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Issue Brief

Indian Plans to Disrupt CEPC Projects in Balochistan: Options for Pakistan

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For years now, Indian intelligence has maintained a close eye on Pakistan's province of Balochistan, patronising the insurgency in Balochistan which has serious implications for Pakistan's security and economic progress. They have also maintained links with Baloch separatist leaders across the world, meeting them in state capitals like London and Geneva. India openly admits its help to Baloch insurgents for independent Balochistan, and ever since the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was announced under the rubric of China's One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, Balochistan has become a card that India seems to be exploiting as a way to not only sabotage CPEC along the western route that traverses through Balochistan, but also create conditions like it did in 1970 in East Pakistan. Reportedly, it is now seriously considering request by Brahamdagh Bugti for political asylum in India.

India started feeling uncomfortable ever since the visit of the Chinese President Xi Jinping in April 4-5, 2015. Chinese presence in Gwadar is perceived as a serious threat to their defence as Gwadar holds immense strategic and economic significance.

The consecutive statements by Indian national security advisor and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Balochistan manifest their frustration on CPEC. Using the pretext of Mumbai attack, both Modi and Ajit Devol have been trying to justify the interference of Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) in Balochistan. Ajit Devol has threatened Pakistan with, "You do one more Mumbai, you lose Balochistan".¹ Soon after the statement of Indian national security advisor, an Indian serving naval official Kulbhushan Yadav was arrested red-handed by law-enforcement agencies in March 2016 while trying to infiltrate into Pakistan from the Saravan border area of Balochistan with Iran. According to revelations by him, "my purpose was to hold meetings with Baloch insurgents and carry out activities with their collaboration."²

The reports suggested that RAW has established a special cell in its headquarters in New Delhi to sabotage the CPEC project. "RAW and Afghan NDS have launched joint secret operations against Pakistan by using three Indian consulates in Jalalabad, Kandahar and Mazar e Sharif."³ The accounts suggests that India panicked due to CPEC and PM Modi expressed his concerns to Chinese President Xi Jinping. Their prime concern is the vulnerability it might poses to the Indian defence in the region by the presence of Chinese in the Indian Ocean. Secondly, CPEC has a wide prospect of developing Pakistan economically and would possibly help it to emerge as a competing economy in the region.

Recent statement of Prime Minister Modi on Balochistan while addressing the independence day gathering in New Delhi showed his abhorrence to CPEC. The statement faced strong criticism within India and is dubbed as being against the diplomatic norms.

On the international front, CPEC also poses threat to the United States policy of Asia Pivot. It also effectively counters the US policy of containing China through India.

On the other hand, Pakistan considers the CPEC project as a game changer for its poverty stricken economy. Its ailing economy is expected to achieve a significant boost through the CPEC as many international economic magazines have indicated positive signs for Pakistan's economy through the \$46 billion initial Chinese investments. When CPEC becomes an operational transit corridor, Pakistan is expected to make billions in transit fee alone, and will provide it with an evous economic capability in the region. As the CPEC is considered game changer for Pakistan, security therefore is a major concern for entire the CPEC, which faces threats from both regional and extra-regional players.⁴

Options for Pakistan

1. Given the above mentioned circumstances, to make the CPEC successful, Pakistan needs to highlight the Indian interference in Balochistan more forcefully citing the latter's acknowledgement of involvement in the separation of East Pakistan. United Nations Charter strongly condemns the direct or indirect forms of interference threatening the sovereign personality and the political independence of States.⁵ The arrest of Kulbhushan Yadav, a serving Indian naval commander, working for RAW is a strong evidence of interference in Pakistan. It should be shared with the world to unveil the malafide intentions of India to interfere in Pakistan.
2. There is a dire need of prioritising the development of Balochistan in general and Gwadar in particular. Development, access to education and health facilities will ensure a stake by the people of Balochistan for the safety and security of the province against any external designs.
3. Create ownership of the projects in Balochistan under CPEC to help build and meet the established timelines for maximum benefits and implementation of CPEC.

Notes and References

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- ¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7ESR5RU3X4>
 - ² 'Transcript of RAW agent Kulbhushan's confessional statement,' *Dawn news*, March 30, 2016.
 - ³ Mateen Haider, 'Raw runs special cell to sabotage CPEC', *Dawn News*, April 14, 2016
<http://www.dawn.com/news/1251860>
 - ⁴ Baqir Sajja, "Civil-Military hold up CPEC security plan," *Dawn News*, September 19, 2016
<http://www.dawn.com/news/1284724>
 - ⁵ http://legal.un.org/avl/pdf/ha/ga/ga_2131-xx/ga_2131-xx_e.pdf.