

The Role of CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) in Socio-Economic Development of Balochistan

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Abstract

The socio-economic indicator bestows Balochistan which is the most deprived province of Pakistan. One of the primary reasons for its under development is not paying proper attention to this region by the federal government. The government continuously exploiting the natural resources of the province and did not bother on its socio-economic development. It aroused the anger of the local people, and their grievances further led to the militancy that prevailed since last few decades. The current China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is destined to be the changing factor which will minimize poverty of the province. There are alleged attempts made by other major ethnic groups in the country. They tried to divert its routes from the poverty-stricken districts of Balochistan to developed Punjab regions. Research suggests that it should be the prime objective of the Chinese government to make sure the route goes through poor and conflict-ridden areas so that they get develop due to this project. This paper is based on secondary data and the results would be appealing for the concerned policymakers.

Key Words: OBOR, BRI, CPEC, Geopolitics, Gwadar, Pivot of Asia, Strait of Malacca, triangular relations of China with India and Pakistan.

Introduction

BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) is a mega project started by Xi Jinping, the President of People Republic of China. Objectives of the project are to link

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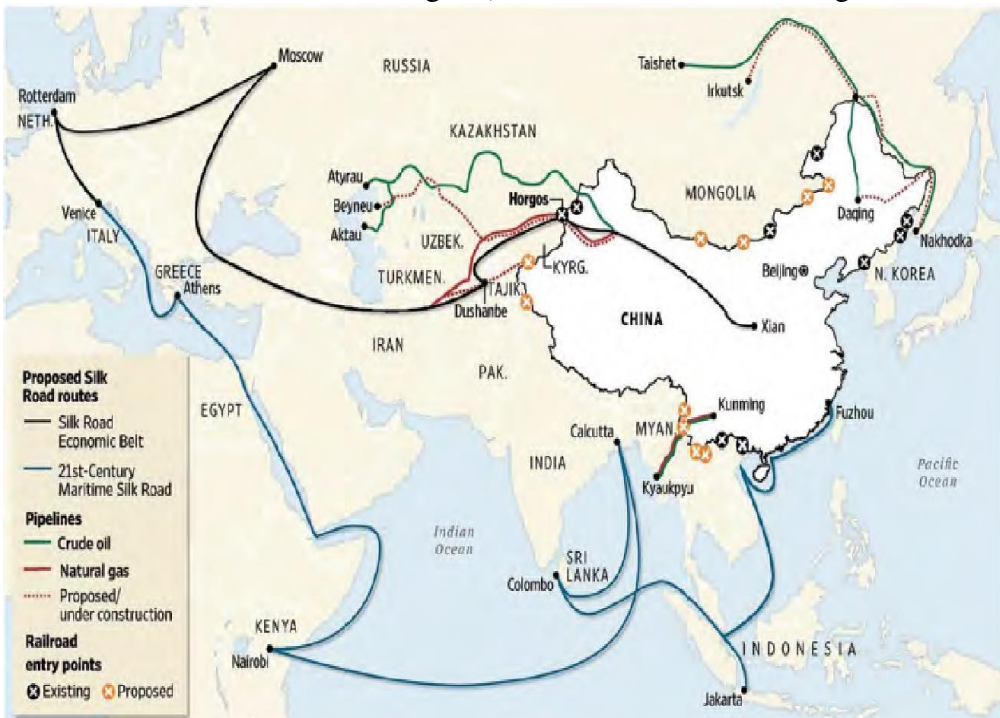
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China with Indo-Pacific littoral states (Littoral countries located on the shore of Pacific and Indian Ocean), Europe, Africa and Central Asia (Quora, 2017). BRI is a network of roads, railways, oil pipelines, ports, infrastructural projects and power grids serving as major sources to link China to the world. (Fig. 1) in the 2013 it was announced with an aim to revitalize the Earliest trade route which also “known as the Silk Road or the Silk Route” connecting Asia to Europe (Dusitthani, 2017). BRI project has been divided into two major parts; the ‘Belt’ refers to the land-based “Silk Road Economic Belt” which connects China with Eastern, and Central Asia Western Europe. The ‘Road’ which is sea-based raises to the 21st Century Naval Silk Road’ will link China to Africa, Central Asia and South-East Asia (Sternberg, Ahearn, & McConnell, 2017). Under BRI one maritime route and six economic corridors have been proposed; “China_Mongolia _ Russia Corridor (North China to Eastern Russia via Mongolia), New Eurasian Land Bridge.



(Fig .1) Source:

<http://www.cpecinfo.com/news/cpec-obor-andstability/NTA4MQ>

(Connect Western China to Western Russia), China – Central Asia – West Asia Corridor (Western China to Turkey via Central and West Asia, China – Indochina Peninsula Corridor (Southern China to Singapore via Indo-China), Bangladesh – China – India – Myanmar Corridor (Southern China to India

via Bangladesh and Myanmar), China – Pakistan Corridor (South Western China to and through Pakistan), Maritime Silk Road linking Coastal China to the Mediterranean via Malaysia-Singapore, the Arabian Sea the Indian Ocean and the Strait of Hormuz (Aoyama, 2016).”

BRI would encompass almost sixty-eight states and an ambitious project. Around one trillion UD dollars of investment has planned in different infrastructural projects providing loans to the states with minimum cost (Pant, 2017). BRI is a rather ambitious one, towards economic development and grooming Information and Communication Technology. This mega project proposes substantial potential in different fields including economic, strategic, political, information technology, and cultural fields, not only for China itself but for the whole of Asia-Pacific and Asian region. BRI may help in developing economic cooperation and technological trade in Asia (Latif, Yang, Pathan, & Jan, 2017). As part of BRI, China develops China Pakistan Economic Corridor which will connect China from Kashgar region with the Gwadar’s port of Balochistan province through the network of railways, highways and pipelines (Ahmad, Asmi, Ali, Rahman, & Abbas, 2017). Objectives and aims of CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor) is to develop and increase the economic development between Pakistan and China through different projects. The significant projects developed by China and Pakistan through dynamic collaboration, include energy power plants, transportation infrastructure, Gwadar port area, and industrial complexes (W. Ali, Gang, & Raza, 2016). This study is a review of China Pakistan Economic Corridor and via this project development and economic growth. CPEC (China Pakistan Economic Corridor)

Plans for CPEC (China Pakistan Economic corridor) extending from the border of China to the Pakistani deep-water port on the Arabian Sea date back to the year 1950, and motivated KKH (Karakoram Highway) construction started in 1959 (Ispahani, 1989). The interest of China in Pakistani deep water Sea port at Gwadar Baluchistan province had been renewed by 1998 and in the year 2002 the Chinese government began the port of Gwadar construction which was finalized in 2006 (G. Ali, 2013).

“The present form of this project was first proposed by the then Prime Minister and President of Pakistan) invited the top leadership of all political parties to luncheon the honor of Li Keqiang the Chinese Premier on May 22nd 2013 (Dawn, 2013). The Chinese government announced in November 2014 its intention to backing the Chinese companies as part of China’s 45.6 (now 62) billions USD infrastructure and energy projects of CPEC in Pakistan .

In April 2015, “during the state visit of President Xi Jinping to Islamabad, he wrote in an open newspaper stating; “This will be my first trip

to Pakistan, but I feel as if I am going to visit the home of my own brother." China and Pakistan signed an agreement to commence work on the 46 billion US dollars agreement on April 20th 2015, which is almost 20 per cent of annual GDP of Pakistan, with roughly 28 billion US dollars' worth of fast-tracked initial harvest tasks to be developed soon (CNN, 2015).

Subsequent Developments under China Pakistan Economic Corridor

An international trade route started up in Pakistan by a Chinese vessel transferring products to the Africa and Middle East. The economic corridor is being developed by Chinese government in Pakistan is probable to make a big amount of financial benefits for both China and Pakistan (Ahmed, 2016). CPEC is one of the most significant developments of the BRI mega project started by Chinese government that purposes to integrate China with Africa and Europe establishing a significant state in global economic affairs. China Pakistan Economic Corridor connect Xinjiang, the Chinese north western region with Gwadar deep water port of Pakistan via a Rail, Highways system approximately 2,500 km rail and pipelines and road Route to transport gas, oil and other means (Fig. 2). This investment of 46 billion US dollars (now 62 billion US dollars) by Chinese government is not only limited to rail and roads link but to other infrastructure too which includes international airport in Gwadar, development of Gwadar sea port and various energy projects which will add 10,400 MW in the National Power Grid of Pakistan.



(Fig. 2). Source: cpec.gov.pk.

CPEC Benefits to Pakistan

Because of the security situation, Pakistan is presently starving for foreign investment. International companies may establish their distribution networks to come up with local demands after the accomplishments of Gwadar deep sea port (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). After the successful operation of China Pakistan Economic Corridor, it would be a green signal for international community that Pakistan is truthfully open for trade and business and its fresh educated demographic and low-cost labor is an alternate to Bangladesh, India and South East Asian region (Rabbi, 2017). Nevertheless, China Pakistan Economic Corridor grants an enduring Chinese presence in Pakistan, that assures the stability of Pakistan. Investments of Chinese government in Pakistan would make very strong Pakistan-China relations which are a good sign for Pakistan's stability and China will never want an unstable Pakistan because of its interest in the region (Yamada, 2018).

China Pakistan Economic Corridor from every count will prove a real game changer and would make China a strong supporter in the security and stability of Pakistan. CPEC is win-win phenomenon for both China and Pakistan and will significantly broaden the opportunities for stable and sustainable development of the Chinese economic developments (CSIS, 2018). The connectivity of fiber optic from China to Pakistan would be inaugurated. China will extend through China Pakistan Economic corridor different wavelength data services to Pakistan, which will decrease the poor connectivity, squat bandwidth and stumpy speed issues transfer of data to Pakistan (Latif, Jianqiu, Ullah, Pathan, & Latif, 2017).

Balochistan is the largest province which almost cover 44 per cent of the land mass of the country and the importance of Balochistan lies in the concentration of several natural resources. Irrespective of this, Balochistan has remained the underprivileged and less developed province in Pakistan. Though it is very rich in natural resources, but the negligence of concerned authorities, lesser and unskilled population is a huge barrier in development of the province and in utilizing those resources. A high rate of unemployment and low rate of urbanization are the real reasons behind little annual growth rate (Wei, Manzoor, & Latif, 2018).

Gwadar deep sea port development has been a significant development in the recent era. Gwadar port would be a real game changer not only for Balochistan but also for Pakistan and the region. It would be an economic center and would contribute in the progress of the province, succeeding in

addressing the numerous social and economic issues of Balochistan and further would help in reducing unemployment in Balochistan. Industries at micro and small-medium sized in Balochistan will also contribute towards achieving great benefits for the native people (Hussain, 2017). It is very important for higher authorities in the government to make sure that Bloch and Pashtoons are completely include in the development and are also given opportunities to benefit from these projects (Jameel, 2018).

The Western and Central Routes

China Pakistan Economic Corridor's central and western routes can also be used by heavy vehicles loaded with goods from Burban. By the end of last year, a new motorway four lane that was supposed to be added with 6 lanes will carry the both central and western Burban to DI Khan in KPK through Mianwali dissect in western part of Punjab, that can further help reducing contemporary 6 to 8 hours of daily journey to about 3 and a half. The 1.36 billion US dollars, 177 mile project was expected to be the part of CPEC but doesn't seem to have been included in CPEC portfolio even yet construction work is under progress (Times of Islamabad, 2016).

This planned motorway would bypass several key industrialized and ethnic Pashtoon population central hubs in KPK province. Peshawar the northwestern city of KPK province is treated as the eastern route part as a matter of fact linking to center Islamabad through the M1. There are no allocations in CPEC to upgrade the N-55 (north south Indus Highway) form Peshawar to DI Khan, which is currently in an extreme bad condition. Government of Pakistan is upgrading north south Indus Highway N-55 using its own funds of 300 million US dollars from Kohat to DI Khan. Starting from Peshawar to DG Khan a longer connectivity would serve both industrial sectors of KPK province and a very poor agrarian part of southern Punjab, and will deliver the fastest and shortest route from Peshawar KPK to Gwadar Baluchistan and Karachi Sindh simultaneously.

The central and western routes get split in "DI Khan, KPK. The western route then moves through western region, a part of Balochistan surrounded by mountains and hills, including Zhob to Qilllsifullah and Muslimbagh, and Quetta to Gwadar. The central route travels through southern part of Punjab and interior Sindh to link by east west motorway to the eastern and western routes to the district of Gwadar. N-85 highway from Gwadar to Quetta is almost completed and will be fully operationalize soon. With the funding from CPEC and other global partners, sections are being

rehabilitated. While using N-85 the first convoy of Chinese trucks arrived in Gwadar for container shipment in November 2016, use the N-85 Highway, traveling on the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) rout from Khunjerab pass in Gilgit Baltistan (GB) to Burhan and move the N-80 towards Kohat in KPK province. From Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Kohat the route moved along the N-55 towards DI Khan, and then shifted onto highway N-50 towards Zhob, Qillsifullah and Muslimbagh, and Quetta in Balochistan province. The N-50 highway will be rehabilitated by the loans of both Asian Development Bank (ABD) and Chinese government via CPEC. The convoy from Quetta then took highway N-25 which was upgraded by USAID, through Baloch belt Kalat district into Surab passing through a very short east west highway financed by Chinese government under China Pakistan Economic Corridor linking Khuzdar district and Besima. The convoy then used highway N-85 to travel through Panjgur district to Hoshab, and then, lastly, reached district Gwadar via Turbat district using M8 and the Makran Coastal Highway funded by China. Ministry of Planning Commission clarifies the Central Route as CPEC long term plan's part". According to the official map a new high-speed motorway is planned which will connect DI Khan to Shahdaktot in Sindh province, consecutively like the present, dilapidated N-55 highway (Dawn, 2018).

Presently Chinese government enhances additional assistance to high speed roads network development connecting to the Port of Karachi then moving directly to Gwadar port. Road projects of CPEC dovetail would further collaborate with funds of other international donors. Such as CAREC (Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation) program, the ABD (Asian Development Bank) goals to strengthen regional connectivity between Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Central Asian Republics and USAID are also assisting various developmental projects of connectivity between Pakistan and Afghanistan (Rimmer, 2018). These lenders and agencies have to some extent different regional connectivity visions, but they complement China Pakistan Economic Corridor Project. It is also said that CPEC and various projects would not only brand the port of Gwadar, a more trade feasible option for Chinese Government, but will also enhance the attractiveness of Port Qasim and Karachi port.

The Route Controversy

Some nationalist Political parties from Balochistan began to allege that China Pakistan Economic Corridor's original route had been shifted (Dawn, 2014). Unlike subsequent variants, the original route had avoided the two

largest cities of Pakistan, Lahore and Karachi, and moved through the less developed areas of southern Punjab and Balochistan, and also pass through the central part of KPK, including the capital city of the province. Suggestively also, it was planned in the year 2006, the era of relative security along the “Pakistan-Afghanistan border, similar as Taliban in Afghanistan resurged and before the TTP (Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan) network founding in Pakistan which threaten most of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province and Federally Administered Tribal Areas by 2009. Hassan Nawaz Tarar, Pakistan’s planning and development secretary informed the committee that “the proposal (to change the route) was on the table,”(Khaleeq, 2014) attributing the change to Chinese government unwillingness to fund an extended route. However, Hassan Nawaz Tarar next day said that the original route had never been discussed with Chinese government yet. Other political parties at that meeting weighed in, either disputing or agreeing to each other’s statements on whether and how Beijing authorities were the part and how and why the route would change”. What accurately triggered the change, in the meantime, is not clear. Political process of Pakistan was then overcome by a sit-in (Dharna) by the PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) party, aimed at dismantling the Pakistan Muslim League N (PML N) government for fraud election (The News, 2015). As political tensions lessened in February 2015, the routes debate on CPEC restarted. While recording protest, the parliamentarians of the above said parties whom had reservations walked out from the Senate meeting (Wasim, 2015).

President Xi’s visit to Islamabad in April precipitated even harder demonstrations. The then government took sensitive measures to pacify critics, planning a conciliated solution of three routes and one corridor, which was referred to the western, central and eastern routes (Azam, 2015). While publicizing the proposed plan, the PML N government sustained to claim that the real and original route was not changed. The minister for planning Ahsan Iqbal claimed that joint working group on the project special economic zones will be established and they will operationalize the western route first (Dawn, 2015). The second all parties conference was organized in May, following a combined resolution was called for the restoration of the real and original route but miss presented what basically the original route was supposed to be (GEO News, 2015). Along with the restoration of the original route, the protesting parties were also demanding the creation of motorway which connects the major cities of the less developed in Balochistan. Moreover, there was no attention specified to economic viability of such a route and the trouble in escalating the roads network in physically daunting and dangerous territory. The all party conferences over with the formation of a CPEC parliamentary committee, the committee would have a nonbinding oversight

role, and had a commitment that the western route will complete first (Express Tribune, 2015). “It was significant development that appeared to eventually address the foremost contention of the smaller provinces and opposition parties. But over the routes of CPEC continue into now, with contradictory on size and course of the western route, whether this route will be a six-lane motorway or a dual-lane highway, and will this route pass through Peshawar, or divert out of KPK after entering DI Khan? The ministry of planning commission own China Pakistan Economic Corridor maps seems to have changed over the course of 2015 into 2016. While the May 2015 and January 2016 agreements do not seem to have included Peshawar city as the western route part based on the map of the planning commission (Saeed, 2015). In these changes, major cities such as Karak, Kohat and Bannu, where the government of KPK has projected special economic zones (SEZ), are excluded from all three routes of CPEC (Express Tribune, 2016). Senate’s committee on China Pakistan Economic Corridor contended that there “Is considerable substance in the complaint that the province will gain very little from this alignment.” The terminus of western route is at DI Khan, where it joins the central route and is the shortest one to the border with China. People’s fear is that the absence of CPEC direct connectivity will not have positive externalities; the cities which are not in the route directly will then be given inferior priority for transmission and generation of electricity projects, that would also improve potential industrial output (Haroon, Khilji, & Anil, 2017). As noted, the city of Peshawar does link to the eastern route of CPEC, which will advantage from the upgrade of highway linking Lahore Punjab to Karachi Sindh into 6 lanes, high speed motorway. According to the then planning commission minister “Though, is that the closest port to Peshawar is Karachi, not Gwadar. The distance between Peshawar and Gwadar is approximately 1,800 kilometers (1,100 miles) and between Peshawar and Karachi is only 1,400 (870) (Dittmer, 2016).” According to the federal government eastern route will also pass through Dara Adam Khel which is a dangerous region and requires security patrols and convoys, adding security risk, time and cost. The government seems to have pledged to get land for ultimate expansion of the six lane motorway on western route, but it is not clear that whether this kind of road can be built between DI Khan and Quetta in the mountainous region. The opposition parties have demanded that the western and eastern routes be equal in scope and the then government has tried to placate them (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015).

They will be disappointed in the future too because the demand for the eastern and western roads equivalent size will never be acceptable for the dominant province Punjab and Islamabad because it will reduce the economic gap between them and others (Butt et al.). An intervention by powerful but

nonpolitical voice proved significant. Sun Weigong, the Chinese ambassador issued a rare statement expressing a serious concern about the route dispute and asked the government to resolve the issue (Butt, et, all, 2014).

Baluchistan's Contribution in China Pakistan Economic Corridor

The provincial government of Balochistan is right to feel outraged at CPEC's findings relevant department cell of ministry of Planning and Development, which show that Balochistan has received a little stake of the whole investment committed under the CPEC's bouquet of projects. And even the committed projects have seen no determinate progress over the past years

Above all, intellectuals and scholars have to understand is that the people of Balochistan are not anti CPEC, but they are asking for their legitimate right/ownership. Why they are not treated as equal and first class citizen of Pakistan? (Dawn, 2015). This paper will also find out how much other federating units (Punjab, Sindh and KPK) are contributing to the CPEC project and how much they are getting benefits and are the division of projects right.

National Contribution in CPEC

Baluchistan is contributing 50 per cent in the national contribution by means of its roads, pipelines and lands and this means about half of the whole project. On the other hand, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's share is 10 per cent, Punjab's percentage is also 10 and Sindh's share is 30 per cent. If we compare seaport or the provincial share through sea, then Balochistan's share is 70 per cent, and Sindh is of 30 per cent, and Punjab and Khyber Pashtoonkhwa have no sea, then their share is zero per cent (Baloch, 2014) same like at the environmental damages to the sea and land by these projects then because the roads and sea of Balochistan will be used 50 per cent then the direct cost to Balochistan will be 50 per cent. Damage of Sindh will be 30 per cent, Punjab's 10 per cent and Pakhtunkhwa's will be 10 per cent. In the contribution of minerals in raw materials form, Punjab's share is again very less which is only 5 per cent, Pakhtunkhwa's 15 per cent, Sindh's share is 20 per cent and Balochistan is again major which is 60 per cent.

In the form of coal, the major one is Sindh which contribute 60 per cent; Balochistan's share is 30 per cent, Pakhtunkhwa's 5 per cent and Punjab's also 5 per cent. Balochistan's share in natural gas is 35 per cent which is the second highest; Sindh's share is 50 per cent which is the highest, Pashtoonkhwa's 9 per cent and Panjab only 6 per cent. In whole one can clearly see that Balochistan is contributing the highest which is 39.5% of a

total, Sindh is providing 240 per cent, Khyber Pashtoonkhwa 59 per cent and Punjab only 36 per cent which is the lowest.

CPEC Projects Distribution and Its Benefits

The total worth of China Pakistan Economic Corridor is now 62 billion dollars and almost half of the amount is invested in different projects till now. Out this Balochistan is getting only 600 million US dollars which is very less because Balochistan's contribution is highest. Punjab has a lion share of 13 billion US dollars which is not fair, Sindh is getting 4.6 billion US dollars, Khyber Pashtoonkhwa 1.8 billion US dollars, and Gilgit Baltistan is getting 920 million US dollars.

In the national benefits the contributions of Balochistan is 60 per cent and the benefit it is getting is only 5 per cent, on the other hand, Punjab share in contributing is only 10 per cent and it is getting 60 per cent. Khyber Pashtoonkhwa share is 10 per cent and getting 10 per cent and Sindh is getting 23 per cent and adding 20 per cent. Here it is very clear that the major investors are not getting the significant benefits which show that the distribution is not fair and is alarming. The distribution could be proper if the higher authorities will make their policies based on poverty, underprivileged areas or provinces and not based on population (Baloch, 2016).

Conclusion

On the basis of area, Balochistan is the largest province comprising 44 per cent of land mass of the country. Along with the above mentioned significance of the Gawadar port, the city is replete with valuable mineral resources like Copper and Gold. Pakistan unfortunately, has not been able to utilize it due to political unrest in the region ever since the establishment of the country. The people of Balochistan complain to have been deprived of their constitutional rights by Islamabad and not treated as an autonomous province but as a colony.

The basic complaints have been related to provincial contribution and unfair distribution of funds and projects of CPEC, non-provision of Sui Gas, produced from the area of Sui in Baluchistan, to the residents of the province, and very lesser opportunities in joining the country's different department jobs and less autonomy to the decisions making of provincial assembly for the province. The major nationalist groups of Balochistan province while the latter ethnic group decided to demand equal rights in the non-violent way. The uprising insurgencies were countered since 1948 to the subsequent years of 1958, 1973 and in 2004. In many cases, the use of force turned the situation towards more chaos in the region.

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