns are aggravated by the presence of China in the region. Gilgit-Baltistan is included as an integral part of CPEC for the trade routes, and India considers it a part of Jammu Kashmir. India believes Pakistan to have illegal control over the land of Gilgit-Baltistan. China supports Pakistan in this matter and India considers it as a tactic adopted by China to secure its future CPEC investments¹². India has concerns regarding the joint naval activities between Pakistan and China in the region. India views this as a threat to its power and interests in the IOR. Moreover, India does not seem to be satisfied with the decision of handing over the control of Gwadar Port to China.¹³ India is concerned about the Chinese surveillance in the IOR and the intentions of China to utilize the Gwadar port as its hub for logistics control, and accommodation of submarines and naval ships¹⁴. The possibility of Gwadar becoming the military base of China is also a matter of perturbation for India. Indian navy perceives the presence and domination of China in the region as a strategic approach to undermine its power; as a result, India has taken advantage of all the possible platforms to present its reservations with CPEC as it does not seem to come on terms with it. The potential intimidation of China in the region is being dismantled by India through all political and diplomatic means.¹⁵

¹¹ Umbreen Javaid, "Assessing CPEC: Potential Threats and Prospects", *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 53, No. 2(2016), 254-269.

¹² Don McLain Gil, "An Indian Perspective towards the PoK: Challenges and Opportunities", *Atlas Institute for International Affairs*. June 16, 2020, <https://www.internationalaffairshouse.org/an-indian-perspective-towards-the-pok-challenges-and-opportunities/>. (accessed April 21, 2022).

¹³ Massarrat Abid and Ayesha Ashfaq, "CPEC: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan", *Pakistan Vision* 16, No. 2 (2015): 142-169.

¹⁴ Lieutenant General PK Singh, "China's Strategic Gateway to the Indian Ocean", *Reconnecting Asia*. May 24, 2017, <https://reconasia.csis.org/chinas-strategic-gateway-indian-ocean/>. (April 21, 2022).

¹⁵ Fakhhar Hussain et al., "Challenges to Pak-China Economic Corridor (CPEC): The Indian Perspective", *Elementary Education Online* 20, No. 5(2021), 3764-3770.

CPEC will shorten the route between Balochistan and the Middle East, CAS, and West via the Arabian Sea, which will consequently work in favor of China and Pakistan, resulting in low tariffs and less trade time for both the countries. India lacks this advantage. The trade-ease that CPEC entails is something that India is not ready to welcome as it is a threat to its economic and geopolitical aspiration in the region. India-Iran nexus to manifest the Chabahar Port has been an old long dream of India that has not been fulfilled due to the sanctions imposed on Iran. The completion of this port would cause direct access of India to Tajikistan, reducing the shipment cost and time¹⁶. Unfortunately, the Indian-Iran nexus is still an incomplete and unpredictable venture, and the rise of CPEC is nothing, but a cause of distress for India. Gwadar Port will be a more suitable option for Afghanistan as its distance is only 1237 kilometers and the distance of Afghanistan from Chabahar Port is 1840 kilometers. This would attract Afghanistan towards Gwadar Port more because the route between Afghanistan and Pakistan is also shorter and the infrastructure of roads is suitable for travelling. Moreover, the Chabahar Port is not in its concrete form at present and the pace at which CPEC is developing is massive.¹⁷

The Gwadar projects under CPEC composed of 14 development plans that included the development of the infrastructure of the port and installation of power plants. Out of the 14 development plans 4 have been completed by the mid of 2022, and the other 6 are under development, whereas the remaining 4 are in-pipeline¹⁸. On the other hand, the Chabahar Port is facing issues in the completion of their project after the Taliban take over in Afghanistan in 2021¹⁹. Not only this, but the US-Iran growing conflicting relations which have slowed down the progress of Chabahar Port has paved

¹⁶ Dr. Khalid Manzoor Butt and Anam Abid Butt, "Impact of CPEC on regional and extra-regional actors", *Journal of Political Science* XXXIII, No. 1 (2015), 23-44.

¹⁷ Jawad Falak, Zeeshan Muneer, and Hassan Riaz, "Chabahar: India's Economic Gambit", *Centre for Strategic and Contemporary Research* August 10, 2016, <http://cscr.pk/pdf/ib/Chabahar.pdf>. (Accessed date: April 21, 2022).

¹⁸ CPEC Authority. "Gwadar Projects under CPEC." CPEC Authority: Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives. <http://cpec.gov.pk/progress-update#tabs-26> (Accessed Date: July 7, 2022).

¹⁹ Shreyas D. Deshmukh, "The return of the Taliban and complications for India", *The Economic Times*, August 18, 2021. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/the-return-of-the-taliban-and-complications-for-india/articleshow/85419928.cms> (Accessed date: July 7, 2022).

way for Pakistan to take Iran into confidence regarding CPEC which would determine rapid progress of its phase 2 resulting in regional integration.²⁰

Indian Intervention in Balochistan and Threats to CPEC

The CPEC developments have been active since 2013; as a result, the rise in the threats and security issues has also escalated since 2018 in Pakistan. India has been against the CPEC as it considered it a threat to territorial sovereignty as well as its economic and naval power. India through all traditional and non-traditional means has been trying to disrupt the normal functioning of CPEC. The capture of Indian spy Kulbhushan Yadav, who is said to be a member of the Indian RAW,²¹ was captured from the border of the Balochistan-Sistan and was considered suspicious of funding Baloch insurgents; all these facts are the proofs of active Indian involvement in the province. Pakistan and China have focused on their megaprojects rather than paying heed to the Indian sentiments, which has compelled India to sponsor the Baloch separatists' movements and insurgents in the province. India has adopted the strategy of initiating proxy wars in Pakistan via insurgent groups. These insurgent groups have caused attacks on Chinese Consulates and Chinese citizens working on the CPEC related projects. The Pakistan military personnel have also been a target. All these efforts are said to cause a serious threat to the consistency and security of CPEC²². The statement delivered by the Defense Secretary of Pakistan in 2016 in an in-camera briefing highlighted the comprehensive plan of India to sabotage the working of CPEC.²³

The statement of the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi accepting the existence of relations between RAW and the separatist groups and their leaders is also an initiative adopted by India to demoralize the CPEC. India aimed at enhancing its diplomatic and political relations with Afghanistan for the training of these separatists and insurgents. India has been trying to involve Afghanistan and Iran in a trilateral cooperation program via the Chabahar Port construction to alter the CPEC's benefits. Geopolitically, India has been trying to magnify its relations with the CARs and the Middle East

²⁰ Saima Gul and Shamaila Farooq, "Changing US war politics in Southwest Asia and Regional Cooperation through CPEC," *Margalla Papers* 25, No. 2 (2021), 91-97.

²¹ Javaid, "Assessing CPEC: Potential Threats and Prospects", 254-269.

²² Hafeez Ullah Khan, "Regional Security Threats to CPEC: A strategic Overview", *Journal of The Research Society of Pakistan* 36, No. 1 (2019), 181-189.

²³ ISSI Web Administrator, "RAW set up Cell to sabotage CPEC", *Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad*. April 14, 2016, <https://issi.org.pk/raw-set-up-cell-to-sabotage-cpec/>. April 21, 2022.

via the Chabahar Port construction²⁴. Diplomatically, India aims to isolate Pakistan and intensify its economic issues. Khurram Abbas very explicitly sheds light on the covert and overt efforts of India to tarnish the development and growth of CPEC. India has attacked Pakistan through ideological and visible means to sabotage the working of CPEC by making the province of Balochistan a target of terrorist activities. The Fifth Generation Warfare tactics adopted by the Indian Security Advisor Ajit Doval have given rise to political and economic crises in the province and the country²⁵. India justifies its interference in Balochistan on the basis of humanitarian concern and also under the pretext of the Mumbai attacks. Yadhav's statement of inaugurating meetings with the Baloch insurgents for terrorist activities was a clear depiction of Indian negativity and qualm towards the security of Balochistan and CPEC.²⁶

The abduction and killing of Pakistanis and Chinese workers in Balochistan are in the result of India's comprehensive sabotage plan against CPEC. India's involvement in Balochistan through the funding of various rebel groups has been vigorous.²⁷ The Indian media and academicians view India's policy towards Balochistan as an anti-terrorist strategy and an objective to support the inhuman activities rising in the province. This is also referred to as the "Baloch Tactic", adopted by Modi. However, the rise in the crime rate in the province after the initiation of CPEC accounts for the involvement of India in the region. Diplomatic isolation of Pakistan was done by Modi by not inviting Imran Khan to the SAARC meeting. Efforts of India to blacklist Pakistan in the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) through lobbying are some other measures taken to weaken the country's economic conditions for the peaceful working of Chinese workers and their cooperation. The hard and soft measures to cause distress in Pakistan have been a cause of disturbance amongst Pakistan's military and civilians.²⁸

India has always had an intervening policy toward its neighbors. Its Indian-centric policy in South Asia and the IOR has been challenged by the

²⁴ Javaid, "Assessing CPEC: Potential Threats and Prospects", 254-269.

²⁵ Khurram Abbas, "Strategizing Kashmiri Freedom Struggle Through Non Violent Means", *Policy Perspectives* 16, No. 2 (2019), 41-58.

²⁶ Mir Shehbaz Khetrn, "Indian Interference in Balochistan: Analyzing The Evidence and Implications for Pakistan" *Strategic Studies* 37, No. 3(2017), 112-125.

²⁷ Rahat Shah, Shakir Hussain, and Asif Rasheed, "China Pakistan Economic Corridor: Security Challenges and Sequence of Process of Domestic Resistance", *European Academic Research*, VII, No. 10(2020): 4820-4843.

²⁸ Prasanta Sahoo, "India's Balochistan Tactic: Has it Shattered Pakistan's Kashmir Dream?", *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 23, No. 2(2019): 98-115.

Chinese involvement in Balochistan via CPEC²⁹. India's policy of supporting dissident groups has been manifested fully in Balochistan. The presence of the Indian consulate offices along the Iranian border is said to be used by the Indian intelligence agencies for causing disruption in the province. India's full support to the leaders of the separatist parties, like Brahamdagh Bugti, by granting them citizenship and security is proof of its overt tactics to financial chaos and disturbance in the province of Balochistan.³⁰

India's rising criticism and tactics to disrupt CPEC have become a major concern for China. The Chinese refer to Modi's tactics as a hard-liner approach and act of hostility causing damage to both Pakistan and China. CPEC is the backbone of the BRI and its completion is indispensable for the success of the Chinese agenda and Pakistan's potential benefits; India is very well aware of this fact, and takes advantage of this situation to not only derange the ongoing developments of CPEC, but also to divert the international pressure regarding the Kashmir situation.³¹

The Struggles of Pakistan amidst Indian Intervention in Balochistan

Pakistan opposes India's hegemony in the region due to the insecurity that comes with it. India established the RAW in 1968 with one of the prime objectives to disintegrate Pakistan, which resulted in the separation of East Pakistan in 1971. Since then RAW has been indulged in Pakistan through covert and overt means. The links between RAW and Baloch insurgents is disturbing the security conditions in Pakistan. The Baloch insurgents are financed by RAW; their training programs are led by RAW and inciting the insurgents against the Pakistan Army are some of the negative measures taken by RAW to create inconvenience in the province. Guerilla fighting tactics are taught to Baloch insurgents to counter the control of the Pakistan Army in the province. Militant elements are used by RAW to create disturbance in the province which consequently has impacts on the domestic politics of Pakistan.³²

²⁹ Mariam Asif, Ahmed Saeed Minhas, and Bashir Ahmad: "Evaluating the Role of Different Actors in Balochistan Unrest" *Global Social Sciences Review* III No, I (2018): 395-410.

³⁰ Col (R) Muhammad Hanif, "India's Renewed Strategy of destabilizing Balochistan", *Daily Times*, August 21, 2018, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/286526/indias-renewed-strategy-of-destabilising-balochistan/>.

³¹ Prasanta Sahoo, "Narendra Modi's Anti-Terrorism Strategy and India's Islamic Neighbours", *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 21. No. 1 (2017): 122-135.

³² Muhammad Shoaib Malik and Hafeez Ullah Khan, "Regional Security Threats to Pakistan: A Critical Review" *Pakistan journal of History and Culture* XXXIX No. 2 (2018): 159-175.

Pakistan has blamed India for inciting the Baloch insurgency since 1948, and the statements delivered by new Delhi and the proofs of RAW's involvement in Balochistan verify this. The change in Modi's policy to highlight Balochistan's issue on international media and to adopt diplomatic, political, and intelligence tactics to cause chaos in the province is driven by the Modi government's aim to shift the attention of Pakistan from the Kashmir issue. Pakistan has been suffering the deficiency and inhibition of natural resources given the staunch criticism posed by India regarding the exploitation of their natural resources, considering that CPEC passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, which India views as a threat to its territorial sovereignty³³.

India is trying its best to keep Pakistan on its toes by disrupting the security conditions in Balochistan so that it refrains from exploring the natural resources of the land, which if explored and utilized could economically benefit the province Balochistan and Pakistan more broadly. India's intervention in Balochistan is its goal to counter terrorism in the region, but Pakistan views India's intrusion as a threat to its economic, defense, and security conditions.³⁴

Analysis and Discussion

It is important to understand that most of the time, the issue of CPEC is not discussed while considering the Indian point of view, hence this literature review very rightly highlights the Indian government's different perspective towards Balochistan, especially after the enhanced collaboration between Pakistan and China, has fulfilled the Indian strategy and objective of not only setting aside the Kashmir issue, but also indirectly discouraging the CPEC developments. Most of the time, the CPEC disruptions are not studied and explored in terms of the Indian involvement in Balochistan which narrows down the mode of inquiry of the matter. It is essential to first analyze the Indian goals and objectives towards Balochistan in order to understand its aspirations of dismantling CPEC. The literature regarding the role of India in Balochistan and CPEC often lacks Indian opinion and Indian literature which in turn makes the study limited and one-sided. The incorporation of Indian

³³ Zeus Hans Mendez, "Repression and Revolt in Balochistan: The Uncertainty and Survival of a People's National Aspiration" *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs* (2020), 43-61.

³⁴ Afroz Ahmad and Ms. Najish, "Balochistan Movement: Why India's Policy took a shift towards Balochistan under Narendra Modi Government" *International Journal of African and Asian Studies* 37, (2017), 80-84.

authors' literature has given this study an all-inclusive approach, advocating the Pakistani doubts and speculations.

India is reluctant to join CPEC due to the involvement of China in the Indian perceived disputed territories of Pakistan, which would further intensify the matter for India. Moreover, India seems to be more satisfied with the Chabahar port as Japan also shows interest in collaborating with India³⁵, and if Chabahar port is manifested into reality, it will create easy route trades for India, but here lies the fact of geographical proximity of CAS and Afghanistan with Pakistan and considering the new Taliban Regime, their interests are weighed towards CPEC more than Chabahar Port, which leaves India with no other option but to utilize its military, diplomatic, and political potentials to create insurgency in the province, because the only factor that acts as a constant threat to CPEC is the security concern of Pakistan. However, the Indian researchers and academicians, despite not being a part of CPEC, still view it as a major threat to their political and security position in the Indian Ocean Region and suggest that observers must be sent to examine the proceedings of CPEC.³⁶ However, it must not be ignored that India acknowledges the economic, geostrategic, and political opportunities that CPEC will be offering to all the involved states, but India, in order to secure these perks is reluctant to compensate for its hegemonic rule in the Indian Ocean region in the hands of its two perceived notorious enemies which happen to be its neighbors as well³⁷.

India is trying its best to use the excuse of human rights to destabilize CPEC. For Pakistan, India's Balochistan tactic in international media and China's mass killing of Uyghur Muslims are used to tarnish the international image of both countries. Sadly, the insurgents in Balochistan have become much more active in recent months in Pakistan, causing attacks in Anarkali Lahore and Jamia Masjid Peshawar, strengthening the social and sectarian fragmentation in the society. As mentioned earlier that the security concerns regarding CPEC are the only justifiable reasons to not join CPEC for India;

³⁵ Soumya Awasthi, "China led BRI and its impact on India with specific reference to CPEC", *Journal of International Affairs* 2 No. 1, (2018), 97-112.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Dr Manoj Joshi, Suhayl Abidi, and Dr Anurada Rai, "The Eco-politics of CPEC and India", *SSRN Electronic Journal*

<https://deliverypdf.ssrn.com/delivery.php?ID=3510841051140760850790011271211160740370240900080320520231050151110410209200006601105901203305803911211023092123103086091111103046069078020028000108084104101027007006042074029095010085114072085109094085024124027090121109112069021097069026003001017&EXT=pdf&INDEX=TRUE>. 2017 (accessed April 23, 2021).

hence it has spent all of its expertise in trying to train, finance, and mind wash the insurgent Baloch groups under the caption of “Nationalism”. Brahamdagh Bugti who lives in one of the European states views Pakistan as his enemy and admits to have meetings and negotiations with the state only after the separation of Balochistan as a separate state. He denies involvement in any of the terrorist attacks in Pakistan that come under the responsibility of Baloch insurgent groups³⁸.

Another dimension to the debate on Indian involvement in Balochistan and its impact on CPEC is that it will be an injustice to levy the responsibility of the Baloch conundrum on India only. The history, geography and political dynamics of Balochistan are very different from the other provinces of Pakistan, such that Balochistan gained the status of province after 1970, and before this ample efforts were made by President Ayub Khan to strengthen the province economically but all in vain, because the politically the province was suffering from disunity, as a certain segment of Baloch nationalists wanted to follow the Communist Block instead of following the political suggestions of One-Unit given by Ayub Khan. However, the geostrategic importance of Balochistan never faded, and it shined in utmost glory during the Russian intervention of Afghanistan in 1979.³⁹

Despite being the largest province geographically, the security, infrastructure, and opportunities in the province are low and weak. The fact that Balochistan always witnessed the rules of tribal chiefs has contributed to the poor educational and economic condition of the provinces⁴⁰. The historical instances reveal that the government of the Baloch is often prone to controversies, one such instance is the dismissal of the first Chief Minister of Balochistan Sardar Ataullah Mengal by the then Prime Minister of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto on the charges of secessionist activities⁴¹. Similarly, the killing of Nawab Akbar Bugti during General Musharraf’s regime also gained immense controversy in 2006. Musharraf’s statements of apathy and

³⁸ BBC news Urdu, Balochistan Rebel leader Brahamdagh Bugti ‘ready to talk’’, *Youtube* video, 10:21, August 28, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF7D1tO7LQc&t=214s>.

³⁹ Muhammad Saleem Mazhar, Umbreen Javaid, and Naheed S. Goraya, “Balochistan (From strategic significance to US involvement)”, *Journal of Political Science* 19, No. 1 (2012), 113-127.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Pia Krishnankutty, “Sardar Ataullah Mengal- Balochistan’s 1st CM jailed by Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, self-exiled in UK’’, *The Print*, September 3, 2021. [https://theprint.in/world/sardar-ataullah-mengal-balochistans-1st-cm-jailed-by-zulfikar-ali-bhutto-self-exiled-in-uk/727277/\(July 7, 2022\)](https://theprint.in/world/sardar-ataullah-mengal-balochistans-1st-cm-jailed-by-zulfikar-ali-bhutto-self-exiled-in-uk/727277/(July%207,%202022)).

aloofness after killing him infuriated the Baloch people. The politics of Balochistan is tribal in nature, and the inability of Pakistan to reach its root has been its biggest failure.⁴² This event was exploited by India and the forthcoming events like CPEC strengthened the Indian aim and aspirations to separate Balochistan just as they did to Bangladesh.

The massive participation of law enforcement agencies in Balochistan has made the land's security questionable. Not to forget the ill system of allocation of civil servants in Pakistan, that ends up landing the best minds in Punjab, and candidates with low merit, but Baloch domicile. Most of the project areas of CPEC lie in Balochistan, but the locals of the land are not benefitting from it, however, this perceived gap can be filled by granting the employment opportunities to the local Baloch people instead to the Chinese workers.⁴³ Here the matter of low literacy rate amongst the Baloch community rises, according to the statistics of 2020, the illiteracy in the province is estimated to be 44% and the ones who are literate are also unable to read and write properly⁴⁴.

The province is a victim of sectarian violence, terrorism, and enforced disappearances, and above all CPEC for them is a project that would offer those little opportunities and unwanted immigration. The Baloch people fear that this project would heavily drain the perceived natural resources of the province.⁴⁵ It is also perceived that China is gaining the maximum profit and advantage that is being made out of the Gwadar port and the locals of the land are suffering and viewing it as a new form of colonialism.⁴⁶ CPEC might have accentuated the economy of Pakistan, but the economy of the Baloch people is still the same. The Baloch people believe that just as the profits gained Reqa Dik and Saindak are not enjoyed by the locals, similar will be the case with CPEC, considering the people living in Gwadar lack clean drinking water and health facilities⁴⁷ only 0.5% of CPEC's total share is distributed

⁴² Mazhar, "Balochistan (From strategic significance to US involvement)", 113-127.

⁴³ Sadia Sohail, Sohail Ahmad, and Noor Jehan, "Distribution of resource revenue in Balochistan: A gap in Pakistan's Policy making", *Global Regional Review* 2, No.1 (2017): 1-15.

⁴⁴ Homer Jan, "Illiteracy rate in Balochistan", *Daily Balochistan Express Quetta*, August 14, 2020. <https://bexpress.com.pk/2020/08/illiteracy-rate-in-balochistan/> (Accessed date: July 7, 2022).

⁴⁵ Tilak Devasher, *Pakistan: The Balochistan Conundrum*, (India: Harper India, 2020), 291-292.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Hassan F. Virk, "CPEC: A Discourse on Space, Security and Development in Balochistan", *Journal of Global Peace and Security Studies* 1, No. 1 (2020), 47-69.

amongst the locals of Balochistan⁴⁸ and despite the fact that the locals were promised of employment opportunities, the non-Baloch candidates are given the jobs.⁴⁹ While exploiting such shortcomings, India's involvement has further intensified these issues by translating its anti-Pakistan sentiments to the people of the land, but it is necessary to have an in-depth overview of both sides of the story to analyze the Balochistan conundrum in order to suggest a viable policy option for Pakistan.

Conclusion

CPEC has the potential to benefit Pakistan economically and politically. Pakistan is not in a position to compromise on its economic and political well-being hence, the smooth functioning of CPEC is essential for Pakistan's prosperous future. There are pits and bumps in Pakistan's and China's plan regarding Gwadar port that might give India a chance to manipulate the poverty-stricken people of Balochistan into matters of anti-state proceedings. Pakistan while working upon its developments with China on CPEC needs to be vigilant militarily as well as strategically in securing the province from external intervention. After the disposition of Imran Khan, it is unclear to say about the rapid developments of CPEC; however, the record of Shahbaz Sharif's party towards CPEC and China has been over-whelming and positive. Pakistan needs quick progress toward the economic development, which is rooted in the success of CPEC.

Recommendations

There are a number of recommendations that may be followed by Pakistan to enhance the security situation in Balochistan for the peaceful and timely completion of CPEC. In doing so, Pakistan needs to conduct reformative changes at multiple forums because the threat that Pakistan is facing from India is not through one channel, rather there are multi-faceted channels and ways through which India is trying to sabotage CPEC and attempting to secede Balochistan from Pakistan. The set of recommendations is categorized into two as

- Recommendations for Pakistan regarding the Balochistan province
- Recommendations for Pakistan regarding CPEC

⁴⁸ Shazar Shafqat, "CPEC and the Baloch insurgency", *The Diplomat*, February 8, 2017. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/02/cpec-and-the-baloch-insurgency/> (Accessed date: July 7, 2022).

⁴⁹ Sanaullah Baloch, "CPEC: A Baloch Perspective", *The News*, October 4, 2016. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/154685-CPEC-a-Baloch-perspective> (Accessed date: July 7, 2022).

Recommendations for Pakistan regarding the Balochistan province

The lack of inclusion of Baloch representatives is one of the biggest problems that must be solved by not limiting to give opportunities to only those who present themselves as the representative of the Baloch people, as most of them are Bugti and other tribal lords who are under the influence of Indian finances and RAW. For the real representation of the Baloch people, the federal government should set up a commission for the initiation of the political party in Balochistan, focusing on the recruitment of such people who are likeminded allies and well-wishers of Pakistan. Pakistan cannot risk giving the limelight to anti-Pakistan entities in its government machinery, although Pakistan can try its best to wipe out such elements by strong negotiations and discussions.

Enhanced cooperation in Balochistan on infrastructure, development, and security should be held. The university quota for Baloch students should be increased. There should be reformative changes in the allocation of civil servants in Balochistan to enhance the better functioning of administrative tasks. The rule of law in Balochistan should be revamped, to not create an atmosphere of fear, but of trust between the citizenry and the state. The post-conflict response of the Government of Pakistan towards the minor terrorist attacks by the Baloch insurgents should be catered. Pakistan needs to adopt a policy of affiliation and affection through soft power with the people of Balochistan in order to make them realize that they are a part of the state.

The sense of seclusion must be reduced by granting the people of Balochistan their due shares in the profits of the resources mined from Balochistan wherever and however this may be possible. The representation of the people of Balochistan in the central government should be from the grass root level. Unfortunately, the tribal politics of Balochistan have dominated the subject political culture in the province, hindering and concealing all modes of a direct connection between the central government and the public. Islamabad needs to conduct conferences regarding the development and political awareness in Balochistan.

Recommendations regarding CPEC

Pakistan is facing multiple challenges regarding CPEC, the most important of which are those related to Balochistan. Pakistan needs to consider the rights and aspirations of the Baloch people as well. The killing of Akbar Bugti is something that has marked a sign of hatred in the hearts of Baloch people for Islamabad; the maximum that the state can do to compensate for this is to inculcate a sense of inclusion in the Baloch people

by granting them their due rights financially and socially in the Gwadar port. This can be a good strategy for winning the hearts and minds of the people of Balochistan. The profits and the opportunities should be enjoyed by the Baloch people because it is impossible to succeed in the Gwadar project without the willingness and acceptance of the Baloch people towards it. The external threat of India and their association with insurgent groups are definitely an ultimatum for Pakistan, but the biggest threat for Pakistan can be an indigenous movement of the Baloch people against the Chinese involvement in Balochistan, because if the Baloch people are not given their due rights and are not taken into confidence regarding any of the development of the project, they will see the Chinese presence in Balochistan as a foreign threat and not as a collaborative plan of economic cooperation and development.

Diplomatically, Pakistan must try its best to get rid of all of its internal and external crises to quickly and effectively complete the CPEC with China because India is also trying its best to complete the Chabahar port project, so that it can easily convince Iran and Afghanistan to come to the tables. Pakistan is at an advantage position to have good relations with all the countries involved in CPEC, but Pakistan needs to enhance its position diplomatically with Afghanistan especially after Taliban rule, Russia after the ongoing Ukraine-Russia crisis, CAS, and Iran. India, through coordination with Iranian militant groups, is trying to create religious animosity towards a certain religious sector in Pakistan which is posing a great threat to Balochistan's security; hence, Pakistan, through diplomatic channels, must convince the Iranian government to limit these efforts through both covert and overt means. The strict military deployment must take place on the CPEC sites to reduce the events like gas pipeline explosions that inculcate fear amongst the Chinese officials. Islamabad must take into confidence the concerns of Beijing, but at the same time, this relationship must be based on equality and not the dominance of any one party.