

Rethinking China, the Middle East and Asia in a 'Multiplex World'

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The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor

Building National Consensus, Curbing Terrorism, and Managing Regional Rivalries in Balochistan

Saeed Shafqat

5.1 Introduction: The Place of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor in the Belt and Road Initiative

Analysing the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), one can argue that it has three essential components. First, it links development with security. Conforming to neoliberalism, fundamental economic drivers such as trade and infrastructure investment are inextricably linked to political stability and peace. Second, the BRI anticipates cultural and educational exchanges as manifestations of its developmental strategy. Third, it envisions regional connectivity and economic interdependence as catalysts of the development and security nexus. The BRI is an ambitious initiative that covers about sixty-five countries, 4.4 billion people, and 40 per cent of the global gross domestic product (GDP) (National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, 2015). Given the ambitious scale and inherent risk of the plan, China has designed the BRI in a manner that addresses the cultural sensitivities, economic needs, and security concerns of participant states. In addition to factors such as the production and exchange of knowledge, innovation, and technological growth, trade, and transportation costs, China recognises that security acts as a pivotal determinant of the geography of development. By adding an element of security to the equation, China's revival of the ancient Silk Road into the modern BRI redefines the parameters of traditional geo-economics and international relations.

In effect, China's BRI is gaining global recognition and legitimacy. For instance, in April 2017 the UN's Social and Economic Council held a workshop with Chinese experts titled 'The Belt and Road Initiative: Progress and Future Cooperation – Dialogue between the United Nations and Chinese Experts'. The aim was to explore how this initiative intersects with the UN 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Chinese and UN experts noted that it was in line with 17 SDGs and 169 targets, as the initiative focuses on

five categories of the SDG s: people, planet, prosperity, peace, and partnership ('Belt and Road Initiative provides strong support for UN 2030 goals', 2017).¹ In September 2015, the government of Pakistan adopted the SDG s and declared these global goals as national goals of Pakistan. It also decided to create a federal SDG Unit and under that umbrella established SDG Support Units in each of the country's four provinces. The National Initiative on Agenda 2030 supports the government of Pakistan and all the provincial governments in localisation of SDG s and creating an enabling environment for its implementation. The National Initiative includes activities at the federal, provincial, and district levels involving multiple stakeholders and ensuring vertical and horizontal policy coherence. In this spirit, besides localisation, the SDG s related to peace and partnership (16 & 17) have special significance for the province of Balochistan, where combating a separatist movement and curbing terrorism remain key challenges.

The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is one of the pivotal components of China's high-profile BRI. A distinctive feature of this initiative is the scale and size of connectivity that it envisages for Asia, Europe, and Africa, combining all forms of exchange over rail, road, air, and sea. By facilitating connectivity, China promotes a vision where a 'win-win' situation of mutual benefits and people-to-people contacts can be achieved. Invoking a 2000-year-old history that China shares with Central Asia, Eurasia, and other parts of the world, President Xi Jinping has been persistent in conveying that the BRI plan, including the CPEC, aims to revive regional connectivity through infrastructure development, trade, and investment in industry from which development dividends can be shared across the world. Openness and inclusive growth thus form core principles of this 'project of the twenty-first century', while any scepticism over the geostrategic ambitions of the BRI have been categorically rejected by the Chinese leadership.

1 A month later, speaking at the BRI Summit in Beijing on 14 May 2017, the upcoming Secretary General of the UN, Antonio Guterres, urged the international community to support and join the initiative as it is 'rooted in a shared vision for broad development'. He went on to say that China is the 'central pillar of multilateralism' and supporter of global institutions and leading contributor to UN peace missions. Many world leaders (twenty nine premiers and representatives of over 130 nations) echoed similar sentiments demonstrating solidarity, support, and praise for the initiative. India was conspicuous in its absence. Speaking as host of the Summit, President Xi Jinping promised to contribute another \$100 billion toward the BRI to create what he called a 'big family of harmonious coexistence'. For more details, see 'UN chief urges global efforts to tap Belt and Road potential for common development', 2017, and Lei, 2017.

Given this thrust, the BRI initiative has generated a lively discourse on how geo-economics could have a symbiosis with geopolitics. It has revived and energised the salience of geo-economics in the sense that China is not challenging the existing neoliberal international economic order; it is clamouring for legitimate space in it and is seeking 'integration'. In fact, President Xi Jinping's keynote speech at the World Economic Forum this year highlighted this very 'legitimacy', as China assumes an increasingly significant leadership role in global development. By claiming that,

China has in the past years succeeded in embarking on a development path that suits itself by drawing on both the wisdom of its civilization and the practices of other countries in both [the] East and West.

'Excerpts of Chinese president Xi Jinping's keynote speech', 2017, A2

President Xi Jinping reminded world leaders to be conscious of China's civilizational accomplishments and its ability to remain relevant and progressive. Pinpointing China's achievement in lifting 'over 700 million people out of poverty', he added that,

when assessing China's development, one should not only see what benefits the Chinese people have gained ... but also what contribution China has made to the world.

'Excerpts of Chinese president Xi Jinping's keynote speech', 2017, A2

This was a clear statement on China's rise and its ability to direct and manage nations that seek partnership. More importantly, it indicated the shifting world order, where China exemplifies and champions that the 'East' is on the rise and the 'West' needs attitudinal change and needs to recognise this new reality and work for East–West cooperation ('Excerpts of Chinese president Xi Jinping's keynote speech', 2017).

However, sceptics caution that integration has limits, as China is not 'embedded' in the international economic order (meaning proportionate influence in the World Bank and the IMF) (Dai & Renn, 2016). Others contend that with its acceptance and participation in the neoliberal economic order, China should assume greater responsibility in maintaining peace and stability of the global order. The BRI initiative, particularly the CPEC, is China's response to that challenge. It manifests a paradoxical global trend that, on the one hand, socio-economic integration is making territorial boundaries and notions of national sovereignty irrelevant, but on the other, nation states are asserting pressure to regain national sovereignty (Brexit, America First, etc.). However, many

in academia, media, and global politics remain both critical of, and anxious about, China's real intent behind the BRI (Shafqat, 2017).

Regardless of China's intention, the CPEC nonetheless offers Pakistan an opportunity for both economic and human development. Projects in the CPEC are estimated to be approximately \$46 billion to \$62 billion, around 17 per cent of the country's total GDP. Through the CPEC, a network of road and communications infrastructure will be developed spanning over 3,000 km from the city of Kashgar in China to Pakistan's southwestern tip, Gwadar. In addition to infrastructure development (roads, bridges, and railways), there are three key elements to the CPEC: the development of the Gwadar port, investments in the energy sector, and the development of industrial zones, both in western China at close proximity to Pakistan and within Pakistan (Ahmar, 2015). This chapter maintains that Pakistan will be able to benefit from these opportunities if policies surrounding the CPEC are transparent, led by research and evidence, and backed by a deep and clear understanding of local conditions. Pakistan will therefore need to charter negotiations with China on the CPEC in a manner that boosts trade in Pakistan, provides Pakistanis with an opportunity for technical learning, and creates employment in the country. Such a framework should also ensure human development vis-à-vis investments in health and education. Thus, shifting focus towards building civil society.

5.2 Literature on the CPEC: Assumptions and Perspectives

Given Pakistan's politico-economic infirmities, including perceptions about security threats and a volatile regional strategic environment that contrasts to China's prudent, thoughtful, and vigorous determination to launch the BRI initiative with a particular focus on the CPEC, the project has evoked vociferous response from local, regional, and international scholars and policymakers. Pakistani scholars generally tend to be divided on the CPEC initiative. While academic, data-driven studies are scant, a variety of journalistic articles see the initiative in terms of black and white, good and bad, pro and con. For convenience and conceptual clarity, we can divide this literature into three typologies: CPEC enthusiasts, CPEC opponents, and CPEC pragmatists.

5.2.1 *The CPEC Enthusiasts*

The CPEC enthusiasts are primarily Pakistani political leaders belonging to the Pakistan Muslim League (N) (the ruling party from 2013 to 2018), government officials, and journalists who claim and built the narrative that the CPEC is a 'game changer'. They advocate and plead with missionary zeal (however,

lacking in evidence) that the CPEC is a harbinger of peace and development for Pakistan. Any critique or concerns of transparency, protecting interests of smaller provinces, or the need for environmental impact assessments is equated with conspiracy against the Pakistan–China friendship. Commentators in favour argue that the Chinese mega-plan goes beyond politics and, through a trickle-down effect, will help alleviate the livelihood of people across the country (see, e.g., Malik, 2017a; 2017b; 2016b). Enthusiasts see the CPEC as an opportunity for Pakistan to join the bandwagon of international economic growth, where participation in the global network of production and consumption is necessary for development. Since assuming power in August 2018, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Party (PTI) of Prime Minister Imran Khan has taken a somewhat cautious and pragmatic approach towards the CPEC.

5.2.2 *The CPEC Opponents*

The CPEC opponents come in two shades. One group opposes the CPEC because they think it would lead to the exploitation and ‘stealing of Pakistani resources’. They argue that the CPEC is China’s instrument to expropriate Pakistan’s economic resources and is likely to lead to cultural, social, and political subjugation to China. They are quick to reject the idea that the CPEC will indeed be a ‘win-win situation for all’, citing the failure of previous agreements to bring the promised economic boost. For instance, the free trade agreement (FTA) signed between China and Pakistan that called for more favourable tariff rates and conducive trade and investment policies is in reality highly skewed and tilted towards China. Moreover, they fear that an influx of Chinese goods and services will crowd out local producers and enterprises that will lose out as the CPEC materialises (Ahmad, 2016). Dr. Mubashar Hasan, a reputable Pakistani leftist politician, said that the CPEC is an ‘instrument of Chinese imperialism’ and will adversely impact Pakistan’s territorial sovereignty.² This theme of dependency, portraying the return of a reincarnated ‘East India Company’, was expressively conveyed on the cover of the August 2015 *Herald* magazine, where a caricatured President Xi Jinping cradles a toddler version of Pakistan’s then prime minister, Nawaz Sharif (N. Jamal, 2015). Dr. Qaiser Bengali, an eminent Pakistani economist, has also said that the result of the CPEC would be Pakistan turning into Greece as it acquires unprecedented loans in the name of the CPEC. From this point of view, Pakistan has little to gain in terms of measurable developmental benefits; rather, it will play home to China’s export

² Dr. Hasan was making a speech at the opening ceremony of a book shop in Lahore on 20 October 2017.

of excess supply of labour and industries in which it has a competitive advantage, all the while adding to Pakistan's already high level of local and external debt – an estimated US\$73 billion in 2015 (Chaudhury, 2011).³

The second group comprises those who articulate that the CPEC would widen the wedge between Pakistan and India, as the thrust of its infrastructure development is north to south and undermines the prospects of any East–West route, trade, investment, and connectivity. These are Pakistani and international contributors, who advocate that the revival of people-to-people contact and trade and transport connection between India and Pakistan is imperative for peace and development in South Asia. Some Indian and international scholars are also part of this group. They argue that the BRI and the CPEC, in particular, are China's instruments to 'contain' India and that this is the real objective of the CPEC. Kashmiri journalist Fahad Shah (2015) points out that Indian policymakers believe that China is trying to 'encircle' India, by cultivating and making bilateral agreements with its smaller neighbours by pursuing infrastructure development and regional connectivity (the so-called 'string of pearls' theory). Shah also magnifies three challenges that confront the CPEC. First, he thinks the disputed status of Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan can hamper the project (Shah, 2015). This is an idea reflected in a recent statement by US Secretary of Defense James Mattis as well. At a meeting with the Senate Armed Services Committee, Mattis said,

The One Belt, One Road also goes through disputed territory, and I think that in itself shows the vulnerability of trying to establish that sort of a dictate.

IQBAL, 2017

This statement has come at a time when the relationship of Pakistan and the United States is seemingly in a 'low phase', and by reinforcing the 'disputed territory argument', the CPEC project has once again come under attack (Iqbal, 2017). Second, Fahad Shah claims the resentment and resistance towards the CPEC in Gilgit-Baltistan and Balochistan is problematic. According to Shah, the people in these areas feel that they are being denied the benefits and rewards that this initiative promises. Finally, Shah observes that because a part of the CPEC targets Xinjiang, where the persecuted Uyghur Muslims are in a majority, the project risks irritating an already marginalised segment of Chinese society,

3 For further academic assessments of Indian apprehensions regarding the CPEC and possibilities of how India could benefit from it by adopting a positive role by building a network of roads between India, Pakistan, and China, see Ranjan, 2015.

which wants ‘separation’ from China and not ‘inter-connectivity’ (Shah, 2015). This leads him to erroneously assert that both Uyghurs and Baloch want separation, while through the CPEC, China and Pakistan are striving to suppress separatist movements and are not really promoting infrastructural developments or regional connectivity. China and Pakistan are cognizant of these challenges but do not consider them insurmountable. Of course the official Indian position is hostile towards the BRI and the CPEC and both Prime Minister Modi and Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj are on record as having stated that they are ‘unacceptable’ (The Express Tribune, 2016; Geo News, 2015).

5.2.3 *The CPEC Pragmatists*

The CPEC pragmatists, like the author of this chapter, are those who argue that the CPEC is in many ways an innovative and credible initiative and China has made great efforts to design it in a manner so that it could contribute towards the economic, human, and social development of Pakistan. It could also bring about cultural and political transformation leading to greater sociopolitical harmony in the country. However, this demands modification in both the blueprint of the CPEC project and its implementation. If the CPEC and the BRI are truly mechanisms to bring about people-centred development, as Chinese officials claim, then the litmus test of the CPEC would be an evaluation of whether or not local communities are being involved in the process of project development and whether their participation is being promoted in its execution. Evidence suggests that including an element of community-led development is essential for the success of top-down projects such as the CPEC, indicating that ownership from locals is imperative to avoid conflict and adverse consequences for civil society. Additionally, the overarching framework of the CPEC must adopt transparency – legal, political, and financial – and clearly spell out the terms of the forms of financial assistance. It should also carefully review the environmental impact of the associated projects and assess the potential benefits for the people of Pakistan, in particular vis-à-vis the various ethnic groups and provinces. This entails a critical review of security and strategic dimensions of the CPEC.

Some key international and Pakistani academic studies have echoed this understanding. For example, early in 2017, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) released a report evaluating China’s Silk Road Economic Belt and its security implications in Eurasia and how the European Union could cooperate with China in this regard (Ghiasi & Zhou, 2017). According to the report’s authors, the initiative promises great results in terms of infrastructural development in what have largely remained underserved areas, yet security concerns and anxiety over China’s intentions remain key

markers of the eventual success of the project. Unlike the analysis emanating from the United States, much of which tends to see China as attempting to challenge traditional powers, the report describes China's objectives with the Silk Road Economic Belt as 'a convergence and clustering of multiple diplomatic, domestic socio-economic, financial, geo-economic and geopolitical interests and drivers, as well as pre-existing governmental overtures and proposals' (Ghiasi & Zhou, 2017, p. 5). From the perspective of many partnering countries within the region, including Pakistan, the Silk Road Economic Belt is just that, a way to engage with China for geopolitical, socio-economic, and financial gains of their own.

However, the report also identifies a number of challenges China faces as it demonstrates strategic muscle through inclusive growth, trade, infrastructure development, and regional connectivity. In particular, with respect to the CPEC, the SIPRI analysis forecasts heightened conflict in the region, at least in the short term. It correctly observes that without proper reforms, the CPEC could enhance the already prevalent corruption and the lack of political transparency in Pakistan (Ghiasi & Zhou, 2017). This reasoning stems from the political volatility of the region and the layers of internal conflict and externally financed proxy wars with which Pakistan is confronted. In Balochistan, separatists and insurgents have for year's resisted Chinese involvement in the development of Gwadar, threatening to sabotage projects that are being developed under the CPEC. In November 2018, the Chinese consulate in Karachi was attacked and the Balochistan Liberation Army claimed responsibility. No Chinese national were killed in the attack yet all the insurgents involved were killed. The incident was seen as a reflection of resentment against the CPEC (Aamir, 2019).

In analysing the objectives behind the BRI, Cheng (2016) argues that the Chinese grand scheme may be considered as a hybrid strategy of economic gains and well-intentioned development targeted towards countries that have growth potential. Accordingly, the development of the Silk Road does not necessarily have to be seen as either pure market-led profit making or 'financial aid' geared towards developing nations. In fact, as Cheng argues, 'foreign aid and profitability may be complementary, with aid creating conditions for trade and investment'. In this way, Chinese investment in countries such as Pakistan may be expected to bring about social uplift through principles of 'social responsibility'. Social uplift of people, particularly the youth, through social responsibility could serve Pakistani policymakers and civil society as an important guiding principle to ensure the success of the CPEC.

Despite Cheng's conclusions, a lack of credible information seems to be a recurring theme in the analysis emanating from local Pakistani sources.

Observers have underscored the need to achieve logistical and administrative prerequisites as an inextricable determinant of the viability of the Chinese grand scheme. Journalist Nadeem F. Paracha (2017) echoes such caution in declaring that the CPEC could in theory initiate virtuous cycles of development through economic growth, greater income, eventual sociopolitical stability, greater investment, and tourism, to name a few. According to Paracha, this requires change in the attitudes of Pakistanis and demands curbing religious extremism and pressuring the state to withdraw the support and patronage that has in the past been extended to militant groups. Pakistan needs to rediscover its culture of liberalism and project and preserve its peaceful and inclusive cultural heritage (Paracha, 2017).

Small (2016) summarises the most pertinent and perceptive questions surrounding the CPEC as follows: while many questions and doubts remain, these are now more concerned with 'how' rather than 'if' the CPEC will happen. What are the debt implications for the Pakistani economy? Will Punjab be the disproportionate beneficiary? What will be the local impact of the projects? Which route will be completed first? Does the government have the capacity to build a set of projects on as grand a scale as the CPEC envisages? Yet, Small argues, questions like these relate to the entire BRI and are not exclusive to the CPEC. He thinks that as the CPEC is the brainchild of the Chinese, it is their leadership that must address concerns that naturally emanate from pursuing the CPEC, specifically those pertaining to transparency and human development (Small, 2016).

Wagner (2016), a member of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, foresees an optimistic impact of the CPEC on Pakistan and India. Unlike Shah (2015), or the official position of the Modi government, he recognises that besides strengthening China–Pakistan relations, it could also help diffuse India–Pakistan tensions. Wagner correctly highlights a few steps that Pakistan has taken in this direction. First, in 2009, Pakistan gave Gilgit-Baltistan the status of an autonomous region which, according to the partition plan of 1947, was part of an undivided Kashmir – which remains a point of contention between India and Pakistan. Second, after December 2014, albeit reluctantly, Pakistan is showing signs of a change of approach towards terrorist groups. Prime Minister Imran Khan has shown determination in combating terrorism. Third, the CPEC could also restrain the Pakistani military from misadventures such as the Kargil conflict. Finally, the Chinese hope that the economic dividends of trade, investment, and connectivity would help bring more tolerance and peace to Pakistani society. Thus, Wagner argues, the CPEC can result in a more peaceful region, if properly designed and implemented (Wagner, 2016). Extending this argument further, Ali, a researcher based at

Shanghai University, postulates that if Iran and India were to join the CPEC, it could be transformed into IICPEC, giving a new sense of economic and regional connectivity to South Asia, Central Asia, East Asia, and the Middle East (Ali, 2016). Such a broad international project might seem fanciful today but if India and Pakistan were to change their attitude and outlook, a regional socio-economic transformation could indeed occur. It is in this spirit of pragmatism and redesigning the CPEC that this chapter will examine and evaluate the challenges, risks, and opportunities that the mega-project offers.

5.3 Harmonising Provincial Interests and Building National Consensus

The edifice of both China–Pakistan and US–Pakistan relations is built around strategic and geopolitical considerations (Small, 2015).⁴ However, the fundamental difference between the two is that in the case of China and Pakistan, geographical contiguity and civilisational roots also strengthen the alliance. In the popular Pakistani perception, China is recognised as an ‘all-weather friend’, while America is seen as a ‘fair-weather friend’. It could be argued that the CPEC initiative offers unprecedented opportunity for both countries to transform ties and deepen their economic, cultural, educational, and strategic partnership. While Chinese policymakers have carefully planned the CPEC, investing diverse resources to effectively design and pursue the CPEC, Pakistani policymakers have been struggling to comprehend the enormity of the task. However, the determination to seize the opportunity is visible and is gaining momentum.

Broadly, the CPEC has four components: infrastructure development, energy projects, the creation of industrial zones, and the construction of the Gwadar port. These components can be pivotal in helping Pakistan expedite its development process. However, in order to maximise economic and human development returns from the CPEC, Pakistan must first overcome internal political differences in approaching the project. The federal government must seek support and win the trust of the provincial leaders while engaging with China. With secure national consensus, the CPEC can result in equitable gains in terms of business opportunities, environmental protection, and infrastructure development. In the absence of a broad national consensus and inclusive process, implementing the CPEC will continue to be acrimonious and

4 Small (2015, pp. 1–6) provides a perceptive overview of Pakistan–China relations with some understanding of the role of the United States. However, he is wrong to suggest that China–Pakistan relations are founded on ‘shared enmity with India’.

will offer suboptimal benefits. Despite the fact that China enjoys considerable goodwill among the Pakistanis and the work on the project is ongoing, the CPEC has become a point of friction. While the government of the PML(N) was enthusiastic about the project, the opposition parties and the provincial governments remained sceptical about the CPEC being a 'win-win' situation for all (Small, 2015). Indeed, a significant hindrance to the smooth implementation of the CPEC is the inability of the federal government leadership to convince the provinces that the project will deliver equitable benefits for the entire country, especially for its economically peripheral regions. Prime Minister Imran Khan's government has initiated some discussion on re-negotiating the CPEC framework with China and the officials of the two governments met in April 2019 and signed FTA II, enhancing trade opportunities for both, particularly for Pakistan, providing greater access to the Chinese market and reducing tariffs. Advisor to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Textiles Abdul Razaq Dawood, said, 'We are extremely thankful to the Chinese government. It has accepted our demand for concessions' (Shafa, 2019). Prime Minister Imran Khan has been a little more re-assuring and skilful in carrying along the provincial leadership of the smaller provinces and the military on the CPEC negotiations with China.

On the other hand, the Pakistani military has demonstrated strong resolve to support the project and remains a pivotal player on the Pakistani side. The military's vision is security-centric and confined to protecting the infrastructure, the port of Gwadar, and Chinese personnel. While a separate security division has been created for the protection of Chinese workers in Pakistan, the cost and consequent effects of creating an additional army division have not been revealed and remain controversial. Securing consensus within Pakistan will also mean adopting a transparent and accountable system of project management. The Pakistani official and non-official CPEC enthusiasts have so far disseminated limited information relating to key issues such as project financing, project locations, and specific implementation timelines being kept away from public review.

The operational features of Pakistan's federal character are still in a formative phase. The tension between the federal government and the demands of provincial autonomy has a chequered history, where provinces have traditionally complained about the lack of authority or engagement in an over-centralised system of decision making (Javed, 2016). Harmonising provincial demands and interests, therefore, continues to be a key challenge for the civilian and military leaderships. With such high stakes in the collaboration with China, active participation from the provinces in the CPEC would be a

desirable goal to comfort lower levels of government and the civil society that could otherwise threaten a positive investment climate.

There are various reasons for the underlying mistrust and scepticism surrounding the CPEC. First, a credible description of the CPEC infrastructural, energy, and social sector projects is missing, raising apprehension and suspicion. Such transparency is necessary, not only to avoid the dire costs of malpractice and corruption, but also to ensure that the CPEC does not derail the economic and human development rights of those being affected.

Second, there is little discussion over the extent to which the new rail and road projects will build on existing infrastructure. If the new investment will disregard previous transport networks and begin afresh, the government should be able to confront concerns regarding the waste of physical resources and meagre finances and extensive environmental degradation that could be avoided (Shafqat & Shahid, 2018, pp. 52–54).

Third, there needs to be a clear indication by the government on how the project routes are going to impact the social, economic, political, and environmental well-being of local communities. Explanation will support local communities to benefit from the economic development that the CPEC offers without fearing economic or environmental disasters. Previous experiences indicate that impact assessments were lacking during the construction of the Karokaram Highway, which had various adverse consequences. The third interim report of the Special Committee of Senate on the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor points out several flaws surrounding the development of the highway in light of increased traffic due to the CPEC. There is ecological damage taking place along the Ataabad Lake in the form of cracks on the lake's embankment as a result of construction work. The lake itself appears to be a product of a landslide resulting from the degradation of surrounding mountains because of the blasts that took place during the construction of the highway (Raza, 2016).

Finally, there is considerable ambiguity concerning whether the government has been able to negotiate trade agreements, whereby local markets can maximise returns from the proposed CPEC projects. Is there, for example, an understanding of the various areas of Pakistan's competitive advantage and how the CPEC routes can be altered to benefit them? Take the case of Balochistan, a province that has low population density and a dearth of skilled labour coupled with low income levels; worker migration into the province from other parts of the country may prove to further worsen the plight of the local labour force, who would not be able to compete in terms of skill or education (Raza, 2016). Pakistan must charter negotiations with China on the CPEC in a manner that boosts trade in Pakistan, provides Pakistanis an opportunity

for technical learning, and creates employment in the country. Such a framework should also ensure human development by investments in health and education. The good news is that China is responding favourably to address some of these concerns; in 2017 it established the China–Pakistan Emergency Medical Center in Gwadar, which provides medical assistance and medicines to the local population. Earlier in 2016, in collaboration with local villagers, Gwadar Faqeer School was launched to encourage the children of fishermen and local villagers to seek primary education. There is then a sense of urgency attached to the need for complementary policies in the form of technical and vocational training of the local labour force. More importantly, both governments have agreed to prioritise agriculture, education, medical treatment, poverty alleviation, water supply, and vocational training as key cooperation areas. The CPEC Joint Working Group (JWG) of Social Economic cooperation has begun work on establishing agricultural demonstration centres, poverty alleviation demonstration villages, vocational training schools, and hospitals, and for increasing scholarships for Pakistani students in China. These are small but positive steps and could win the confidence of local people in supporting the CPEC.

5.4 Curbing Terrorism and Strengthening Security

A prevalent security threat and acts of terrorism make it imperative to provide protection to Chinese companies and their personnel. Pakistan continues to be a venue for global terrorists: it is a victim, but also a source. There is a growing realisation that domestic sources of terrorism must be dismantled and destroyed. A politically volatile situation in Balochistan also threatens the prospects of the CPEC.

In terms of Pakistan's plan of action, the country will need to overcome the hurdles surrounding the CPEC by making a paradigm shift from a security state to a development state, where pursuit of peace and harmony promotes a culture of economic growth and reform. While striving for internal socio-economic reform, China has sought peace within and abroad, particularly in its neighbourhood (India, Vietnam, Russia, etc.), setting an example of pursuing diplomacy effectively. Pakistan is haunted by the twin problems of political instability and terrorism. Uprooting terrorism and maintaining internal peace and harmony continue to be the key challenges for Pakistan. In the past four years there has been considerable progress in this area, particularly in Karachi, the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and Balochistan. Further foreign and local investment can come and development could be enhanced if

Pakistan is able to create a terror-free environment. Response of the provinces to security threats has not been proactive and uniform but rather reactionary and scattered. There is variation in the capacity of public institutions and officials in the provinces. The links and coordination at the federal, provincial, and local levels of government on matters of intelligence gathering and countering terrorist threats also remain weak.

Suicide bombings and targeted killings in Karachi and terrorist attacks in the relatively safer urban areas of Punjab further add to the risk associated with bilateral investment projects. Moreover, the security situation in Balochistan continues to be a serious challenge to national peace in Pakistan. Ethnic tensions, political violence, terrorism, and suicide bombings continue to project Pakistan as a country that does not have an investment-friendly environment. Baloch separatists have also explicitly demanded China to not engage in Gwadar (Esteban, 2016). On 2 July 2019, the US State Department declared the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) as an international terrorist group. Pakistan banned it in 2006. The State Department noted that, 'The BLA is an armed separatist group that targets security forces and civilians, mainly in the ethnic Baloch areas of Pakistan' (Bhattacharjee, 2019). On its part Pakistan has welcomed the decision as a 'positive development' (Ghazali, 2019). The global war on terror has cost Pakistan billions of dollars since 2001, an estimated total of US\$123.13 billion (Jamal, N., 2017).

Very recently, in May 2019, a five-star luxury hotel was attacked in Gwadar. BLA claimed responsibility. The US designation of the BLA as a terrorist organisation is a relief for both Pakistan and China. Earlier in February 2017, a suicide bomber attacked Mall Road in Lahore, killing thirteen people, including the deputy inspector general of the traffic police (Gabol, 2017). A few days later, a shrine in Sehwan, a town in southern Sindh, was targeted, resulting in the death of at least eighty-eight people ('Army kills "100 terrorists" after Sehwan shrine blast', 2017). Less than a week later, the session's court in Charsadda, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), was attacked and seven people were killed (Mohmand & Khan, 2017). Quetta, the provincial capital of Balochistan, also witnessed the martyrdom of one of its leading bomb-disposal experts, who was killed during a bomb-diffusion operation. Additionally, attacks take place in the province on a daily basis. After a relatively peaceful 2018–2019 in the region, terrorist-related casualties occurred throughout the country, raising alarm over the extent of countrywide infiltration of armed extremist networks, casting shadows on the CPEC. Over the past three years the provincial government of Balochistan has taken several steps to counter terrorism and to enhance the capacity of the police and security forces, including the establishment of the Police Training College, the Balochistan Constabulary,

and the Anti-Terrorism Force Training School. In addition, a command and control centre with cameras has been set up in Quetta. This clearly shows that the federal and provincial governments are making concerted efforts to improve the security environment in Balochistan.

In April 2015, Pakistan promised the addition of 12,000 security personnel for the purpose of ensuring safety surrounding the CPEC. However, it is evident that the security situation demands a more multifaceted solution (Esteban, 2016). The solution will require more than simply increasing defence spending and setting up armed regiments. Already Pakistan's social sectors have suffered from funds being allocated away from health and education and towards security. A further rise in expenditure on security may further tighten resources for social development. The government has attempted to keep provincial authorities on board through promoting participation at international forums, such as international meetings of the Joint Cooperation Committee of the CPEC, demonstrating to some extent the importance of internal consent. Yet provincial scepticism continues with regards to project development.

5.5 The Political Economy of Balochistan

Analysing the current territorial distribution of CPEC projects reveals that most of the new projects do in fact appear to be concentrated towards the eastern part of Pakistan, while apprehension about the CPEC is brewing in the western part (KP and Balochistan). This clearly shows that it is imperative for the federal government to engage, persuade, and assure the leadership and people of Balochistan on the economic dividends that the CPEC offers. The political economy of Balochistan presents a paradox. It is rich in natural resources (including minerals such as gold, copper, and coal) and energy reserves, but it is characterised by socio-economic under-development, widespread poverty, low-skilled labour, and poor infrastructure, making it a province that has a population that is difficult to engage. More importantly, it is troubling to note that over the decades, successive governments in Pakistan have not paid adequate attention to the social and economic development of the Baloch people.

The people in Balochistan worry that the CPEC projects could catalyse the process of resource extraction from the province without a fair chance for local development. Promoting the 'Western route' of the CPEC could dispel this scepticism. From the maps available on government websites (CPEC, 2020), it is quite evident that development in the province remains limited. Two railway upgrade projects are in addition to the construction of new lines that connect Gwadar to Quetta and Quetta to Zhob. Furthermore, a significant

proportion of the investment in Balochistan is focussed on the development of the port city of Gwadar, which is largely managed by Chinese companies or the Pakistani military. How the province's rural heartland will benefit from the CPEC remains a serious concern. The Baloch people, therefore, need to be assured about the dividends of development in terms of improvements in human resource capacity and quality of life. Resultantly, an important area of action is to promote greater representation of the Baloch people in the CPEC activity. Greater representation could also help correct the perception that the CPEC is not Punjab-centric but brightens prospects of investment, trade, and development all over Pakistan. In the past three years some movement has begun to occur in this direction. For example, in 2017 in collaboration with the Higher Commission of Education (HEC) the Chinese government launched the Gwadar–China Scholarship Program, an international programme designed for the Baloch youth and especially for the indigenous students of Gwadar. The programme offers numerous opportunities, notably the opportunity to learn Chinese at a leading Chinese language institute. Fourteen students of Gwadar were selected for this yearlong Chinese language learning course in March 2018, and another thirty-six in November of the same year. The scholarship is primarily sponsored by the government of Pakistan but operates in collaboration with the Chinese universities. This programme is dual purpose: from a Chinese perspective it is likely to promote cross-cultural learning and from a Pakistani perspective it is likely to produce individuals proficient in the Chinese language who will benefit from job opportunities emerging through the CPEC. More importantly, it is likely to create a sense of inclusiveness and ownership of the CPEC in the Baloch students. This is imperative if we are to realise it in its true spirit; for in engagement lays the prospect of the CPEC being a 'game changer'.

In addition to the Baloch, the people in Gilgit-Baltistan also demand due dividends from the CPEC. Thus far, hardly any meaningful investment has been identified for the area, with the exception of the passage of a road. Gilgit-Baltistan, for instance, could also benefit from access to the 1,000 km gas pipeline between Tajikistan and China for energy use. The third interim report of the Special Committee of Senate on China–Pakistan Economic Corridor revealed that while around \$36 billion of the CPEC were targeted towards electricity generation in Pakistan, power generation in Gilgit-Baltistan remains without any funding whatsoever (Raza, 2016).

The government in the province of KP has similar expectations, demanding that CPEC-related investment in the region should go beyond just highway construction. ICT infrastructure, railway networks, and energy projects should also be ensured for the province. In fact, if the CPEC infrastructure development

is pursued with imagination and commitment, it has the potential to play a substantial role in reducing regional disparities in Pakistan. Economically and politically marginalised territories could benefit in terms of employment generation, basic road infrastructure, and training.

Here a bottom-up approach can be crucial in materialising the CPEC. For instance, greater employment of local labour, the creation of vocational institutes to complement infrastructural developments, and setting up road networks to connect the infrastructurally impoverished rural areas to major highway routes are a few options to consider. Of course, learning the Chinese language would be a step in the right direction, and some progress is visible. According to the Chinese director of the Confucius Institute Islamabad, Chinese language courses are becoming popular in Pakistan; last year, 1,000 people took the language qualifying test and this year, 1,029 people have applied (Yunbi, 2017).

5.6 Fostering Regional Cooperation under the Shadow of India–Pakistan Rivalry

Given the significance of the CPEC, it is worthwhile analysing how the changing dynamics of China–India relations could impact Pakistan. To begin with, it is important to realise that the strategic environment in South Asia is driven and defined by India–Pakistan rivalry. Despite a shared colonial past and visible cultural and institutional similarity, the dynamics of the relationship continue to be driven by hostility, lack of trust, conflict, and war. Insecurity, fear, and suspicion of the ‘other’ continue to keep South Asia as the ‘nuclear flash point’ while peace, cooperation, and economic partnership remain elusive. Most scholarly and journalistic studies continue to present a dismal picture of an ‘unending conflict’ in South Asia (Ganguly, 2001). This rivalry encourages violence and perpetuates an environment that ignites terrorism. The roots of ‘hatred of brothers’ are buried in the Hindu, Muslim, and British histories and cultural experiences. Both India and Pakistan can, and do, invoke ‘past glory’ to run each other down. Suspicious of each other’s intent, Pakistan and India tumbled into war over Kashmir in 1947, aggravating insecurities. Since then, Kashmir has been the core issue between them. India claims Kashmir is an ‘integral part of India’, while Pakistan contests that it is a ‘disputed territory’. The two countries have fought three wars over the matter (in 1948, 1965, and 1999). Over the past half a century, the international community has shown little interest in the ‘historical, legal validity or merits’ of the case or even of the plight of the Kashmiris. The primary concern of the international community

has been to ensure that a conflict between India and Pakistan does not degenerate into large-scale military conflict or nuclear war.

The hostility between Pakistan and India has a deep impact on the psyches of both nations and continues to be an obstacle to the evolution and development of the CPEC. Some international studies have commented that territorial disputes between India and Pakistan may now gain global attention through the CPEC, finally leading to international action on the issue. In this way, the CPEC may not bring the intended peace and regional integration promoted by China but may lead to an intensification of conflict in the region. Would China venture to convert the challenge of India–Pakistan rivalry into a peace dividend opportunity?

5.7 Changing Dynamics of Indo–China Relations and the CPEC

In 2014, as Narendra Modi became Prime Minister, the initial indications were that China and India could embark on a new phase of strategic partnership. In September 2014, China's President Xi Jinping visited India and, along with Prime Minister Modi, the two announced the signing of sixteen memoranda of understanding (MOUs) on a wide range of collaborations in science and technology, culture, trade, infrastructure, and border management. Ahead of President Xi Jinping's visit, Modi remarked, 'China and India are two bodies, one spirit'; the comment was appreciated by the Chinese president and set the tone for China and India's cooperation. A few weeks later in the last few days of September 2014, Prime Minister Modi paid his first official visit to the United States. The visit led to a re-definition of the Indo–US strategic partnership. It opened up new vistas of partnership between India and the US moving beyond strategic concerns and could have caused a schism between India and China. Nonetheless, President Xi and Prime Minister Modi have shown enormous diplomatic skills in sustaining personal rapport. There were several other occasions where the Indian and Chinese leadership also met. First, in 2015 the Indian prime minister visited China and, in 2016, the two leaders met again, on the side lines of the BRICS meeting in Goa. However, between 2014 and 2016 the Indian prime minister visited the United States four times. This clearly shows that the India–US strategic partnership has solidified and India appears to have opted to side with the United States in containing China. Geopolitically, this could intensify the India–China rivalry in global and regional affairs; however, it is unlikely to dampen prospects of economic cooperation between the two. Having said this, two factors that could keep India–US relations tenuous are that, first, the mindset of the Indian political

leadership and policy makers remains tilted towards non-alignment and, second, the unpredictable and brinkmanship driven style and behaviour of US president Trump. Yet, given the scale of Indo–China economic relations and crafty Modi–Xi Jinping personal diplomacy, it is plausible that India may be weighing its options and would strategize to negotiate terms of joining the CPEC by maximising concessions from both China and Pakistan (Ranjan, 2015). The proposed Bangladesh–China, India–Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor thus remains under active consideration and warrants attention being given to the prospects for both economic cooperation and geostrategic contestation between India and China.

5.8 Balochistan: The Emerging Epicentre of Regional Power Rivalry and the Future of the CPEC

It is within the context of great power rivalry and Chinese suspicions of ‘containment’ and Indian worries of ‘encirclement’ that Balochistan has become a battleground for future contestation, rivalry, and proxy wars. Balochistan’s geostrategic location, rugged topography, rich mineral resources, tribal and nomadic population, and long coastline has been highlighted by a number of scholarly studies (Titus, 1996; Kaplan, 2011). From the Pakistani perspective, India and Iran are two countries whose strategic and economic cooperation sets security alarms in Islamabad. Hence these must be monitored carefully and thwarted before they pose any threat. In this context deepening of any Iran–India relations are of immense concern for Pakistan. Besides, terrorism, the expansion of commercial and strategic ties between Iran and India rouses serious concern for Pakistan with special reference to Balochistan.

In May 2016, India made yet another strategic move to impede the CPEC. Prime Minister Modi signed twelve pacts with Iranian President Rouhani to upgrade the operationalisation of Chabahar Port in the Iranian province of Sistan and Baluchistan (which neighbours the Pakistani province of Balochistan) by agreeing to invest US\$500 million. For India, the Chabahar Port could serve as its gateway to Afghanistan and the rest of Central Asia (Malik, 2016a). India promised to undertake projects worth US\$20 billion that would lead to a ‘strategic game change’ across the region, including China. The Indo–Iranian deal came in the wake of the Iran–US–Europe nuclear deal and opened up an opportunity for Iran to increase the export of its oil (at the cost of Saudi Arabia). Iran has already built 600 km of road between Chabahar and Zahedan.

Rail connections are also being built: Iran sees Chabahar as an alternative to Bandar Abbas which is inside the Gulf and west of the Arabian Sea. Chabahar, like Gwadar, is a deep-water port that gives Iran access to the Indian Ocean. Pakistan is however discomforted by this Iran–India collaboration in Chabahar, as it suspects this port would be used for surveillance of the Pakistan Navy in the Arabian Sea. Iran could also use it as a tactical ploy to put pressure on Pakistan to reduce reliance on Saudi Arabia, particularly in light of President Trump’s recent visit and the Arab Islamic American Summit (in which fifty Islamic countries participated), which seemed to be against Iranian influence in the region. Pakistan is also wary that through Chabahar, India’s influence will increase, both in Afghanistan and across Central Asia.⁵

On the other hand, both Iran and Pakistan have a common interest in quelling the Baloch separatists; neither is willing to accept any demand of an independent Balochistan. In the 1950s Iran crushed the Dadshah revolt in Iranian Balochistan and Pakistan extradited Dadshah’s brother to Iran. Similarly, in 2011 Abdulla Malik Riggi, a Jundallah leader, was arrested by Pakistan, returned to Iran, and was executed there.

Baloch separatists on both sides have intensified their international campaign for separation and vocalised their opposition to Chabahar and Gwadar. The situation is complicated by India and China viewing investment in these two ports as an opportunity for countering the other. These two ports are likely to intensify Saudi–Iran rivalry as well, for influence/power projection in the region. This became evident when in February 2019, Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman, while visiting Pakistan pledged an investment of \$20 billion, including \$10 billion for building an oil refinery at Gwadar (Dilawar & Haider, 2019). Despite continuing sanctions on Iran, the United States has encouraged India to build Chabahar yet it also perceives Gwadar as a long-term threat if, and when, China is able to connect through Gwadar’s western part and then deeper into Central Asia. For the United States, it is not an immediate threat, as the US Navy is much more technologically advanced and has greater reach as compared to China. For both China and Pakistan, Gwadar, on the mouth of the Persian Gulf, does provide an edge. Therefore, as I have argued elsewhere, whosoever controls the Persian Gulf will control the Arabian Sea; whosoever dominates the Arabian Sea will dominate the Indian Ocean (Shafqat, 2017). Thus, Pakistan needs to astutely monitor Iran–India cooperation and tread carefully around the Iran–Saudi Arabia rivalry in the Gulf and beyond.

5 For a perceptive analysis of these regional rivalries and state strategies, see Hughes, 2016.

It is worth noting that the two emerging strategic ports, Gwadar and Chabahar, are both part of Iranian and Pakistani Balochistan and are merely a distance of 70 km from each other; if the two are connected and cooperative peace building occurs, it could spur economic activity and strengthen China's BRI and CPEC initiatives.

From China's perspective, Pakistan serves many of its vital geostrategic objectives in the region. Pakistan is a regionally important country to China, and the CPEC could usher a brighter economic future. Pakistan was a key ally for China throughout the Cold War period. However, today a militarily muscular India is also a leading trading partner of China. Any new economic partnership between China and India could weaken ties between China and Pakistan. Beijing, however, would not abandon Pakistan, as China's interest in a stronger Pakistan parallels its own interests. In particular, Pakistan plays an important role in fighting terrorism, contributing to China's efforts to fight terrorist and separatist forces in southwest China. Just as India has been able to build economic ties with China despite its border disputes, Pakistan and India can also learn from that practice and pursue the significant opportunities that can be realised for both countries if economic interactions are strengthened. This will require India to overcome its scepticism regarding the CPEC road routes going through Gilgit-Baltistan (Kashmir) or its fears of China's facilitated access to the Arabian Sea (Esteban, 2016). That implies that both India and Pakistan would also need to abandon proxy wars as a policy choice; the arrest of an Indian intelligence agent in Balochistan this year has sparked controversy in this regard (U. Jamal, 2015). This demands diplomatic engagement and resolution of 'intractable conflicts' through political means for mutual economic gains, trade, and development, and to that end the CPEC can be pivotal.

5.9 Conclusion

Taking a pragmatist position, I have argued that the eventual success of the CPEC for Pakistan could be assessed through a human development lens, where it is participatory and inclusive. For Pakistan, prioritising harmony and consensus between the provinces is one area that needs to be pursued with urgency. This can be done through involving local members within the management and design of the individual CPEC projects. For instance, for the communities in Gilgit-Baltistan, in essence the first geographic point of entry of land-based economic interaction between China and Pakistan, there needs to be a coherent policy framework that encourages participation in, and ownership of, the CPEC. This can be achieved through promoting local agricultural

and handicraft projects and facilitating labour movement from northern Pakistan to China.

Similarly, Balochistan has been confronted with chronic unemployment and grim job prospects for its youth. Ensuring the employment of Baloch labour in Gwadar and their technical training to enhance their skills will pacify anxiety that the CPEC will be exploitative and unjust. Simultaneously, China and Pakistan need to create an enabling environment for Baloch traders and businessmen by working with the Quetta Chamber of Industries that was established in 1972 and today has over 2,000 members. The CPEC would gain a boost along with credibility in the eyes of the Baloch business people if China opens up visa application centres or consulates in Quetta and Gwadar. Currently, a Baloch businessman has to travel to Karachi to obtain a visa for China and besides this expense and inconvenience the business visa is itself pretty expensive, costing about US\$1,500 (Aamir, 2019). Prudence on the part of Pakistan and China demands that this visa fees must be rationalised to promote a sense of ownership and engagement among the Baloch businessmen, investors, and bazaar traders.

This chapter also argued that managing the security situation will be a determining factor on the basis of which Pakistan will be able to capitalise on the opportunities the CPEC offers, both through engaging with China and also through an enhanced role in the regional economy. The civilian and military leaderships appear more determined in fighting terrorism, especially since 2014. Operation Zarb-e Azab and Radd al-Fasad have indicated the army's new-found fervour for curbing militant activity, while the civilian government has supplemented military efforts with policies such as the National Action Plan. These measures, however, continue to remain controversial and their implementation questionable, many pointing out that the root causes of terrorism still require a more holistic solution. Such solution would require engaging across the educational, social, political, religious, and cultural spheres of governance through improved curriculum design, providing opportunities for skills development and quality employment, and undertaking community-building initiatives that include interfaith dialogue and effective awareness campaigns.

Only by establishing internal harmony can Pakistan's leadership expect to resolve its external conflicts, including the pressing India–Pakistan rivalry that presently threatens the smooth completion of CPEC projects. Learning from China, Pakistan too will need to engage in skilful diplomacy to project the CPEC as an opportunity for the entire region, not just for Pakistan. This chapter argued that an East–West corridor can complement the CPEC, formalising

the significant clandestine trade that occurs between India and Pakistan and boosting the potential for greater development gains for both countries.

Analysing the strategic dimensions, the chapter argued that the port of Gwadar in Balochistan is now an integral component of the CPEC. Its development and full-scale operation as a seaport and potential naval base has caused anxiety for India and other regional powers. Through this port, China gets the closest access to the Persian Gulf and its oil as well as to the Middle Eastern markets. China has become the world's second largest oil consumer and it is well aware of the significance of Pakistan's strategic location on the globe.

The second important rationale for the CPEC is related to China's sensitivity about the growing strategic partnership of the United States with India, emerging under the Bush administration in 2004, expanding under President Obama, and more recently reaching new heights under President Trump and President Biden. On the other hand, Pakistan, despite its 'roller-coaster' relations with the United States, has maintained an enduring partnership with the US. On occasions Pakistan has served as a bridge between China and the United States (such as the 1971 Kissinger visit to China), but more importantly, at critical times Pakistan has lent diplomatic support to China on international forums; the issue of Tibet and Taiwan and its support for China to obtain a seat at the UN Security Council are a few examples. This has helped Pakistan win China's trust and strategic friendship.

The third point to consider is that China and Pakistan share a history of strong geopolitical interests and military ties. Transformation and expansion into economic, commercial, educational, and cultural links could enlarge the framework of cooperation that the two countries share. The CPEC, under the BRI framework, is perhaps one of the most critical components of the Chinese vision, to borrow Nye and Keohane's expression of 'complex interdependence' (Keohane and Nye, 1973). The CPEC's geostrategic location requires that both China and Pakistan develop sophisticated diplomatic and foreign policy skills to make the salience of the CPEC understandable to people within the country and across the region. Pakistani policy planners had realised the strategic significance of Gwadar in the early 1960s but had neither the resources nor the capacity to develop it into a port. Nonetheless, today the port city of Gwadar and its development as a key component of the CPEC symbolises the importance of China–Pakistan relations that cuts across all of the dimensions mentioned above. In particular, the upgrade of Gwadar reflects China's policy of safeguarding its security concerns vis-à-vis its overarching development programme. The Pakistani port city forms one of the three focal areas of recent Chinese military strategy, in addition to the ports of Djibouti and Chabahar. In that spirit, Balochistan is the geo-economic and geostrategic 'heartland' for

the CPEC. Gwadar's 'ultra-strategic location', plus the propping up of the ports of Pasni and Ormara along the Makran coast makes it Pakistan's 'new destiny' (Kaplan, 2011, pp. 68–69).

Establishing strong military cooperation with Pakistan's navy in Gwadar will further deepen ties between the armed forces of the two countries and will help both Pakistan and China expand its commerce and security role in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan would remain pivotal for China's BRI strategic vision, but to ensure that it becomes a 'game-changer' for Pakistan, it would need to redesign its economic policies and security interests with pragmatic foresight, discretion, and national consensus that manifests national will.⁶

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