

Islamabad Papers
2020

No. 49

CPEC in Balochistan

Impact and Prospects

Mir Sherbaz Khetran



THE INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES ISLAMABAD, PAKISTAN

Registered under societies registration Act No. XXI of 1860

The Institute of Strategic Studies was founded in 1973. It is a non-profit, autonomous research and analysis centre, designed for promoting an informed public understanding of strategic and related issues, affecting international and regional security.

In addition to publishing a quarterly Journal and a monograph series, the ISS organises talks, workshops, seminars and conferences on strategic and allied disciplines and issues.

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Chairman

Ambassador Khalid Mahmood

MEMBERS

Dr. Tariq Banuri
Chairman, Higher Education
Commission, Islamabad

Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali
Vice Chancellor
Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad

Ex-Officio
Foreign Secretary
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Islamabad

Ex-Officio
Finance Secretary
Ministry of Finance
Islamabad

Ambassador Seema Illahi Baloch Ambassador Mohammad Sadiq

Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry
Director General
Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad
(Member and Secretary Board of Governors)

CPEC in Balochistan Impact and Prospects

Mir Sher Baz Khetran*

February 2021

** The author is Research Fellow, China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC), Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad.*

EDITORIAL TEAM

Editor-in-Chief: Ambassador Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry
Director General, ISSI

Editor: Najam Rafique
Director Research

Associate Editor: Saira Ijaz

Sub-Editor: Ume-Farwa

Composed and Designed by: Sajawal Khan Afridi

Published by the Director General on behalf of the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad. Publication permitted vide Memo No. 1481-77/1181 dated 7-7-1977. ISSN. 1029-0990

Articles and monographs published by the Institute of Strategic Studies can be reproduced or quoted by acknowledging the source.

Views expressed in the article are of the author and do not represent those of the Institute.

Abstract

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a source of new avenues of opportunities for Balochistan — the largest province of Pakistan in terms of area. Balochistan with regards to its geographical location is pivotal for CPEC since Gwadar has central position in the entire project. It is believed that the project would potentially contribute to the development of the whole province and is likely to address its interlinked economic and social problems. This paper is an attempt to highlight challenges being faced by Balochistan and would analyse how CPEC would be significant for the development of the province. The paper concludes that although CPEC provides a plethora of opportunities for the people of Balochistan, nevertheless comprehensive planning needs to be carried out for the smooth execution of the CPEC projects.

Keywords: Balochistan, CPEC, Gwadar Port, Political Instability, Natural Resources, Human Development.

Introduction

Pakistan is eager to reinforce itself to address its domestic socio-economic needs while also aligning policy orientations with the evolving and changing economic and geopolitical environment within the region and beyond. Since 2015 onwards, federal governments have been trying to address economic and political issues of the province through various economic packages particularly like Aghaz-e-Haqooq-e-Balochistan and special package for south Balochistan. Balochistan needs an uplift in the living standards of its people along with socio-economic development, improving communication infrastructure and provision of employment which have hampered the social, political, and economic progress of the province. It is a positive development that policymakers and top political leadership of the country realises the severity of the issues and certain steps have been taken to improve the overall situation in the province.

In the light of above mentioned issues, it is significantly important to see the impact of multibillion-dollar projects planned under CPEC in Balochistan. To explore the impact, some core questions like how implementation of the CPEC projects will help to address the development issues being faced by the local population in Balochistan? And, will socio-economic stability help to overcome current and future challenges of Balochistan? These questions will lead this paper to explore multidimensional answers and identify various potential sectors in the province that can benefit from the ‘low hanging fruits’ of CPEC.

Economic Situation

Balochistan with five per cent of Pakistan’s population and the largest land area of the country is the poorest and at the same time richest in its wealth of natural resources. Its coastal line stretches 750 km which makes up 70 per cent of Pakistan’s coastline with Gwadar and Pasni being the two main seaports in the province.¹ Due to lack of industry and few opportunities for jobs and businesses, per capita income and average household incomes are very low. According to the Asian Development Bank (ADB), poverty rate stands at 47 per cent in Balochistan. Female

¹ Mir Sher Baz Khetran, “Potential and Prospects of Gwadar Port,” Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, vol.34. no. 4 (Winter2014).

education is 16 per cent as compared to 32 per cent in rest of the provinces in Pakistan. The population of Balochistan is around 13 million with a population density of only 19 per square kilometre compared to the national average of 166.² Agriculture and livestock are the major source of income and over half of the labour force is engaged in agriculture. Over extraction of water, droughts and primitive methods of agriculture and lack of drip irrigation system result into water scarcity. The province had been facing worst form of poverty due to loss of 43 per cent of the livestock.³

By the development of Gwadar port and other projects under CPEC, it is expected that necessary avenues for further economic benefits and connections with other provinces and regions will help support the economic development of Balochistan. Over the last four decades, China has pulled eight hundred million people out of poverty with its continuous macroeconomic and political stability along with rural development programmes and its open-door policy.⁴ Recently, China has been serving as an economic role model for many developing countries like Pakistan in the area of poverty alleviation. Implementation of such programmes can help bring about transformational changes not just in Balochistan, but the entire country.

Significance of CPEC for Balochistan

CPEC is a flagship project of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) jointly initiated by China and Pakistan, stretching from Pakistan's Balochistan province to China's Xinjiang province. This project consists of the establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs), massive investment in energy projects, rail and road routes and the agriculture sector. Initially, in 2014, the Planning Commission of Pakistan reported

² "Technical Assistance Islamic Republic of Pakistan: Balochistan Economic Report," Asian Development Bank (ADB), December (2005), <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-document/68721/39003-pak-tar.pdf>

³ Ibid.

⁴ China Lifting 800 Million People Out of Poverty is Historic, *Business Standard*, Washington, October 13, 2017, https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/china-lifting-800-million-people-out-of-poverty-is-historic-world-bank-117101300027_1.html

27 special economic zones⁵ which include industries, dry ports and agricultural marketing. Three more industrial zones were further added in existing SEZs, one for former FATA, one for Gilgit-Baltistan, and one for Azad Jammu and Kashmir. In the first phase, existing industrial sectors would be extended like the industrial sectors of Karachi, Sialkot, Hub (Balochistan), Hattar (Haripur) and Faisalabad.

Furthermore, the numbers of dry ports would also be extended along with the establishment of new ones. The dry ports of Sust in Gilgit-Baltistan and one in Islamabad along with new dry ports will be established at Havelian, Sialkot and D.I. Khan.⁶

The energy sector of Pakistan has been passing through a crisis since 2006. In 2016 and 2017, the shortfall of electricity was more than 8000 megawatts. Energy projects under CPEC have been able to alleviate this shortfall by producing more than 24000 MW electricity.⁷ Energy projects under CPEC include Civil Nuclear Energy projects in which two nuclear reactors K2 and K3, having a capacity of producing 1100 MW each, would be established, moreover, there are coal projects as well, in which a series of projects are under construction like Bhikki, Sahiwal, Port Qasim and HUBCO Coal Power Project. Balochistan alone will generate 1620 MW of electricity by utilising coal.⁸ Moreover, solar energy projects like Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park, Hydel energy projects like Sukki Kinari, Matiari to Lahore transmission line, the establishment of grid station in Hub Balochistan are also part of CPEC.⁹

⁵ Krim Khan and Saba Anwar, "Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and CPEC: Background, Challenges and Strategies," *The Pakistan Development Review* (2016): 203-216.

⁶ "Port Development and Integrated Transport Connectivity," Ministry of Communications, Government of Pakistan, March 3, 2018, https://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/Pakistan_CBStrengthening%20Transport_March.pdf

⁷ Drazen Jorgie, "Pakistan Sees End to Routine Power Outages by Year End," *Reuter*, February 13, 2017.

⁸ S.R Dadwal, Shebonti Ray and Chithra Purush Othaman, "CPEC in Pakistan's Quest for Energy Security," *Strategic Analysis* 41, no. 5 (2017): 515-524.

⁹ "China Pakistan Economic Corridor," Ministry of Planning & Development, Government of Pakistan, December 19, 2021.

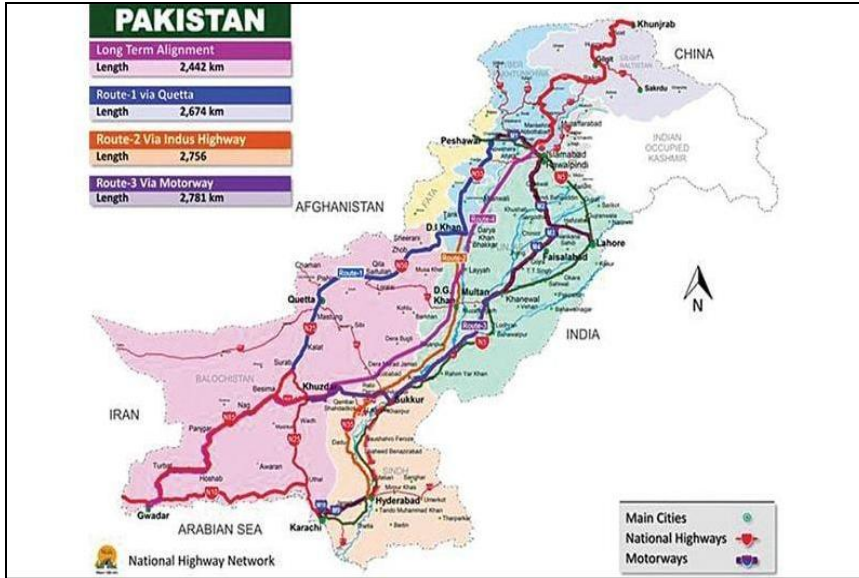
Following are the specific CPEC projects for Balochistan:

- i. HUBCO coal power plant — 1300MW
- ii. Gwadar power plant — 300 MW
- iii. Khuzdar-Basima highway (N-30)
- iv. D.I.Khan-Quetta highway (N-50)
- v. Gwadar international airport
- vi. Gwadar-Nawabshah LNG terminal
- vii. Gwadar smart port city
- viii. Expansion of multipurpose terminal including breakwater and dredging wastewater treatment plants for Gwadar city
- ix. Gwadar technical & vocational college, Gwadar
- x. Gwadar Eastbay Expressway II
- xi. Freshwater supply
- xii. Gwadar free zone
- xiii. Gwadar hospital up-gradation
- xiv. Gwadar primary school

Connectivity plays a vital role in the development of a country. Keeping in view the importance of interconnectedness, CPEC has initiated two broad projects namely: road construction and railway tracks. There are two main road links that are under construction under the auspices of CPEC. The western route (Kashghar to Gwadar) of CPEC runs through Balochistan which enters through Dera Ismail Khan and covers Zhob, Quetta, Kalat, Panjgur and on to Gwadar passing through Turbat (see map no. 1).

Map No. 1

Western Route of CPEC



Source: <https://www.quora.com/What-is-the-difference-between-eastern-and-western-route-of-CPEC>

CPEC has multifaceted opportunities for underprivileged Balochistan. It is entrusted with helping Balochistan for augmenting economic, political, social and technological avenues. Infrastructure development, establishment of new sources for economic activities, energy projects, optimal resource utilisation, communication and transportation, housing and amenities, effective water resource management, education and recreation are some of the areas which may advance through this project. Furthermore, socio-economic development of the province is linked with this multi-billion project which would contribute towards the restoration of harmony in the regional context.¹⁰

¹⁰ Sher Baz Khetran and Muhammad Anjum Saeed, "The CPEC and China-Pakistan Relations: A Case Study on Balochistan," *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 3, no. 03 (2017): 447-461.

CPEC Projects in Balochistan: Factors of Concern

Balochistan is strategically the most important province of Pakistan. It is blessed with numerous natural resources along with a deep sea port which can accommodate multi-consignments simultaneously. However, there are some factors of grave concern that may impinge upon the execution of CPEC. These include:

a) Fishing Factor

Fishing is one of the fundamental rights of locals in Gwadar, Ormara, Jiwani and Hub. Around 70 to 80 per cent of locals are dependent upon fishing.¹¹ The security forces have already prohibited trawling on security grounds and locals need permission from officials. In January 2018, during Gwadar Expo in the free trade zone, several boats were beached for three days during a harsh season of still waters.¹² Fishing societies are trying to relocate to the nearby fishing beach along the coast such as Sur Bandar. This could turn out to be a tipping factor for feeding grievances among the Baloch. Government of Balochistan needs to facilitate the local fishermen by giving priority to their demands. They have the first right being the locals and relocating them from their ancestral lands and waters can create grievances which can have a negative effect on the CPEC project.

b) Employment Factor

Locals have often expressed their resentment on their exclusion from employment on port and in its construction. . Their allocation of giving more opportunities to labour from Northern and Central Punjab is disdainful for the people of Balochistan who consider this as discrimination. Unless a proper policy is formulated, it could halt the development of CPEC projects in the long run and enhance more resentment in Balochistan.¹³

¹¹ Shah Mir Baloch, "The Plight of the Gwadar fishermen," *The Diplomat*, August 08, 2016.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

Impact of CPEC on the Economy of Balochistan

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor projects have the potential to revive and give new life to economic activities in the province of Balochistan. Currently, the share of Balochistan in terms of economic activities is low as compared to other provinces of Pakistan. A number of factors have contributed to this which include: energy shortfall, unskilled labour force, lack of local administration's interest in the economic matters, feudal system, illiteracy, marginalised focus of the Centre, mismanagement of lucrative natural resources, corruption, separatist movements and foreign involvement in various matters to sabotage CPEC projects in the province.

CPEC projects are meant to set these issues right by reviving and restructuring the industrial sector of Balochistan. With the development of new Economic Zones which have been planned in Quetta, Gwadar, Dera Murad Jamali, Uthal, Khuzdar and Hub along with mineral economic processing zones which are going to be established at Chaghi, Lasbela, Kalat, Gawadar, Qila Saifullah and Khuzdar prospects of economic prosperity are high in the province.¹⁴

CPEC Projects: Concerns of the People of Balochistan

There are numerous concerns of the people of Balochistan regarding CPEC projects. These concerns are of immense importance and have impacted negatively on the implementation of CPEC projects. When the local people of the province are not happy with the under-construction projects, they could create hurdles in the execution of the same. This scenario leads to a delay in completion and harvesting the benefits from the projects. Some of the concerns and issues faced by the people of Balochistan are:

a) Compromise on the Identity and Culture of the Local People

The people of Balochistan anticipate that CPEC would invite the people from other provinces and from around the world for various

¹⁴ KamranTaj, Zhang Liang and Umbreen Zafar, "CPEC Impact on Balochistan Economy," *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)* vol. II, issue no. IX (September 2018).

ventures in Balochistan that would result in loss distinct Baloch identity and locals may lose their separate recognition. This is one of the major concerns of the people of the province.

b) Non-provision of Due Share from CPEC Projects to Balochistan

Another significant factor which people of Balochistan complain about is regarding Balochistan's share in CPEC which is only 4.5 per cent as revealed by the Chief Minister of Balochistan.¹⁵ If we exclude the HUBCO power plant and Gwadar projects, this share shrinks to only 1 per cent. Furthermore, locals have concerns over employment opportunities for them.

Moreover, Balochistan is a resource-rich land having large reservoirs of copper, marble and a lot of other natural resources,¹⁶ beneficial for the entire country. Baloch feel that the benefits of their exploitation may not flow down to the locals. The Baloch term this state of affairs as their socio-economic deprivation, exploitation and their alienation. Gas from Sui which was explored in 1952¹⁷ and was provided to the other provinces since the 1960s was not provided to Balochistan till 1970, Hub was provided gas in 1990 when it became an industrial city in fact various districts of Balochistan are still deprived of this natural resource.

Problems of Balochistan

Balochistan is facing multifarious issues which have fuelled unrest in the province. Abject poverty, mass illiteracy, *sardari* system, un-employment and economic backwardness, poor social life, lack of basic health facilities, water scarcity, weak writ of local administration and inaccessible technology are among the major ones. Unfortunately, the Federal Government of Pakistan did not pay timely attention to these issues. This scenario deteriorated the situation more. The following discourse will analyse the various dimension of the problems currently prevailing in Balochistan.

¹⁵ Saleem Shahid, "Balochistan Voices Concerns Over its Share in CPEC Projects," *Dawn*, December 10, 2018.

¹⁶ Rana Afzal, "Balochistan-Development, Challenges and Options," *The International Journal of History and Social Sciences* 5, no. 2 (2014).

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

a) *Multidimensional Poverty*

Balochistan is at the top in terms of poverty as compared to rest of the provinces of Pakistan.¹⁸ The administration and governance have long been neglected and are mainly surrendered to the local tribal system. The society is neither modern nor progressive and hence finds it difficult to integrate into the rest of the society of Pakistan. Their living patterns are nomadic in nature since most of their economy is based on raising livestock. The terrain is rugged and water channels are also not developed with *karez* system being a major source of water resources. The *karez* system allows the monopoly of water. This keeps the entire supply chain of food in the hands of few sardars. Their legislature making is also dictated by the same.

Similarly, illiteracy has also played a vital role in keeping Balochistan underdeveloped. Although, privileged people of Balochistan are literate with reasonable income resources either through business or employment, but a majority of the people are illiterate, and their earning is too low to live a respectable life. The number of schools in the province is also very less and the condition of existing schools is also deplorable they are neither well-equipped nor have qualified and well-trained teachers. The schools infrastructure also does not accommodate all the applicants. The syllabus taught in schools is also out-dated.

Balochistan is a society that consists of 47 per cent women population. Their participation in education is very low partly due to poverty in the province and partly owing to the non-availability of secondary schools for girls in most localities and villages.¹⁹ The cost of sending them to the main cities for schooling cannot be afforded by many. Apart from the societal backwardness, most of the schools are inaccessible since they are located in far-flung areas. Sometimes, in these days and times, only one school caters to more than one village. Undoubtedly, skill development helps in uplifting the poor. It, however,

¹⁸ Attaullah Khan et al., "Mapping and Measuring Of Multidimensional Poverty in Pakistan: Empirical Investigations," *Pakistan Journal of Life and Social Sciences* 9, no. 2 (2011): 121-127.

¹⁹ "Balochistan: Challenges and Opportunities," UNDP, Pakistan, January 19, 2021, file:///C:/Users/ISSI/Downloads/DAP%20Vol%205,%20Special%20Issue%20English%20final.pdf

does not enjoy a pertinent role in the provincial subjects. This has consequently lowered the confidence in the society for entrepreneurship, business and self-employment activities.

Due to lack of technical and modern education vast majority of Baloch people lacks the ability to compete in the employment market at national as well as international level. This state of affairs results in lower earnings poverty and backwardness of the province. Besides this, poor infrastructure and communication, absence of industry, lack of skilled labour force, terrorism, sectarianism, personal rivalry and disinterest of local administration in solving the above-stated issues are the major reasons behind abject poverty in the Balochistan.

b) Extractive Institutions

It is a recognised fact that rich and influential people have always exploited the poor for their economic gains. The extractive institutions become the prime cause of inequality between various stakeholders which ultimately results in low economic growth in the country.²⁰ Acemoglu, Johnson and Robinson stated that there is a strong co-relation between extractive institutions and lethargic economic growth in the country.²¹ In the case of Balochistan, at national level, this less-privileged province has always been neglected as compared to other provinces of Pakistan at the time of resource sharing. Myriad institutions are working in Balochistan who are busy in extracting natural resources of the province for instance OGDCL, Sui, Saindak, Rekodiq and PPL but when it comes to distribution of dividends out of these natural resources, the provinces like Punjab, Sindh and KPK are preferred and Balochistan is given less share out of the total earning.

²⁰ Eric Chaney, "Ethnic Cleansing and the Long-term Persistence of Extractive Institutions: Evidence from the Expulsion of The Moriscos," *Unpublished Working Paper* (2008).

²¹ Daron Acemoglu, Simon Johnson and James A. Robinson. "The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation," *American Economic Review* 91, no. 5 (2001): 1369-1401.

c) Weak Political Institutions

The weak performance of political institutions and mis-governance in the province owing to incapacitated political leaders and bureaucracy have been major hurdle in the overall development of Balochistan. Absence of local government is one of the major causes of poor governance²² and consequently much of this has been left to the powerful sardars of the various tribes. The government cannot deliver without a functional local government system. Security forces and other law enforcement agencies have taken concrete measures to combat the activities of non-state actors but there is still unsatisfactory law and order situation in the province. The low-level insurgency in the province and proximity with Afghanistan and Iran make it difficult to maintain law and order in Balochistan.

The weak political institutions make it difficult to establish the writ of state and allow non-state actors and tribal leaders to come to forefront in managing and controlling affairs of the province. Having their militias and enjoying clout over local population, these tribal leaders often disregard the state apparatus and many a times influence state decisions.

d) Water Scarcity

According to a UNDP report, Balochistan's only 21 per cent of people have access to supply lines of water,²³ 23 per cent to hand pumps and about 30 per cent have access to river water. Water plays a pivotal role in uplifting agricultural production and the people of Balochistan mostly rely on agriculture and livestock. Water scarcity has damaged agriculture very badly. The major source of freshwater is rainfall. As per figures provided by the World Bank, 96 per cent of the total water resources per annum consist of surface water; the rest 4 per cent pertains to groundwater. About 40 per cent of the total surface water is consumed by the province; however, the remaining water flows down into the sea. Furthermore, 60 per cent of groundwater is utilised domestically by the agriculturalists use tube wells.²⁴

²² Mian Tayyab Hassan, "Governance and Poverty in Pakistan," MIMAP, Technological Paper Series, December (2002).

²³ "Water-the Lifeblood of Tomorrow," UNDP, Pakistan, February 20, 2020.

²⁴ M. Rizwan Chaudhry, "Water Management in Balochistan."

Total cultivatable area is about 38.6 per cent of the total geographical area of Balochistan, 14 per cent of the cultivatable area has availability of water; the rest of the cultivatable area is barren due to water scarcity.²⁵

e) Agriculture

The largest section of Balochistan's economy is based on agriculture which is a major source of income for small farmers. It is considered one of the employment generators for lower middle class and middle-class families.²⁶ Shortage of electricity and climate change resulted in water scarcity which affected the province output of agriculture and lowering its GDP. In the last ten years, share of agriculture in Balochistan's GDP was 34 per cent. Lack of state of the art equipment and unskilled labour is also one of the reasons for less production. It is expected that CPEC projects based on agriculture will revive agriculture in Balochistan through the use of latest technology with high yield. Before revival of the agriculture sector, the issue of water scarcity needs to be addressed. There is a vital need to increase Balochistan's capacity to meet its present and future needs of water consumption. It has been learned that China is keen to improve the agriculture sector of Balochistan under CPEC, agriculture experts will build the capacity of labour force through proper usage of seeds with the latest technology.²⁷

Challenges to CPEC

Due to his huge impact, CPEC has numerous internal and external challenges in Pakistan. In the same context, CPEC has started domestic political pushback from smaller provinces calling for a greater share in the development initiative. Small provinces complain about unfair distribution of funding to the projects under the CPEC. Political stakeholders in Balochistan, the home of Gwadar port, view Punjab as the major beneficiary of CPEC. Similarly, some political parties in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa have called for prioritising under-developed districts of

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ "Small Scale Irrigation: Large Scale Benefits for Balochistan," Relief Web, June 19, 2014.

²⁷ China Keen to Improve Agriculture Sector in Balochistan, *Dawn*, July 23, 2019.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan for the CPEC route. To address these reservations, the western route of the CPEC was included in the project. To create economic opportunities, particularly, employment generation, special economic zones should be established in the smaller provinces and priority should be given to Balochistan, being the most backward. The other major challenge is the insurgent groups in Balochistan. According to these groups, they will not allow Chinese companies to exploit their resources and term it as colonisation. They argue that Balochistan will get nothing out of CPEC and Islamabad and Beijing will be the beneficiaries of it. Secondly, external support to sabotage CPEC projects is also on the cards. India, which is on top of the list wants to destabilise development of Pakistan by financing insurgent groups in Balochistan and Sindh. The government of Pakistan has given official dossiers to the United Nations (UN) confirming India's involvement in supporting, financing, and facilitating insurgency in Balochistan. Domestically, these challenges are compounded by weak economic and fiscal policies.

Increasingly, CPEC has been embroiled in China-US strategic rivalry. Islamabad has been trying to address a perception that the Chinese CPEC loans are a debt trap for Pakistan with a very high mark up.²⁸ India has always been uncomfortable with any development that strengthens Pakistan economically and CPEC is seen as a threat to its overarching ambition to dominate South Asia.²⁹ India continues to oppose Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a whole and undermine CPEC.

Policy Recommendations

A few recommendations have been suggested below in order to address the grievances and make CPEC projects in Balochistan successful.

- Enhance the representation of Balochistan in the National Assembly which elects the Prime Minister. Balochistan has a

²⁸ Naveed Siddiqui, "Alice Wells' Remarks Another Doomed Attempt to Defame Sino-Pak Relations: Chinese Embassy," *Dawn*, May 21, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1558763>

²⁹ Ambassador Tariq Osman, "External and Internal Challenges to CPEC," *STRAFASIA*, March 15, 2019.

mere representation of 14 seats³⁰ which are equal to Lahore city. Senate is an inactive institution where equal representation does not matter. More members in the National Assembly will increase the importance and give voice to the concerns of Balochistan.

- Strengthening the provincial autonomy of Balochistan is essential to ensure a lucrative environment for the people of Balochistan to excel in various fields of life through which they could improve their skills. Adequate measures should be taken to ensure this autonomy.
- Fair distribution and equal access to the resources is necessary. The CPEC projects can be used to eliminate Balochistan's valid grievances and its marginalisation. Until now, the common man in Balochistan is not the beneficiary of the CPEC. The federal government should make sure that the youth of Balochistan is getting jobs through CPEC, and through the federal government quota in Islamabad. Unemployment is the leading factor that forces young men to join insurgent groups. The government can contest stance of insurgents through development projects, otherwise people will keep buying the narrative of the separatists.
- Continuation of *Sardari* system is one of the biggest hurdles in the development of the middle class in Baloch areas. Efforts should be made to eliminate the system so that power is devolved to the locals.
- Engaging the youth of Balochistan in debate through universities and think tanks is essential to understanding the dynamics of Balochistan.
- Benefits from the resources of the province should first be the priority of the people of Balochistan. Grievances like gas from Sui, Reko Deq, Gwadar and others must be redressed.

³⁰ Members of National Assembly of Pakistan, *National Assembly of Pakistan*, http://na.gov.pk/en/all_members.php

Conclusion

CPEC is a harbinger of development and prosperity in the region. It is a true manifestation of an all-weather friendship between China and Pakistan. It will increase economic growth in both the countries and revolutionise the business and inter-connectedness in the region. Like all provinces of Pakistan, it is well received by Balochistan, too. However, enhanced sharing of resources will give incentive to the people to support the project further.

CPEC carries in itself various benefits for Balochistan as well as for other provinces of Pakistan. This project has already helped Pakistan in overcoming the energy crisis and will help in alleviating poverty by providing mass access to education, health and safe drinking water. Of all the projects in Balochistan, Gwadar Port forms one of the core pillars of CPEC and the benefits of this project must flow down to the people of Balochistan. In this milieu, perceptions of being deprived of its ancillary benefits should be overcome through open and frank academic debates, particularly among and between the youth.

Furthermore, this project will generate new economic opportunities in Balochistan as well as in the other provinces of Pakistan and will help speed up the essential infrastructure development.

Comprehensive planning needs to be carried out for smooth execution of the CPEC projects that would bring an economic revolution in Balochistan and the other provinces of the county and the whole region would enjoy its fruits. CPEC provides the right tools in this regard.