

Analyzing the Socio-Economic Impact of CPEC on Balochistan: Opportunities, Challenges, and Controversies

Mehtab Shah

PhD Scholar, Area Study Centre (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar

Shabir Ahmad Khan

Professor, Area Study Centre (Russia, China & Central Asia), University of Peshawar

Abstract: *The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), launched in 2013, with an investment of \$62 billion, has been hailed as a transformative initiative aimed at enhancing economic growth, connectivity, and infrastructure in Pakistan. For Balochistan, CPEC offers significant opportunities including the development of Gwadar Port, road networks, energy projects, and the establishment of special economic zones. However, the socio-economic impacts of CPEC on Balochistan remain contentious, prompting debates on whether it is a blessing or a curse for the province. While the federal government views CPEC as a game-changer, Baloch nationalist leaders, Politicians and academics highlight concerns over marginalization, inequitable resource distribution, demographic changes, and a lack of consultation with local stakeholders. The disproportionate allocation of energy projects and fears of exploitation of Balochistan's natural resources have fueled dissatisfaction with nationalists threatening potential cultural and economic alienation. Moreover, the insurgency and targeted attacks against CPEC infrastructure have further complicated its implementation. Critics draw parallels with historical patterns of resource exploitation, raising questions about Balochistan's ownership of strategic assets like Gwadar Port and the implications of Chinese loans. This paper analyzes the dual socio-economic impacts of CPEC on Balochistan, exploring whether it represents a development path or perpetuates the province's marginalization, and offers recommendations to address local concerns and foster inclusive growth.*

Keywords: CPEC, Balochistan, Socioeconomic Development, Local Baloch Concerns, Nationalism

Introduction

Proposed in 2013 by Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, CPEC is an economic corridor designed to link China's Xinjiang province to Gwadar port in Pakistan (Mardell, 2020). Economic corridors create critical connections between key economic hubs through infrastructure such as roads, railways, and ports, promoting trade and industrial growth (Brunner, 2013). The CPEC initially had an investment value of \$46 billion. This amount was based on the 51 agreements and memorandums of understanding signed between China and Pakistan in 2015. CPEC aims to establish a vast network of highways, railways, and energy pipelines to boost economic development (Wolf S. , 2020). Pakistan considers CPEC a game-changer, focusing on transportation, industrial parks, and energy projects to create jobs, modernize infrastructure, and reduce dependency on imported fuels (Kamran, Zhang, & Umbreen, 2018). The project aims to link Balochistan with the rest of the country through developed transportation infrastructure and ultimately make Gwadar a transit trade between Central, South and West Asia. It has also been planned to address the socio-political issues in Balochistan by bringing socio-economic development to the restive province.

A significant component of CPEC is the energy sector, where 21 agreements have been signed to develop gas, coal, and solar projects (Ministry of Planning Development, & Special Initiatives, n.d.). Fourteen energy projects alone are expected to generate 10,400 MW of electricity. Former Foreign Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif stated that CPEC has reduced Pakistan's daily 13-14 hours of load shedding to zero in 70% of the country. The project has also generated 60,000 jobs and is expected to create 800,000 more by 2030 (China Daily, 2018). Of the \$35 billion investment in energy, \$11 billion is allocated to Sindh, and \$9 billion to Balochistan (Ministry of Planning Development, & Special Initiatives, n.d.).

Despite these figures, Balochistan's share in CPEC remains a point of contention. Baloch nationalists argue that Balochistan will receive only 0.5% of the project's benefits, as 70% of CPEC's budget is allocated to energy, with none of the 13 major energy projects based in Balochistan. Former Chief Minister Mir Abdul Quddus Bizenjo criticized the federal government for prioritizing larger provinces over Balochistan (Dawn, 2018). Similarly, BNP-M leader Sardar Akhtar Mengal stated that Baloch people were not consulted about CPEC and opposed the project (Aamir, 2017). Nationalist parties such as BNP-M and NP reject CPEC, viewing it as an attempt to control Balochistan's resources and alter its demographic landscape (Zafar, 2017). They fear that Balochistan's economic and political autonomy will be eroded (Wani, 2021).

The insurgency in Balochistan further complicates CPEC's progress. Baloch militants perceive CPEC as a tool for resource exploitation and have conducted attacks on security forces and Chinese workers. In 2015, 20 construction workers were killed in Turbat before Xi Jinping's visit (Shahid, 2015). In 2016, two Chinese engineers were killed in a bomb blast in Hub (Mayank, 2016). The BLA¹ has also attacked the Pearl Continental Hotel in Gwadar, targeting Chinese investors (Omer, 2019).

Concerns over transparency and financial obligations add to the skepticism. Some Baloch academics compare Pakistan's reliance on Chinese loans to Sri Lanka's debt crisis, where the Hambantota port was leased to China for 99 years due to financial strain (BBC, 2017). If not managed properly, Pakistan may face similar consequences with Gwadar (Khan & Zahid, 2024). Thus, while CPEC promises economic growth and infrastructure development, its impact on Balochistan remains debatable. Marginalization, lack of transparency, insurgency, and fears of debt raise critical questions about whether CPEC will be a blessing or a burden for the province. Addressing these concerns is essential for ensuring that Balochistan benefits from CPEC's potential rather than suffering its consequences. The work attempts to answer three main questions: what socio-economic benefits CPEC brings to Balochistan? What are the local concerns in Balochistan regarding the project? and what concerns have been raised by local Baloch people regarding the project?

Research Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research methodology to explore the challenges and opportunities associated with the CPEC in Balochistan. According to Bryman, qualitative research focuses on understanding social behaviors within their specific contexts, allowing researchers to explore values, attitudes, and beliefs as they relate to unique settings (Bryman, 2016). This approach is flexible and adaptive, making it suitable for examining the complex socio-economic and internal challenges surrounding CPEC (Bryman, 2016). The qualitative method enables an in-depth understanding of

¹ The Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) is an ethnonationalist militant organization, comprised mostly of Marri and Bugti tribe members, fighting against the Pakistani government for greater regional autonomy for the province of Balochistan. The organization was founded in 2000 and has used IEDs, mortar strikes, ethnic genocide, and small arms attacks against Pakistani government affiliates, Punjabi, and foreign workers in Balochistan. Available online at: <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/balochistan-liberation-army> Retrieved on: 14/3/2014

whether CPEC brings positive or negative impacts to Balochistan and provides a deeper analysis of its implications for the region.

The research relies on both primary and secondary data sources. Secondary data sources include scholarly books, peer-reviewed journal articles, policy reports, and select mass-media outputs. Peer-reviewed journal articles are more reliable because they undergo a rigorous review process, ensuring credibility and academic validity. However, mass media sources, which may lack academic rigor, were used selectively to supplement factual information. Government reports and policy documents were particularly valuable in understanding official perspectives, developmental policies, and strategic objectives related to CPEC. The secondary data collected was thoroughly examined to identify relevant themes related to economic development, security concerns, political implications, and regional connectivity. Key points were extracted and categorized for later thematic analysis. Government documents, archival records, and mass media outputs were collected directly from official sources, not from Google Scholar.

Primary data was collected from government officials, politicians, and security forces through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders who are directly involved in or affected by CPEC. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, a technique that allows researchers to intentionally choose individuals with relevant knowledge and experience. This method ensured that the study captured diverse perspectives on CPEC's socio-economic and security implications. The participants included a subject expert from Balochistan, a student from the University of Balochistan, a police officer responsible for CPEC security, a local fisherman from Gwadar, and a local politician from Balochistan. These individuals were chosen based on their expertise, accessibility, willingness to contribute, and ability to offer varied perspectives on the research topic.

The semi-structured interview method allowed for a structured yet flexible approach to data collection. A predetermined set of open-ended questions guided the discussion, but the interviewer retained the flexibility to explore emerging topics based on participants' responses. The interview process involved several key steps. First, a set of interview questions was developed, focusing on economic development, security concerns, community impact, and policy issues. Open-ended questions allowed for detailed, narrative-style responses. Participants were contacted in advance and briefed on the study objectives. Interviews were conducted in person or via online platforms, depending on participant availability. Each interview lasted 30-45 minutes and was audio-recorded (with consent) for accuracy.

The interview process followed a structured yet flexible format. Participants were asked questions tailored to their specific background and expertise. After data collection, interviews were transcribed verbatim, and thematic analysis was used to identify key patterns and perspectives. Thematic coding helped categorize responses into major themes such as economic development, security risks, policy implications, and regional socio-political dynamics. This combination of primary and secondary data ensures a comprehensive and well-rounded exploration of CPEC's impact on Balochistan.

Socioeconomic Opportunities for Balochistan through CPEC

CPEC has introduced significant opportunities for socioeconomic development in Balochistan, a province historically marked by economic marginalization and underdevelopment. With CPEC's extensive focus on infrastructure, including highways, railways, and Gwadar Port, the region is witnessing a transformative phase in its connectivity and trade potential. Gwadar Port, often referred to as the "jewel" of CPEC, is being developed into a world-class maritime hub, facilitating regional trade and commerce. This development is expected to generate substantial revenue streams and employment opportunities for the local population, significantly improving their economic conditions. The construction of transport networks, such as the Makran Coastal Highway and railways linking Gwadar to other parts of Pakistan, enhances regional and national integration, creating avenues for increased trade and mobility. Additionally, the development of energy projects under CPEC is poised to alleviate

the province's energy shortages, providing much-needed electricity to communities and industries, and enabling sustained economic activities.

One of the notable aspects of CPEC in Balochistan is its emphasis on human resource development, equipping the local population with the skills needed to participate in modern economic activities. Vocational and technical training centers being established under CPEC initiatives are focused on preparing the workforce for employment in various sectors such as logistics, construction, and industrial manufacturing. The development of SEZs across the province, particularly near Gwadar, offers promising prospects for industrialization, attracting foreign and local investments and creating thousands of job opportunities. Moreover, health and sanitation projects, including initiatives to provide clean drinking water in Gwadar and other areas, address pressing humanitarian needs. Improved healthcare facilities and infrastructure not only enhance the quality of life but also build a healthier and more productive workforce.

CPEC's digital and IT-focused initiatives present additional avenues for socioeconomic growth in Balochistan. The introduction of IT training programs and digital infrastructure allows the province to connect with global technological advancements, enabling youth and entrepreneurs to harness digital tools for innovation and business. Programs supporting startups and small enterprises empower locals to engage actively in economic growth, while scholarships and educational collaborations between China and Pakistan offer skill-enhancement opportunities for students and professionals. Furthermore, efforts to support marginalized communities, including women, through targeted education, training and financial incentives, aim to foster inclusive growth. These measures are vital in ensuring that all segments of the population benefit from the transformative potential of CPEC, making it a cornerstone of Balochistan's journey toward socioeconomic upliftment.

Human Resource Development and Economic Potential of Balochistan under CPEC

CPEC offers immense opportunities for Balochistan, particularly through infrastructure and human resource development. Projects like highways and railways are set to transform the region's connectivity, fostering intra-provincial trade and linking Balochistan with the rest of Pakistan and beyond (Farooqui & Aftab, 2018). Water-related projects alleviate severe shortages, benefiting Gwadar and other areas facing critical water scarcity. Gwadar Port's development and associated infrastructure turn the region into a key economic hub, attracting domestic and foreign investments while creating substantial employment opportunities. Energy projects, including power plants and transmission lines, address long-standing electricity shortages, enhancing industrial output and energy security. Similarly, establishing SEZs in Balochistan promises to boost industrialization, promote economic diversification, and generate new revenue streams for the province and the country. Pipelines and oil/gas transmission projects further underscore the strategic importance of Balochistan's natural resources, supporting sustainable economic growth and positioning the province as a vital energy corridor for regional development (Khetran, 2016).

Human resource development under CPEC aligns workforce capabilities with the demands of emerging industries. Vocational training and skills enhancement programs focus on sectors such as logistics, energy, construction, and IT, ensuring that Balochistan's workforce is equipped for the opportunities created by CPEC projects. Academic collaborations between China and Pakistan, including scholarships and exchange programs, foster knowledge transfer and expose students and professionals to advanced technologies and management practices (Arif, 2018). SEZs under CPEC require a skilled workforce, prompting the establishment and modernization of technical and professional institutions to meet industry needs. In addition to technical training, CPEC promotes youth engagement and entrepreneurship through support for startups and small businesses, empowering local communities to contribute to economic growth. Digital skills training, prepares Balochistan's workforce for integration into the global digital economy. Beyond skill acquisition, CPEC's infrastructure projects, such as

healthcare and educational facilities, enhance social development, improving the quality of life for local Baloch communities. With Gwadar as its centerpiece, CPEC represents a collaborative effort between Pakistan and China to harness Balochistan's geographic and economic potential, addressing historical disparities and laying the groundwork for inclusive human resource development (Khetran, 2016).

Reassessing Balochistan's Economic Prospects Under CPEC: Challenges and Opportunities

Balochistan's role in the CPEC is both pivotal and complex, raising significant questions about the province's actual economic gains from the project. Of the \$62 billion allocated under CPEC, approximately 61% has been invested in power projects, the majority of which are located outside Balochistan. Within the province, two major energy initiatives include a \$600 million, 300-megawatt imported coal-based power plant in Gwadar and a \$1,090 million, 1,320-megawatt coal-fired power plant in Hub (Kalam, 2015).

Despite these investments, several concerns and controversies persist. Pakistan, burdened with significant debt, faces challenges in repaying the \$62 billion owed under CPEC agreements. Additionally, illegal trawling by Chinese vessels along the Gwadar coast has led to grievances among local fishermen, further fueling socio-economic tensions (Baloch S. M., 2021). There are also apprehensions regarding the potential militarization of Gwadar by China, which could have strategic implications for the Arabian Sea. Meanwhile, the persistent insurgency in Balochistan, coupled with targeted attacks on Chinese workers, continues to pose security risks, deterring investors and delaying key projects. Many sectors remain incomplete due to funding shortages, and Chinese investors have exhibited declining interest in further commitments. Moreover, the United States has raised concerns about Pakistan falling into a "debt trap" under Chinese influence, further complicating the geopolitical landscape of CPEC. Another contentious issue is the lack of transparency in CPEC agreements. The terms of these deals remain undisclosed, and any disputes arising from Chinese investments are to be settled by the China International Commercial Court, raising concerns about Pakistan's legal autonomy in these matters. These opaque arrangements contribute to growing skepticism about the long-term benefits of CPEC for Pakistan, particularly for Balochistan.

Despite these challenges, CPEC continues to bring significant infrastructure developments to Balochistan. Key projects include the Gwadar International Airport, with an investment of \$230 million; the Gwadar East-Bay Expressway, valued at \$140 million; and essential facilities for water treatment, supply, and distribution worth \$130 million. The province has also received \$980 million for various allied projects, including the Gwadar Free Economic Zone (\$32 million), the Khuzdar-Basima Road (\$110 million), and social infrastructure such as the Gwadar Friendship Hospital (\$100 million) and a vocational training institute (\$10 million)(Kalam, 2015). Gwadar remains the cornerstone of CPEC, serving as a crucial trade hub linking China's Xinjiang province with the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. The corridor significantly reduces the transport distance from Kashgar in western China to the Arabian Sea, cutting it down from 16,000 kilometers to approximately 2,500 kilometers. This reduction enhances trade efficiency and cost-effectiveness, strengthening China's global trade network(Hussain F. , 2020).

CPEC's Energy Projects in Balochistan: Progress and Challenges

The CPEC has introduced two energy projects in Balochistan, notably the operational 1,320MW coal-fired power plant in Hub and the proposed 300MW coal-fired power plant in Gwadar. The Hub plant, a joint venture between Hub Power Company and China Power International Holding, has been contributing approximately nine billion kilowatt-hours annually to Pakistan's national grid since its commissioning in August 2019, thereby addressing energy deficits and supporting economic activities (Dawn, 2019). Conversely, the Gwadar project, estimated at \$542.32 million, aims to supply affordable electricity to the Gwadar Free Zone and surrounding areas. However, it has encountered delays due to financing challenges, environmental concerns, and tariff disputes, hindering its progress. The National

Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has questioned the reliance on imported coal for this project, suggesting the inclusion of local coal to mitigate costs and supply risks(Yousafzai, 2023).

Despite their potential benefits, these projects face several obstacles. The Hub plant has experienced financial strains from Pakistan's circular debt and delayed payments, affecting its operations and investor confidence. Additionally, reliance on imported coal exposes the project to global market fluctuations, increasing production costs. The Gwadar plant's construction delays are compounded by inadequate transmission infrastructure, impeding integration into the national grid (Malik, 2020).

Responses and Concerns from the Baloch Ethnic Community in Balochistan

The CPEC has elicited significant responses and concerns from the local Baloch ethnic community in Balochistan, deeply rooted in historical grievances of marginalization, resource exploitation, and inadequate socio-economic inclusion. According to Mehmood Baloch, a local resident of Gwadar, historically, the Baloch people have experienced an inequitable distribution of their province's natural wealth, with benefits disproportionately favoring other regions of Pakistan instead of Balochistan. A common example is the discovery of Sui gas in 1952, yet major areas of Balochistan remain deprived of it. This legacy has fostered uncertainty about the development promises associated with CPEC, as locals fear further marginalization regarding economic gains and employment opportunities. A prevailing perception exists that jobs linked to CPEC projects are primarily awarded to workers from outside Balochistan, leaving limited prospects for the local population. For instance, despite promises of job creation, a significant portion of the labor force employed in CPEC projects comes from other provinces or China, leading to feelings of alienation and resentment among the indigenous population (Ali & Noor, 2022).

Ibrar Baloch, a local politician in the region, stated in a personal interview that, major apprehension pertains to the anticipated demographic changes in Gwadar due to the influx of non-local workers and settlers. This influx is perceived as a threat to the cultural and social identity of the local Baloch population, who fear becoming a minority in their homeland. The presence of non-locals, drawn by CPEC-linked employment and business opportunities, is expected to dilute traditional lifestyles and undermine the region's historical character. The federal government's plan to fence Gwadar port city has also been met with resistance. Local activists and groups, such as the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), have protested against the project, which proposes enclosing 24 square kilometers with surveillance systems and controlled entry points. Critics argue that the fence, reportedly influenced by Chinese pressure, aims to restrict local movement and deepen marginalization (Iqbal, 2024). Such measures have added to longstanding grievances, including military operations, control over Baloch resources, forced displacements, and human rights violations, further complicating the situation in Balochistan, especially concerning the CPEC project.

Dad Shah Baloch, a local politician, highlighted another significant concern during a personal interview, the minimal share of benefits that Balochistan is expected to receive from CPEC. Despite its resource wealth, the province often receives a disproportionately small allocation of national investments and development projects. This persistent underdevelopment continues to reinforce a sense of neglect. Historical instances, such as the discovery of natural gas in Sui in 1952 and the subsequent delay in providing the resource to the province's largest industrial area, Hub, until 1990, exemplify this neglect. This has solidified perceptions that Balochistan remains an economic colony rich in resources yet deprived of commensurate benefits from the federal government (Pak Voices, 2015). Prominent political figures from Balochistan, such as Akhtar Mengal, Dr. Malik, and Mir Hasil Bizenjo, have consistently highlighted the skewed distribution of CPEC benefits. During a Senate session in 2017, ex-Federal Minister for Ports and Shipping, Mir Hasil Bizenjo, revealed that 91% of the revenues generated from the Gwadar port under CPEC would go to China, while the Gwadar Port Authority would receive only a 9% share over the next 40 years(Iftikhar , 2017).

Aithsham Baloch, a local politician in the region, also expressed concerns regarding employment opportunities under CPEC during a personal interview. Non-locals have been preferred for employment in large-scale CPEC projects due to their experience and skills. Local people of Gwadar, lacking the necessary experience, are often not considered for these projects, leading to feelings of alienation and marginalization among the indigenous population. Authorities argue that the primary reason for not employing locals is the lack of education and professional experience. Balochistan remains the most underdeveloped province with a poor education system, making it less competitive than other provinces and resulting in limited recruitment of local workers in CPEC projects (Umrani, 2019). The fishermen of Gwadar and surrounding coastal areas have raised specific concerns about socio-economic marginalization. Large infrastructure developments under CPEC have displaced many fishermen from traditional fishing areas, jeopardizing their livelihoods. Illegal fishing by large trawlers, often operated by external entities, has depleted marine resources, threatening the sustainability of local fisheries (Ullah, Usman, Jianfu, Khalil, & Jamshid, 2023).

Another pressing issue is the opacity surrounding the terms of Chinese loans for CPEC projects. Politicians like former Senator Kabeer Muhammad Shahi have criticized the lack of clarity regarding interest rates, repayment schedules, and financial obligations (Aamir, 2017). This opacity fuels fears that these loans may disproportionately favor Chinese interests, potentially leading to long-term economic dependency and compromising financial autonomy. The increasing Chinese presence in Balochistan has also raised cultural and geopolitical concerns. The influx of Chinese workers, businesses, and investments is seen as a potential threat to the socio-cultural fabric of the region. Local communities fear displacement and job displacement, while geopolitical tensions surrounding CPEC have heightened security risks. The growing role of Chinese entities in strategic areas like Gwadar reinforces fears that decisions affecting Balochistan are driven by external interests rather than addressing the needs of its local people (Ali & Noor, 2023). The lack of transparency and exclusion of local stakeholders in decision-making processes have only exacerbated the community's mistrust, compounding fears about environmental degradation, social displacement, and the potential loss of cultural heritage.

Local Concerns and Geopolitical Implications of CPEC

Security personnel in Gwadar noted during a personal interview that the local population has become increasingly critical of CPEC, expressing concerns about its implications for their livelihoods and regional development. Many residents perceive CPEC as a form of debt-trap diplomacy, fearing that the significant loans associated with the initiative could place Pakistan in a precarious financial position while providing limited tangible benefits to the local Baloch community (Shaikh & Chien-Kai, 2021). Specifically, the people of Gwadar worry about losing control of their region to China due to Pakistan's potential inability to repay these debts, drawing comparisons to Sri Lanka's experience with Chinese debt policies (Ahmad, 2023). Additionally, they argue that financial commitments under CPEC, particularly those tied to Chinese investments, exacerbate Pakistan's already strained debt burden without delivering meaningful economic returns or benefits to the local population. The financing of CPEC through government-to-government loans and foreign direct investment has significant implications for Pakistan's external debt. Experts recommend strategies such as export diversification, investment promotion, and energy reforms to mitigate economic risks (Hussain I. , 2017).

Safar Baloch, a local businessman from Gwadar, stated in a personal interview that criticism of CPEC is further fueled by the influx of foreign workers and migrants from other provinces, who are prioritized over the local workforce for employment in CPEC-related projects. This has led to a perception that the development disproportionately benefits outsiders while worsening economic hardships for locals. Furthermore, despite government promises of improved infrastructure, employment, and economic opportunities, local communities claim they have yet to receive these benefits. Opposition to CPEC is often labeled as anti-state, with critics being accused of undermining national interests and promoting

separatist agendas (Ullah, 2023). There are also concerns regarding transparency in CPEC funding, loan terms, and foreign involvement in key infrastructure projects. The lack of clarity on interest rates, repayment schedules, and financial obligations has led to doubts about the long-term viability of the initiative (Bhatia, Sucha, & Ingudam, 2024). Hassan's analysis of CPEC highlights the controlled flow of information surrounding the project. The official narrative suppresses criticism, and any opposition is dismissed as detrimental to national security (Ul Hassan, 2020).

Beyond local concerns, CPEC has also raised geopolitical tensions, particularly with India. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi indirectly criticized China's growing influence in South Asia by stating that "expansionism is a mental disorder" (Times Of India, 2020). The Pakistani Business Council (PBC) has also argued that CPEC is primarily a geopolitical project rather than an economic one, with Pakistan's military seeking to leverage it for strategic gains (Ul Hassan, 2020). Historically, China has been a key partner in supporting Pakistan's defense and diplomacy against India (Bukhari, 2011).

Security challenges in Balochistan, particularly in Gwadar, further complicate CPEC's implementation. Baloch insurgents have targeted Chinese officials and projects, increasing security costs (Gwakh & Bezhan, 2024). Additionally, the extension of China's lease over the Saindak mine has fueled local resentment, as communities feel excluded from resource benefits (S.Khan, 2020). Comparisons between CPEC and Sri Lanka's Hambantota Port reinforce fears of Pakistan falling into a debt trap, as Sri Lanka was forced to lease Hambantota to China for 99 years after failing to repay debts (Hussain I., 2017). Beyond CPEC, China's involvement in Pakistan extends to military cooperation, including upgrading Pakistan's naval capabilities (The express tribune, 2016). China also holds a 40-year lease over Gwadar Port, retaining 91% of revenues from marine operations (Dinesh, 2021). Despite CPEC's potential to enhance regional connectivity, its economic and geopolitical implications raise concerns about Pakistan's sovereignty and financial sustainability (Khan & Zahid, 2024).

Some NP leaders are however quite pragmatic and see in CPEC a development model that could uplift the province and Baloch people. According to Dad Shah Baloch, Tehsil Rabta Secretary, during a personal interview, the Baloch people should change their narrative and if the Chinese could bring prosperity that would be well and good for the people of Balochistan. He noted that China has taken hundreds of thousands of its citizens out of poverty by developing ports and economic zones, thus setting an example of development and prosperity. Some Baloch academia respondents observed that though there are power generation projects in Balochistan, except for the 300 MW for Gwadar port, all other power produced will be put in the national grid. Not only power supply to Balochistan is far less than the demand, there is also a serious lack of infrastructure for power transmission in the province; there is not a single 500KV grid station and only a 27km circuit length of 500kv transmission line is available. That means even if you provide the province with electricity, most of it will remain useless, as it cannot be transmitted to the people for their use. Some Gwadar people feel like they are not in their own homeland in the presence of such a large number of security forces, who they allege stop them at every checkpoint and some even humiliate them; although many Baloch academia respondents said the situation had much changed now and security personnel behaved in a far better way as compared to past, Muhammad Atif, an assistant professor research fellow at University of Balochistan. Mehmood Baloch, a social activist and fisherman, stated during a personal interview that the challenges of CPEC outweigh its opportunities, with the fear of losing Gwadar causing deep anxiety among locals. Many residents worry about displacement and the possibility of China taking control of the region. Additionally, fishing areas have become congested, and illegal trawlers threaten their livelihood. He expressed disappointment over the lack of visible development in Gwadar. Sana Baloch, his counterpart, echoed these concerns, stating that despite years of promises, their situation remains unchanged, and they demand tangible economic benefits for the local population. A local policeman, stating that the security situation in Gwadar has significantly improved, with law enforcement ensuring stability and control in the region.

Baloch Nationalism and Its Opposition to CPEC

Baloch nationalism is a political movement advocating for the rights, autonomy, and economic opportunities of the local Baloch people, primarily residing in Balochistan (Ahmed M. , 2020). Rooted in historical grievances of political marginalization, socio-economic disparities, and the preservation of cultural identity, the movement has intensified in response to the perceived neglect of the Baloch population by the Federal Government. One of the key issues fueling Baloch nationalism today is CPEC, a large-scale infrastructure initiative designed to connect China with Pakistan. Baloch nationalists argue that CPEC exacerbates regional inequalities, benefiting outsiders while marginalizing the indigenous Baloch community, despite the use of their land and resources.

Prominent nationalist leaders, including Akhtar Mengal, chairman of the Balochistan National Party (BNP), Dr. Malik Baloch, chairman of the National Party, and Dr. Mahrang Baloch, leader of the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), have consistently raised concerns over the lack of local consultation and benefits regarding CPEC projects. They demand that Balochistan receive its fair share of CPEC's economic benefits, as guaranteed by the Constitution of Pakistan. However, these voices are often labeled as anti-state, and activists face repression, including alleged torture by law enforcement agencies, for highlighting these grievances. Outside Pakistan, figures like Mir Ahmed Suleman Khan have similar concerns, calling for greater political and economic inclusion of the Baloch people in CPEC (Ahmed & Seema, 2024). These tensions underscore the struggle between regional autonomy, national development, and the pursuit of political and economic self-determination.

Sardar Akhtar Mengal, president of the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M), has warned that, like the controversial Kalabagh Dam, CPEC will fail if Balochistan's concerns are ignored (Shabnam, Waseem, & Muhammad, 2021). He asserts that since Gwadar, a key component of CPEC, is located in Balochistan, its people must benefit from the project. Mengal criticized security operations in Balochistan, arguing that they have worsened the situation rather than addressing its root causes (Wani,, 2023). Despite government assurances, Balochistan has seen little improvement, with ex-Chief Minister Dr. Abdul Malik Baloch admitting to a lack of significant change. The federal government's neglect of the CPEC's western route remains a major point of contention (Raza, 2015).

Dr. Mahrang Baloch, a leader of the BYC, has been a vocal critic of CPEC, claiming that it primarily serves the interests of the Pakistani elite and foreign investors while further marginalizing the Baloch people. She argues that CPEC has led to resource exploitation and displacement under the guise of development (The Morning Express , 2024). Mahrang Baloch also highlights issues such as environmental destruction and land seizures, questioning the project's actual benefits for locals (Imran, 2024). She has actively protested against what she calls the "Baloch genocide," accusing authorities of enforced disappearances and extrajudicial killings (Janjua, 2024). Her activism has drawn international attention to Balochistan's plight (The Balochistan Express , 2024).

A major grievance among Baloch nationalists is the lack of consultation regarding CPEC projects (Aamir, 2017). Many feel alienated as decision-making excludes their voices (The Nation, 2017). Additionally, they fear CPEC-induced environmental degradation, displacement, and demographic shifts due to migration (Baloch, 2017). Some Baloch nationalists view CPEC as a tool for consolidating state control over Balochistan's resources, limiting aspirations for autonomy (Recknagel & Siddique, 2013). They argue that economic benefits disproportionately favor the federal government and foreign stakeholders, leaving Balochistan underdeveloped (Javed & Nabi, 2022). In response, nationalists have engaged in political activism, advocacy campaigns, and protests, demanding greater recognition of their rights and equitable economic opportunities. The resistance to CPEC reflects broader struggles for identity, autonomy, and socio-economic justice in Balochistan.

Impact of the CPEC Project on Balochistan: An Overview

The project has several potential impacts, both positive and negative:

Positive impacts: The CPEC has the potential to bring about significant positive impacts in Balochistan. Through the development of infrastructure, such as roads, highways, railways, and the Gwadar Port, CPEC can enhance connectivity within the province and with other regions of Pakistan. This improved infrastructure can facilitate trade, transportation, and economic activities, leading to job creation, economic growth, and increased investment opportunities. Additionally, the establishment of SEZs under CPEC attracts foreign and domestic investment, fostering industrialization and diversification of the economy in Balochistan. CPEC has the potential to contribute to the socio-economic development and prosperity of Balochistan.

- 1) The project has the potential to provide a significant boost to the Balochistan economy by creating jobs, increasing investment, resolving chronic energy problems, and promoting trade between China and Pakistan.
- 2) CPEC Will Help Develop Balochistan's Infrastructure, Enhancing Connectivity and Transportation Systems
- 3) CPEC: Addressing Balochistan's Energy Crisis Through Power Generation projects
- 4) Gwadar Port: Unlocking Economic Opportunities in Balochistan Through CPEC
- 5) Employment Generation Potential of CPEC Projects in Balochistan for Local People
- 6) Promoting Industrialization and Economic Diversification through CPEC Special Economic Zones in Balochistan
- 7) Fostering Education and Skill Development: CPEC Initiatives for Local Workforce Empowerment
- 8) Enhancing Connectivity and Economic Growth: Impact of Road and Transportation Infrastructure Development in Balochistan
- 9) Fostering Social Development: CPEC Initiatives in Healthcare, Education, and Community Infrastructure
- 10) Enhancing Gwadar's infrastructure for sustainable development.

Negative impacts: The CPEC also poses several negative impacts on Balochistan. These include environmental concerns due to potential deforestation and habitat destruction resulting from infrastructure development like coal power projects and highways(Hassan, 2024). There are fears of economic and political dependency on China, raising questions about sovereignty and autonomy. Moreover, security challenges stemming from insurgency and militancy in the region have escalated due to CPEC-related developments, leading to increased military presence and human rights abuses(Wolf S. O., 2016). Additionally, concerns persist about the equitable distribution of benefits, potential displacement of local communities, and limited participation of Balochistan's people in decision-making processes, exacerbating social and economic disparities(Bashir, 2023).Lastly, the livelihoods of fishermen have been affected by this project, with concerns over displacement and demographic changes in Gwadar.

- 1) Environmental Concerns: Potential Impact of CPEC on Balochistan's Ecosystem
- 2) Risk of Dependency: Balochistan's Concerns about Economic and Political Dependence on China
- 3) Security challenges, including insurgency, militancy, instability, and human rights concerns, have intensified in Balochistan amidst opposition to CPEC.
- 4) Concerns of local communities regarding displacement and resettlement due to CPEC infrastructure projects, along with protests against illegal fishing by Chinese and non-local trawlers.
- 5) Potential Social and Economic Disparities: Criticism of the Unequal Distribution of CPEC Benefits in Balochistan, Favoring Other Provinces.

- 6) Financial Concerns Surrounding CPEC: Critics Question Sustainability and Debt Burden on Pakistan
- 7) Underrepresentation of Local Communities in CPEC Decision-Making: Implications for Sustainable Development
- 8) Cultural Disruption Due to CPEC-Associated Migration: Preserving Local Baloch Identity Amidst Development
- 9) Resource Exploitation Concerns: Ensuring Fair Benefits for Balochistan Amidst CPEC Development
- 10) The influx of outsiders and Chinese workers under CPEC has raised concerns among the local Baloch population about job losses, as employment opportunities are often given to non-locals, intensifying fears of economic exclusion and cultural displacement.

Conclusion

Analyzing the socio-economic impacts of CPEC on Balochistan reveals both substantial opportunities and significant challenges, positioning the project as both a potential blessing and a curse for the region. While CPEC promises to bring about transformative growth, such as critical infrastructure development, increased energy availability, job creation, and economic uplift, these benefits must be carefully examined against the backdrop of the socio-political realities of Balochistan. The province holds significant strategic value, particularly owning the Gwadar Port, which could position Balochistan as a major hub for regional and global trade. This could lead to improvements in transportation networks, industrial parks, and energy sectors, which in turn would contribute to the socio-economic development of Balochistan and Pakistan's broader economic development.

However, the fears and reservations voiced by Baloch nationalists, local politicians, and communities cannot be ignored. The perceived marginalization of the local Baloch population, especially in terms of employment opportunities, resource allocation, and participation in decision-making processes, raises legitimate concerns. The overwhelming presence of non-local workers, including Chinese labor (unskilled), has exacerbated fears of economic exclusion and cultural displacement among the indigenous population. Moreover, the concerns regarding the displacement of traditional livelihoods, especially those of the fishing community in Gwadar, and the potential demographic shifts resulting from large-scale projects, must be addressed with urgency.

CPEC's long-term success in Balochistan hinges on how well these socio-economic disparities are managed and local grievances are addressed. It is crucial that the local Baloch people not only benefit from the development but also actively participate in its planning and execution. The inclusion of local communities in the economic opportunities presented by CPEC and the fair distribution of resources is necessary to ensure a sustainable and peaceful development trajectory. If these concerns are not addressed adequately, the potential for CPEC to become a source of further unrest and division remains high, turning what could be a powerful catalyst for regional development into a source of continued socio-political turmoil. Thus, while CPEC offers substantial opportunities for Balochistan, it also carries the risk of deepening existing inequalities, making it a double-edged sword for the province. Only through equitable planning, local empowerment, and inclusive development can the project truly fulfill its promise as a blessing for Balochistan.

References

- Aamir, A. (2017, March 1). *Baloch People not Taken on Board on CPEC: Akhtar Mengal*. Retrieved from Balochistan Voice: <https://www.balochistanvoices.com/2017/03/baloch-people-not-taken-board-cpec-akhtar-mengal/>
- Aamir, A. (2017, December 7). *Claims of Development from CPEC are Delusions: Senators from Balochistan*. Retrieved from Balochistan Voices:

<https://www.balochistanvoices.com/2017/12/claims-development-cpec-delusions-senators-balochistan/>

- Ahmad, I. (2023). An Examination of Chinese Interests in Pakistan from a Regional Perspective. *Journal of Regional Studies Review*, 2(1), 34-42.
- Ahmed, M. (2020). The dynamics of (ethno) nationalism and federalism in postcolonial Balochistan, Pakistan. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 55(7), 979-1006.
- Ahmed, Z., & Seema, K. (2024). Claiming Agency from a Distance: Baloch Diasporic Resistance to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. *Ethnopolitics*, 1-21.
- Ali, Z., & Noor, S. (2023). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Challenges for local inhabitants of gwadar, Balochistan. *Journal of Pakistan-China Studies (JPCS)*, 4(1), 77-102.
- Arif, A. (2018, MAY 22). CPEC: a continuum of opportunities and challenges for Pakistan. *LSE*. Retrieved from <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2018/05/22/cpec-a-continuum-of-opportunities-and-challenges-for-pakistan/>
- Aziz, A. U. (2023). Exploring Different Perceptions of the Local Community with Reference to CPEC. *JOURNAL OF LAW, SOCIAL AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES*, 2(2), 21-29.
- Aziz, K. (2023, january 4). *Govt approves 300MW coal-fired power plant for Gwadar*. Retrieved from Gwadar pro: <https://www.gwadarpro.pk/1610555653754814466/govt-approves-300mw-coal-fired-power-plant-for-gwadar>
- Baloch, S. (2017, January 29). *No Energy in Balochistan*. Retrieved from The News: <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/182491-No-energy-in-Balochistan>
- Bashir, S. K. (2023). Governance and development challenges in Balochistan: A comparative study with other provinces and way forward. *International Journal of Contemporary Issues in Social Sciences*, 2(4), 620-649.
- BBC. (2017, July 29). *Sri Lanka signs deal on Hambantota port with China*. Retrieved from BBC: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-40761732>
- Behram, B. (2017, August 15). *The travails of Gwadar's fishermen*. Retrieved from Dawn: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1351634>
- Bhatia, B., Sucha, S., & Ingudam, S. Y. (2024). Is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor(CPEC) a replica of Sri Lanka's HambantotaPort in South Asia? *Journal of Polity & Society*, 81- 94.
- Brunner, H.-P. (2013). *ADB Working Paper Series on Regional Economic Integration*. Mnila: ADB. Retrieved from <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/publication/100110/reiwp-117-economic-corridor-development.pdf>
- Buisness Recorder . (2024, March 5). *Pakistan 's biggest private utility Hubco forecasts power demand will fall in 2024*. Retrieved from Buisness Recorder : <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40292096/pakistans-biggest-private-utility-hubco-forecasts-power-demand-will-fall-in-2024>
- Bukhari, S. (2011). India-United States Strategic Partnership: Implications for Pakistan. *Berkeley Journal of Social Sciences*, 1(1), 1-28. Retrieved from https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/7599594/Indo-US_Str_Partneship__Pakistan-libre.pdf?1390852389=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DIndia_United_States_Strategic_Partnershi.pdf&Expires=1734936516&Signature=XqfQ2c3Et99XBi-yI4sMF7BZHfrLtl
- China Daily . (2018, March 2). *China-Pakistan Economic Corridor brings economic benefits to*

- Pakistan: report. Retrieved from China Daily : <https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201803/02/WS5a9832daa3106e7dcc13efd7.html>
- Dawn. (2018, April 12). *Balochistan being neglected in CPEC, says Bizenjo*. Retrieved from Dawn: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1401117>
- Dinesh, S. (2021). Strategic salience of the Gwadar Port: An analytical study. *Focus*, 15(1).
- Farooqui, M. a., & Aftab, S. M. (2018). China pakistan Economic corridor; Prospect and Challenges for Balochistan, Pakistan. *IOP Conference Series Materials Science and Engineering*.
- Gwakh, A. B., & Bezhan , F. (2024, November 27). *Rising Violence Threatens Chinese-Funded Projects In South And Central Asia*. Retrieved from Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty: <https://www.rferl.org/a/pakistan-balochistan-baloch-tajikistan-china/33211205.html>
- Hassan, M. S. (2024). Socio economics impacts of CPEC on Pakistan; the dark side of the project. *The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies*, 2(2), 244-255.
- Hussain, F. (2020). Geostrategic imperatives of Gwadar port for China. *The Korean Journal of International Studies*, 18(2), 145-167.
- Hussain, I. (2017, February 11). *Financing burden of CPEC*. Retrieved from DAWN: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1313992/financing-burden-of-cpec>
- Iftikhar , K. A. (2017, November 25). *China to get 91pc Gwadar income, minister tells Senate*. Retrieved from Dawn: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1372695>
- Imran, A. (2024, October 17). *The CPEC and its Discontents: Security, Unrest and the Human Cost of Development in Pakistan's Balochistan*. Retrieved from ISAS: https://www.isas.nus.edu.sg/papers/the-cpec-and-its-discontents-security-unrest-and-the-human-cost-of-development-in-pakistans-balochistan/?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Jamal, N. (2024, February 26). *Gwadar Power Plant at an impasse*. Retrieved from Dawn: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1817203>
- Janjua, H. (2024, August 14). *China-Pakistan Economic Corridor sparks Pakistan protests*. Retrieved from DW: https://www.dw.com/en/china-pakistan-economic-corridor-sparks-pakistan-protests/a-69941212?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Javed, U., & Nabi, I. (2022). Heterogeneous fragility in Pakistan. In *State Fragility*. Routledge, (pp. 141-186).
- Kalam, A. (2015). Maritime Destiny of Bangladesh: Legacies and Prospects. *BISS Journal*, 36(4), 275-292.
- Kamran, M. T., Zhang, L., & Umbreen, Z. (2018, September). *CPEC Impact on Balochistan Economy*. Retrieved from International Journal Research and Innovation in Social Siences (IJRISS): https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Muhammad-Taj/publication/327894767_CPEC_Impact_on_Balochistan_Economy/links/5babd3b945851574f7e9612b/CPEC-Impact-on-Balochistan-Economy.pdf
- Khan, S., & Zahid, S. A. (2024). Impact of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor on Nation-Building in Pakistan: A Case Study of Balochistan. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 1-15.
- Khetran, M. S. (2016, February 15). *Issue Brief on "CPEC: Benefits for Balochistan"*. Retrieved from Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI): <https://issi.org.pk/cpec-benefits-for-balochistan/>
- Kiani, K. (2019, August 19). *1,320MW coal-fired Hub power plant commissioned*. Retrieved from DAWN: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1500348>

- Mardell, J. (2020, May 20). The BRI in Pakistan: China's flagship economic corridor. *MERICs*. Retrieved from <https://merics.org/en/analysis/bri-pakistan-chinas-flagship-economic-corridor>
- Mayank, P. S. (2016, September 28). *Baloch rebels attack Dudher project site, 2 Chinese engineers killed, many hurt*. Retrieved from India Today: <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/baloch-rebels-attack-kills-two-engineers-343719-2016-09-28?onetap=true>
- Ministry of Planning Development, & Special Initiatives . (n.d.). *CPEC Projects Progress Update*. Retrieved from Ministry of Planning Development, & Special Initiatives : <https://cpec.gov.pk/progress-update>
- Ministry of Planning,Development & Special Initiatives. (n.d.). *300MW Coal-Fired Power Project At Gwadar*. Retrieved from Ministry of Planning,Development & Special Initiatives: <https://cpec.gov.pk/project-details/5>
- Ministry of Planning,Development & Special Initiatives. (n.d.). *1320MW China Hub Coal Power Project, Hub Balochistan*. Retrieved from Ministry of Planning,Development & Special Initiatives: <https://cpec.gov.pk/project-details/6>
- Notezai, A. (2023, August 28). *Hook, line and controversy: the impact of illegal trawling*. Retrieved from Fair Planet: <https://www.fairplanet.org/story/pakistan-balochistan-illegal-fishing-boat-china/>
- Omer, F. K. (2019, May 12). *Baloch separatist outfits claims Gwadar port hotle attack aimed at chinese & foreign investors*. Retrieved from The Times of India: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/pakistan/baloch-separatist-outfit-claims-gwadar-port-hotel-attack-aimed-at-chinese-foreign-investors/articleshow/69286699.cms>
- Pak Voices. (2015, May 20). *Why Is Pakistan's Balochistan Shut Out of Its Own Natural Gas Reserves?* Retrieved from Global Voices: <https://globalvoices.org/2015/05/20/why-is-pakistans-balochistan-shut-out-of-its-own-natural-gas-reserves/>
- Raza, S. I. (2015, December 11). *Mengal asks govt to address Baloch concerns on CPEC*. Retrieved from DAWN: https://www.dawn.com/news/1225601?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- Recknagel, C., & Siddique, A. (2013, February 27). *Gwadar: A Port For China, A Tinderbox For Balochistan?* Retrieved from Radio free Europe Radio Liberty: <https://www.rferl.org/a/pakistan-gwadar-achina-balochistan/24914369.html>
- S.Khan. (2020, 7 15). *Why China's investment is stoking anger in Balochistan*. Retrieved from DW: <https://www.dw.com/en/why-chinese-investment-is-stoking-anger-in-pakistans-balochistan-province/a-54188705>
- Sanaullah, & Samad, A. (2016, August 29). *Sui gas supply*. Retrieved from DAWN: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1280622>
- Shabnam, G., Waseem, I., & Muhammad, F. A. (2021). Impact of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) on National and Integration in Pakistan Impact of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) on National Development. *Global political Review*, 1-16.
- Shahid, S. (2015, April 12). *20 labourers gunned down in Turbat*. Retrieved from DAWN: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1175427/20-labourers-gunned-down-in-turbat>
- Shaikh, R., & Chien-Kai, C. (2021). China's debt trap in Pakistan? A case study of the CPEC project. *South Asia Research*, 41(3), 399-414.
- The Balochistan Express . (2024, August 12). *BYC rally reaches Nushki: Dr. Mahrang criticizes CPEC project*. Retrieved from The Balochistan Express : <https://www.bexpress.com.pk/2024/08/byc->

- The express tribune . (2016, August 31). *China to supply Pakistan with eight new attack submarines*. Retrieved from The express tribune : <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1173324/china-supply-pakistan-eight-new-attack-submarines>
- The Morning Express . (2024, September 1st). *The curse of Balochistan: Unveiling the reality behind CPEC (IANS Analysis)*. Retrieved from The Morning Express : https://morungexpress.com/the-curse-of-balochistan-unveiling-the-reality-behind-cpec-ians-analysis?utm_source=chatgpt.com
- The Nation. (2017, February 26). *CPEC not for Balochistan development: Mengal*. Retrieved from The Nation: <https://www.nation.com.pk/26-Feb-2017/cpec-not-for-balochistan-development-mengal>
- Times Of India . (2020, July 4). *age of expansionism is over Pm Modi sends message to China* . Retrieved from Times Of India : <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/age-of-expansionism-is-over-pm-modi-sends-message-to-china/articleshow/76778542.cms>
- Ul Hassan, Y. (2020). China-pakistan economic corridor (CPEC) and questions on pakistan's economic stability. *Strategic Analysis*, 44(2), 137-152. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09700161.2020.1735097>
- Ullah, Z. (2023). Securitised Development and State Authoritarianism in Pakistan: A Critical Discourse Analysis of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). *Charles University Journal*.
- Veengas. (2024, May 20). *Pakistan: Balochs Fear Fence Around Gwadar Will Isolate Them From City*. Retrieved from Veengas: <https://thewire.in/south-asia/balochs-fear-fence-around-gwadar-isolate-city>
- Wani, S. A. (2021). The Baloch Insurgency in Pakistan and the Chinese Connection. *Kulturní studia*, 82-99.
- Wani,, S. A. (2023). Development and Militarization in Balochistan, Pakistan. *Strategic Analysis*, 47(5), 478-494. Retrieved 1 9, 2025
- Wolf, S. (2020). The China-Pakistan economic corridor of the belt and road initiative. *Contemporary South Asian Studies*.
- Wolf, S. O. (2016). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its impact on Gilgit-Baltistan. *South Asia Democratic Forum (SADF)*.
- Zafar, M. (2017, DEC 25). *Balochistan reduced to a colony, says Mengal*. Retrieved from The Express Tribune: <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1591997/balochistan-reduced-colony-says-mengal>
- Zaheer, M. A. (2022). Pamiri Ethnic Nationalism in Tajikistan; a Rising Threat against Future of Gilgit-Baltistan and Pak-China Economic Corridor (CPEC). *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 10(1), 09-18.
- Zofeen, E. T. (2023, April 13). *Coal returns to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor*. Retrieved from China Dialogue: <https://chinadialogue.net/en/energy/coal-returns-to-the-china-pakistan-economic-corridor/>