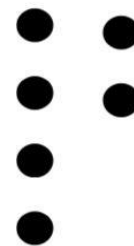




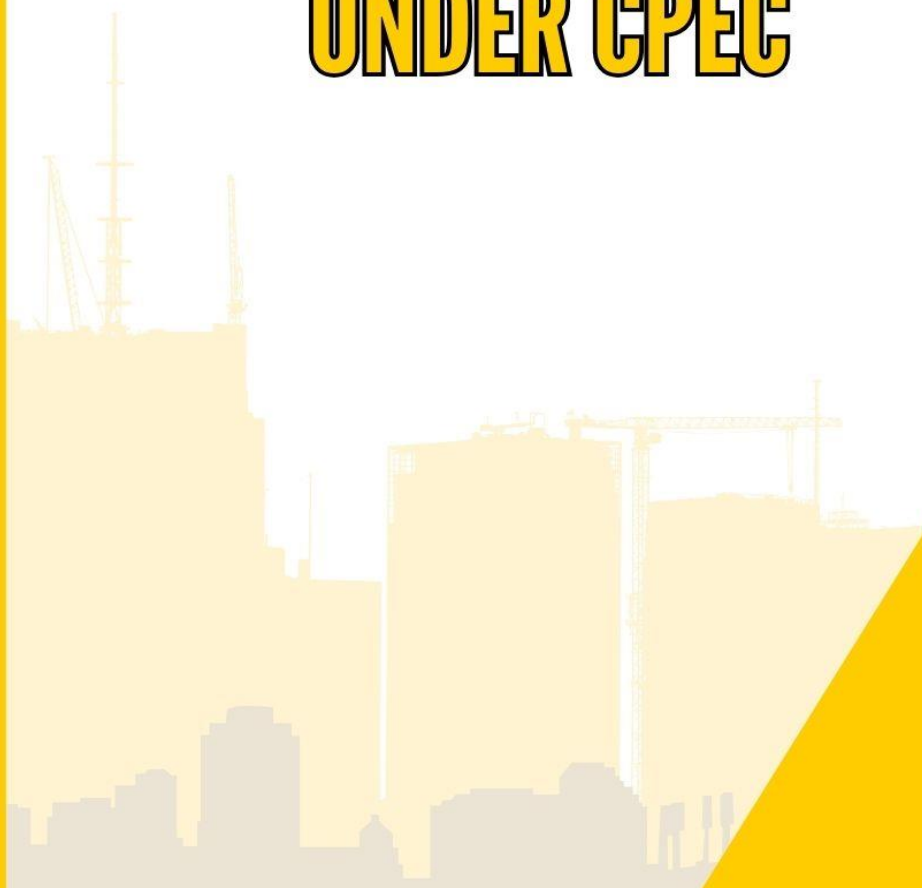
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ALLEVIATING BALOCHISTAN'S POVERTY UNDER CPEC



Alleviating Balochistan's Poverty under CPEC

Dr. Dost Barrech¹

Abstract

Balochistan is a mini Pakistan and Pakistan is mega Balochistan. Balochistan is the largest province of Pakistan in area wise but smallest in terms of population and remains a back bone of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Though the province has strategic location, having wealth of natural resources it remained deprived and marginalized since the inception of the country. Meanwhile, CPEC is a ray of hope, as tapping into Balochistan's sufficient natural resources could pave the way for development and prosperity. Presently, 51 metallic and non-metallic minerals have been discovered in the province. Balochistan is also called "fruit basket of Pakistan." By addressing genuine issues like power shortages, water scarcity manufacturing crop-specific zones under CPEC, agricultural production would prove instrumental in the progress of the province. Balochistan's coastal areas blessed with lobster, shrimp, and cuttlefish, alongside stunning landscapes, providing an opportunity for tourism growth under CPEC. On the other hand, many obstacles are going to be confronted by CPEC, including lack of advanced education, the incomplete implementation of the 18th amendment, separatist movements, poor road infrastructure, the erosion of democratic values, and interference from external actors in Balochistan. In this paper a mixed-method approach has been applied by using both primary and secondary data, in a bid to explore Balochistan's potential under CPEC. The paper will also provide wayward in addressing issues of Balochistan and an in-depth analysis of the challenges the project faces.

Keywords: SEZs, Natural Resources, Tourism, Fruits, Development, Blue Economy, Political Instability.

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1. Introduction

Belt and Road initiative BRI launched by China in 2013 is the biggest project in the mankind history. Under BRI China will revive its Old Silk Road connecting it with Europe and Africa. There are 151 signatories in the BRI. Countries included in BRI are in majority and countries which are not in mega project are in minority. China's peaceful rise, and its win win situation mantra under BRI has been gaining traction across the world. (Green Finance and Development Centre, 2023) China Pakistan Economic Corridor CPEC a flagship project of BRI initiated in 2013 played a crucial role in booting Pakistan's economic growth. CPEC improved the soft image of Pakistan. The CPEC project was started at time when foreign investors were unwilling to invest in Pakistan. However, China trusted Pakistan and launched the mega project. Presently, CPEC altered the views of the foreign investors. They are looking forward to investing in the country. CPEC contributed unprecedentedly in modernizing Pakistan's the infrastructure, boosting the economic growth and job creations. (Saddam Hussain Samo, 2020)

Balochistan the largest province of Pakistan underwent deprivation and marginalization since the country's inception. This raises crucial queries: Will CPEC be a game-changer for Balochistan? Would it truly improve and transform the lives of the province's needy people? Previously, Balochistan too witnessed large-scale projects like Saindak copper-gold project Reko Diq, the, and the Gwadar port project. Will CPEC be any different from these previous initiatives? Remember the masses of Gwadar still struggle with basic necessities such as clean drinking water, healthcare, ample educational institutions. The people of Gwadar endure power outages in the boiling heat of summer. (Dawn, 2018).

Gwadar is regarded as the heart of CPEC its indigenous population still feel increasingly disconnected from the dividends of CPEC. The "Haq Do Tehreek" (Gwadar Rights Movement), led by Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman received unprecedented traction and widespread support. They protested and blocked the Gwadar East Bay Expressway, an important route linking the port to Pakistan's main highway network. (Somaiyah Hafeez, 2023) Maulana Hidayat ur Rehman articulates that the people protest over legitimate issues encompassing a large number of security checkpoints and illegal trawling in Gwadar's waters snatching the bread and better of the fishermen. He reiterated that illegal trawling was grabbing local fishermen of their livelihoods. Meanwhile the provincial government is least bothered to resolve the issues of poor fisherman and pushing them to the wall. (Behram Baloch, 2022)

Arguably, without Gwadar, CPEC cannot truly remain in limelight. Balochistan, still lags significantly in areas like road and railway infrastructure advanced education, and healthcare. The province as mentioned earlier has been overlooked since Pakistan's inception, and perpetually ignored that will have a great deal of ramification for CPEC projects and national cohesion. CPEC appear to be the last hope for addressing the marginalization of Balochistan. The province can offer massively given its abundant natural resources, potential in agriculture and livestock sectors, blue economy, and establishing Special Economic Zones (SEZs) under CPEC that by and large will pave the way for regional connectivity and prosperity. This paper, thus, will shed light on capitalizing on Balochistan's potential to alleviate poverty and examining opportunities and challenges CPEC faces in Balochistan.

2. Research Methodology

Mixed research method has been applied in the paper by using both primary and secondary data. The primary data has been collected from well-known politicians, academics, and journalists from Balochistan. Author of the paper has been teaching at the University of Balochistan (UOB), Quetta. He conducted interviews with Baloch students with the aim of comprehending their perspective as far as CPEC and BRI are concerned. The paper pays special attention to primary data to provide accurate assessment of the ground realities about CPEC projects in the province. Their invaluable insights have enriched the paper.

3. Fostering Agriculture Sector

The agriculture sector is the backbone of Balochistan's economy, producing great potential, with horticulture being its most prominent sub-sector offering fruits like apples and grapes. The province is called the "fruit basket of Pakistan," producing 90 percent of the country's cherries grapes, and almonds 60 percent of its apricots, peaches and pomegranates. Most importantly, the province also produces nearly 70 percent of country's date production and 34 percent of its apples. There are more than 0.3 million tons of distinctive apple varieties produced annually, and the province gives 130 varieties of dates. The Makran division alone is believed to have been producing around 425,000 tons of dates annually. Sadly, despite this massive production, the province still lacks a substantial share in the national export of dates. Providing subsidies to farmers, modernizing the agriculture sector addressing water shortages will further enhance fruit production. Under CPEC, farmers are likely to have an opportunity to export their valuable production to international markets paving the way for alleviating poverty. (Dost Barrech, 2022).

As articulated earlier that agriculture is the key pillar of Balochistan's economy, the province nearly 75 percent people are residing in rural areas and relying overwhelmingly on this sector. Crops is beloved to have been contributing 62 percent to the province's gross farm income. The agricultural sector produces 67 percent of the total workforce. Regions of Balochistan like Naseerabad, Jafarabad, Usta Mohammed, and Dera Murad Jamali are mainly based on agriculture. It is pertinent to mention here that Naseerabad district is only benefiting from a perennial irrigation system. Meanwhile, other areas are in the 21st century still relying on karezat, rain, and tube wells for irrigation. Needless to say that, 11.77 million acres of land in the province still remain uncultivated and barren. Pakistan is supposed to espouse the path of China's development model under CPEC with the aim of cultivating Balochistan precious land resulting in improving the livelihoods of the province deprived farmers. (ZTBL, 2018)

4. Modernizing Livestock market

Like agriculture sector, the livestock also plays an important role in Balochistan's economy, modernizing its potential under CPEC would be instrumental for the economic growth of Balochistan and Pakistan. Balochistan accounts nearly 52 percent of Pakistan's sheep percent of camels, and 22 percent of goats respectively. The livestock sector has been providing jobs to approximately 66 percent of households in arid regions where crop cultivation is almost impossible. As the population of the world grows exponentially and living standards has been rising. Resultantly, the demand for pure milk and meat production will also enhance in the near future converting livestock sector under mega project productive sector of the province will benefit the people. (Prof Dr Muhammad Subhan Qureshi, 2022) The livestock is blessed with massive potential, capable of producing 50 percent to the province agricultural GDP and nearly 10 percent to Balochistan overall GDP. In this regard, Dr. Afzal, who is a livestock expert at the Food and Agriculture Organization FAO articulated that Balochistan had a massive potential and the province could become a crucial actor in the livestock industry given the growing demand for halal food in Muslim states.

He reiterated that he had suggested the government of Balochistan to give top priority to the sector to improve meat exports to international markets. "Promoting meat exports at the government level would strengthen the provincial economy and create job opportunities in Balochistan," Dr. Afzal added. (The Nation, 2023). Balochistan has 40 percent of Pakistan's livestock population and its 70 percent of population directly or indirectly connected to the sector. The 70 percent peoples'

socio-economic conditions is likely to be improved under mega project by making significant investments in the livestock sector. By introducing innovations, coping challenges like inadequate water and fodder supplies, insufficient access to veterinary services, including scarce grazing pastures, and improving marketing strategies. (The Express Tribune, 2019). It is worth to mention here, the fisheries sector of Balochistan has been providing approximately 400,000 jobs to the indigenous population. The fishery sector is having the strength to produce 70 percent of employment for people in residing in the coastal areas of Balochistan. The sector at current juncture is believed to have been earning nearly \$8 million via the export of fish products to international markets. Advancing the fisheries sector under CPEC would embark a path to development and prosperity in underprivileged Balochistan. (Daily Mirror Quetta, 2023)

5. Exploring Blue Economy Potential

The blue economy is the economy which is generated from ocean resources. The global oceanic activities, interestingly in 2010 remained approximately \$1.5 trillion. This figure is likely to reach \$3 trillion by 2030. (OECD, 2016). Presumably, the blue economy would create \$24 trillion in economic activity encompassing the generation of new resources and jobs. (World Wildlife Fund, 2015). Balochistan's coastal areas encompassing 750 km from Goth Haji Alano on the eastern border with Sindh province to Jiwhani on the western border with Iran's Gwadar Bay. These areas are full of natural resources. Nevertheless, the fisheries sector in the aforementioned regions have not been fully capitalized which ought to be utilized under mega project (CPEC Official Website, 2018) Balochistan is blessed with non-living marine resources, such as minerals, oil reserves shale gas, hydrocarbons, and gravel. These resources remain crucial for global economic flows and will generate economic jobs. Moreover, different species available in the Arabian Sea like sea porpoises, turtle's cetaceans, fish and whales, are the valuable assets in the context of blue economy requiring a fresh thinking to be utilized under CPEC to reduce poverty. (Maliha Zeba Khan, 2020)

Balochistan has the sixth-largest mangrove area in the globe. The mangroves have been contributing nearly \$4 billion to annual export earnings of Pakistan. The province coastal regions is having spectacular landscapes. Pakistan under BRI could develop Public Sector Development Programs (PSDP) adjacent to the Makran Coastal Highway resulting in production of job opportunities. The stunning beaches of Hammerhead, Gwadar and Astola Island will prove effective into lifting tourism sector. As far as the report of World Travel & Tourism Council

(WTTC) was concerned, the travel and tourism sectors had contributed \$8.3 trillion to the global economy and reinforced 313 million jobs in 2017. By capitalizing the splendid landscapes and historical sites of the province, the region would become a tourist hub for both foreign and domestic tourists improving Pakistan's soft power and boosting the economy and alleviating the poverty. (Dost Barrech, 2019)

6. Exploiting Natural Resources

The geostrategic location and sufficient natural resources of Balochistan remain to be seen as a buzzword but the state so far has remained failed to capitalize on the province natural resources. CPEC turns to out to be a game changer for natural resources of Balochistan. The province is having 70 percent of the natural resources of the country encompassing nearly \$3 trillion in natural resources, including, natural gas, black pearls copper, chromite, gold, oil and precious stones. (The Balochistan Point, 2021) The provincial government of Balochistan is interested in capitalizing on province natural resources under CPEC. The provincial government takes extra interest in Chinese companies to boost growth in its mining industry. On the other hand, mineral extraction in Balochistan has been a contentious issue. Local masses are unhappy with extraction of natural resources, the abundant natural resources have not alleviated the poverty and people are still disenfranchised. The extraction of natural resources has also contributed to the intensification of the insurgency.

Balochistan has a substantial natural gas industry, large-scale mining and efforts have not yet been successful in tapping these resources. Arguably, organized and proper resource extraction under BRI, and granting the province its rightful share by and large will erode the insurgency in the province. (Gul Yousufzai, 2019)

The recent protest by the Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC) in July urged state to provide fundamental rights to the people of Balochistan demanding the state to give due share of the natural resources. The government, against this backdrop, in December 2022 passed the Foreign Investment Promotion and Protection Act FIPPA in a bid to provide facilitation to foreign investments, including the Reko Diq mining project. The aforementioned project is regarded as instrumental tool in the revival of the country's economy. Despite Balochistan's rich mineral resources the province seems to be nearer to the church and farther from God. People of the province are unhappy and government remained failed in addressing the grievances of the people. However, mining operations produce a great opportunity for Pakistan to win the hearts and minds

of the people of Balochistan. The mining sector is likely to pave the way for employment, training, and social investments.

Most valuable minerals of Pakistan are situated in impoverished regions like Balochistan and ex-FATA. Unfortunately the resources of impoverished regions are processed abroad, giving little dividends to local people. The state needs to craft successful mining operations by prioritizing local engagement providing insurance that federal policies will not ignore the due rights of the Baloch people. The deeply embedded grievances of the Balochistan and the glaring issue of enforced disappearances ought to be addressed before implementing foreign investment. Most importantly, the state must ensure the resource sharing. An equitable distribution of Balochistan's natural resources should be ensured which will also strengthen national integration giving the confidence to the local population benefits from the wealth created by their land. Balochistan has been very low on various development indices ranks. One can image from its per capita earnings below \$1,000, showcasing that Balochistan is treated like a children of the lesser God. Dr. Mahrang Baloch who leads the BYC is representing an important opportunity for the state to get engaged in meaningful dialogue with the youth of Balochistan with an effort to address distribution of resources. (Umeer Farooq, 2024)

7. Geo-strategic location of Balochistan under CPEC

Balochistan's geo-strategic location is the biggest assets of the province, having coastal areas adjacent to the Strait of Hormuz connecting Pakistan with three major regions of the world like Central Asia, Middle East and Indo-Pacific. Pakistan's geo-strategic significance largely depends on Balochistan which is crucial for CPEC. It is not an exaggeration to say that without Balochistan there is no Pakistan. CPEC connectivity with Middle East and Afghanistan is viable only via Balochistan. The potential of Gwadar port could be realized on account of its location in deep waters, surrounded by mountains. This naturally built port is also pivotal for defense. Balochistan is having enough of land that ought to be morphed into productive economic activity. The Sui Gas reserves of Balochistan have been exploited. Copper and coal are extracted in Saindak, and work is going on in Reko Diq. Chinese companies have been working in inland mining in Lasbela and Duddar. There are many minerals gas and oil, resources that could be capitalized under CPEC. Amir Adnan (2023, October 2024) Personal communication [Personal interview].

Since the start of CPEC, we have urged for the Western route encompassing components like industrial zones, energy zones, energy parks, and with a sub-corridor linking Balochistan to

Central Asia. Sub-corridors were supposed to be established along the Afghanistan border in areas like Shorabak district in Afghanistan, as well as Qamar Din Karez, Badini, Chaman, , and Angur Ada in the ex FATA region. The above-mentioned routes should have boosted trade and regional connectivity but the state did not develop these routes. Presently one can see, the Chaman border remains closed, where nearly 20,000 to 25,000 people have to cross on a daily basis. Sadly, other important routes along the Durand Line are also closed. Nasrullah Khan Zayrai Personal communication October 2024 [Personal interview].

Balochistan's massive areas are great assets under mega project for industrial sector. When people discuss CPEC, they concentrate on roads, trade, and infrastructure. Against this backdrop the power sector cannot be downplayed. There is huge potential for developing renewable energy such as wind power plants in the province which is also environment friendly. On account of Balochistan's small population, this demographic can be converted as a strength in poverty alleviation CPEC. To gain more sustainable development and poverty reduction is very much in Balochistan. (Mir Sadaat Baloch (2024, October) Personal communication [Personal interview]

Given the growing threats of climate change, Balochistan is hub of producing renewable energy which can mitigate the impacts of the climate change. The province has robust capabilities for solar energy production. The green belt of Balochistan like Naseerabad Division has been contributing to the region's energy potential. Meanwhile, successive administrations remained failed to utilize on this potential by virtue of a lack of irrigation challenges, the destructive monsoon season, agricultural innovation, the impacts of climate change, , and governance failures. Zakryia Baloch Personal communication (2024 October) [Personal interview]

8. Imminent Challenges to CPEC in Balochistan

The fifth prevailing Baloch insurgency, arguably poses a grave threats to BRI projects in Balochistan. The insurgency from low intensity insurgency morphed into full blown insurgency attacking CPEC projects constantly. The previous four insurgencies only demanded political autonomy but the current insurgency seeks for separatism, which by and large will have ramifications for CPEC projects in the future. The previous four insurgencies only existed in southern Balochistan, the ongoing insurgency now has spread in every nook and corner of Balochistan. Unlike previous four insurgencies that were largely dominated by Baloch tribal chiefs. In the current wave educated class and middle class are joining the insurgency who feel they are disenfranchised economically confronting daily humiliations in the pretext of security.

The recruitment and joining of women as a suicide bombers into the fifth insurgency has altered the tactics of the movement causing challenges for mega project projects in the province. (Abdul Basit Khan, 2023)

There has been trust deficit between the federal and Balochistan's provincial government as far as the CPEC projects in the province are concerned. Akhtar Jan Mengal a Baloch nationalist leader who in September 2024 also resigned from the national assembly of Pakistan maintained that after reading comprehensively the CPEC project a flagship project of BRI he did not find any dividends for Balochistan. He further reiterated all economic benefits were being directed to Punjab. Mengal stated, "Mark my words, CPEC will end up being no different from the East India Company. With their vast population, the Chinese will make Pakistan resemble not a country but a Chinatown." (Tilak Devasher, 2019) The Minister of Planning, Development, Ihsan Iqbal, and Special Initiatives for the Government of Pakistan, articulated unveiling details of the CPEC projects particularly without China's permission was not possible, nor did the information share with the provincial government of Balochistan which indicates that the provincial government of Balochistan was not taken into confidence while making negotiation with China. (Sana Baloch, 2016)

Political engineering in the province is in full swing resulting in creating challenge to CPEC. The 2024 election in Pakistan in general and Balochistan in particular is regarded the as the most rigged elections in the history of Pakistan. Experts are of the view that Balochistan Awami Party (BAP), manufactured prior to the 2018 General Election, weakened genuine leaderships of the province. The rigged election paved the way for them to exploit natural resources, leading to poor governance putting the future of BRI projects in jeopardy. (Asad Hashim, 2018). The 18th Amendment in the annals of Pakistan is a great milestone. Ironically, the non-implementation of the 18th amendment has been contributing to the growing deprivation, causing further barriers for CPEC and enfeebling democracy in the country. Against this back drop, Qamar Javed Bajwa, the former Chief of Army Staff of Pakistan stated that the 18th Amendment was a greater threat than Sheikh Mujeeb's six points. His perspective reflects that the 18th amendment will not be implemented which will further weaken the democracy in Pakistan (Syed Badrul Ahsan, 2020).

It is worth to mention here that the poor road infrastructure in Balochistan further adds fuel to fire for CPEC. The report of National Highway Authority NHA of Pakistan states that the number of death toll in the province on account of traffic accidents surpasses those resulting from terrorist

incidents. Annually, more than 6,000 people die in traffic accidents in Balochistan, with more than 10,000 get wounded. Unfortunately, the entire Balochistan does not have a motorway. The annual 6,000 road fatalities weakens the claim that CPEC will embark the path to regional connectivity and prosperity. (Dost Barrech, 2020)

Remember merely 25 percent of the population in Balochistan is having direct access to electricity while 75 percent across the rest of the country have access to electricity showcasing that Balochistan is being deprived. In the province the total electricity demand is only 1,800 MW. Interestingly, the transmission lines are only able to carry nearly 650 MW. On account of insufficient transmission infrastructure and inadequate of connectivity to the national grid, the extra electricity is impossible to benefit the local people. 80 percent people of the province, including the Gwadar's people do not have access to local gas from Sui, Balochistan. The poor power sector triggers skepticism among Baloch that CPEC is an illusion. (Tilak Devasher, 2019) With literacy rate of 43.58, Balochistan is having highest illiteracy rate in the country. In prevailing advanced era having a literacy rate of only 43.58 will cause impediments in the province's progress under CPEC (The Nation, 2022).

No doubt climate change is greater threat than terrorism and extremism. In this regard, Balochistan has been witnessing the effects of environmental degradation endured devastation from climate-related hazards. The floods in 2022 in Pakistan damaged homes, bridges, highways buildings disrupting communication lines. Quetta which is the largest city of Balochistan and the capital of province, remained cut off from the rest of Pakistan for two months. National Disaster Management Authority NDMA report suggests that nearly 36,469 homes were damaged across the country and Balochistan accounted 60 percent of the total damage. The floods damaged 800 schools, 600 of which were situated in Balochistan. BRI projects under CPEC projects will face severe effects of climate change. (Dr. Tauseef Javed, 2022)

Due to its geo-strategic location, Balochistan historically remained crossroads of cultures and civilizations, and remained hub of great powers competition. Under current juncture the province is unlikely to escape from the existing rivalry between the US and China. Both parties are obsessed with Balochistan. Washington and New Delhi are engaged to contain China. They are creating instability in China's neighboring areas. CPEC will not remain immune to the rivalry they will hurt the BRI projects in Balochistan. (Dr. Muhammad Khan, 2022)

On October 6 BLA carried out attacks near Karachi's Jinnah International Airport. BLA suicide bomber attacked vehicle into a convoy of Chinese engineers resulted into the deaths of two Chinese nationals. A former army brigadier, Haris Nawaz, a security analyst states that "These separatists do not want to see Pakistan progress economically. China has made significant investments in Pakistan, particularly in Gwadar and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)."

BLA maintains that they target Chinese engineers to stop China from increasing its foothold in Balochistan. BLA accuses China of extracting natural resources of the province and local people do not get any benefits from Chinese projects. However, security experts do not agree with their perspective saying the BLA avoids attacking the US and European companies also which are also active in Balochistan.

A faculty member at the Lahore University of Management Sciences LUMS Aameem Lutfi argues that "It's no coincidence that the BLA primarily targets Chinese assets and personnel while refraining from attacking projects of North Atlantic countries, like the Reko Diq gold and copper mine run by Barrick Gold." BLA since 2018 at least eight times targeted Chinese nationals in Pakistan encompassing a suicide attack at the Chinese Confucius Center in Karachi resulted in death of three Chinese instructors. Lutfi is of the view that Western human rights organizations are obsessed with showcasing more interest in the grievances of the Baloch separatists with the aim of "the Western imperative to hinder Chinese projects abroad." (Tooba Masood, 2024)

The BLA is fully cognizant of the fact that by targeting Chinese engineers and officials will damage Pakistan's image globally and the country will not be regarded as a secure place for investment, particularly when Pakistan needs foreign currency to stabilize its reserves. On the other hand, Dr. Maria Sultan, chairperson of the South Asian Strategic Stability Institute (SASSI) University, stated, "This is a war that cannot be fought without foreign support. One terrorist act can easily cost \$50,000. How can a terrorist, who often lacks basic resources, afford that? And it's not just the person carrying out the attack; there's always someone orchestrating the explosives, financing, and intelligence gathering." (Tooba Masood, 2024)

Salahuddin a security expert articulates that, "There is a well-established nexus between the TTP and the BLA. The TTP operates freely in Afghanistan and is ideologically committed to destabilizing Pakistan through terror attacks, particularly against law enforcement. This partnership provides the BLA with strategic and tactical advantages they previously lacked." Experts believe that the US ignores the threat being posed by the BLA to Pakistan's stability

because its own strategic interest is to contain Chinese in the region. The US is interested in supporting military actions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa against TTP militants but it will not support Pakistan politically and financially to crush Baloch separatists. There has been growing speculation that the US has been involved in supporting BLA with the aim of containing China's influence in the region.

The containment of China by the US has become a buzzword in international arena. The US leaves no stone unturned to create troubles for China in its peripheries. Threats posed by BLA to CPEC in Balochistan is exceptional. Chinese engineers under CPEC across the world are being killed only in Balochistan which is a serious blow to China. Both Pakistan and China need to work seriously against the nexus of the US and India in disrupting the mega project in Balochistan. If CPEC project fails in Balochistan it will dent the image of China across the world. Thus, it is prerequisite to address the issue of Balochistan under BRI on a priority basis. (Tooba Masood, 2024)

9. Suggestions

- Balochistan under CPEC has to be utilized in the context of geo-economy rather than geo-politics which has caused irreparable damage to the province.
- Indigenous and local politicians are supposed to be brought into the parliament who could represent the province in letter and spirit. Political engineering ought to be discouraged in the province.
- In agriculture sector the state needs to provide sufficient subsidies to the farmers in order to enhance the sector to export massively to the international markets under mega project.
- 750 km coastal areas of Balochistan have to be utilized for blue economy and tourism sector under CPEC.
- Pakistan has altered its National Security Policy NSP from geo-politics to geo-economic aimed at improving ties with the neighboring countries. Having better ties with Iran and Afghanistan will prove instrumental in Balochistan economic potentials.
- CPEC should be extended to Iran and Afghanistan which will further enhance the importance of Balochistan and Gwadar port.
- Pakistan should follow the Chinese model in improving the livestock sector of Balochistan.
- South Asia is believed to have been one of the least economically integrated regions globally. African continent economically is more connected than the South Asia. Pakistan

ought to prioritize improving economic ties with its neighboring countries resulting in benefiting both the nation as a whole and Balochistan in particular.

- Pakistan's illegal trade with Iran and Afghanistan surpasses that of its legal trade, which impedes human development in Balochistan. Legal trade under CPEC be promoted and enhanced to exceed illegal activities.
- Annually, 6,000 people perish in traffic accidents in the province. Improving road infrastructure under CPEC is essential for safety and development and regional connectivity.
- Balochistan's small population is blessing in disguise. Building Special Economic Zones and capitalizing on the province potential under mega project will pave the way for poverty alleviation.
- Special universities in Balochistan ought to be established with the aim of increasing education and skills of the 21st century.
- The youth of Balochistan are expecting from CPEC. Granting Chinese scholarships to them would enable them with 21st-century skills to contribute successfully to CPEC's progress.
- Ph.D. and post-doctoral scholarships under BRI should be given to Balochistan's scholars to promote advanced education and research.
- It is unfortunate that CPEC seminars are held in major cities of Pakistan which do not represent the voices from Balochistan. It is important to conduct CPEC seminars and conferences in Balochistan, particularly in Quetta which is the capital of Balochistan in a bid to hear the genuine concerns of the people.
- An archaeological site called Mehrgarh Civilization located near the Bolan River in Balochistan is Pakistan's oldest civilization. Promoting Mehrgarh civilization under China's Global Civilization Initiative GCI would generate jobs and enhance Pakistan's cultural influence.
- CPEC should be extended to Afghanistan and Iran that will promote regional connectivity and prosperity in Balochistan. Promoting connectivity with Afghanistan would boost Balochistan's GDP per capita and will also improve Pakistan's trade relations with Afghanistan and Central Asian states.
- The Balochistan's uncultivated 11.77 million acres of land in Balochistan ought to be developed under BRI, which will generate jobs and will reduce poverty.
- Both the federal and provincial governments have to work collectively to irrigate barren lands of the province paving the way for self-sufficiency.

- Though Balochistan is called "fruit basket of Pakistan," Sadly, the province fruits are not exported to international markets under mega project. Pakistan needs to get into introspection and should work on export of Balochistan's fruit to the international market.
- Climate change is serious threat to Balochistan's agriculture sector. Beijing and Islamabad need to promote climate diplomacy under mega project to protect the province's agricultural future.
- China has been importing cherries from Chile located in Latin America. Pakistan ought to explore cherries from Ziarat and Kalat to China under CPEC. Exporting cherries of Balochistan will encourage the farmers of the province.
- Approximately 70 percent people in Balochistan do not have access to electricity, affecting the agricultural sector. Farmers' reservation about load shedding electricity shortages be addressed under CPEC.
- Pakistan has to learn from China's agricultural modernization, following the Chinese model will usher the path of development in Balochistan.

10. Conclusion

Pakistan in 2023 successfully celebrated a decade of CPEC, which has been marked as a game changer for Pakistan. Arguably, Gwadar and Balochistan are important for CPEC. The province deserves a larger share of its dividends by virtue of its strategic location. As the saying goes, "nearer to the church, farther from God." Over a decade, economic benefits remained limited, and policymakers remained unsuccessful to tap the untapped potential of Balochistan under BRI. The province's valuable resources including natural resources blue economy, agriculture, livestock, and tourism need to be capitalized resulting in paving the way for development and prosperity in the province. Arguably, CPEC is the ray of hope for Balochistan. CPEC is the last nail in the coffin to address deprivation of Balochistan. If CPEC does not erode the province's deprivations that will be suicidal for the national integration of Pakistan.

Meanwhile, there are multifaceted threats to CPEC in Balochistan. Challenges like poor governance, political engineering, insurgency, non-implementation of the 18th Amendment, water scarcity, and paucity of modernization in agriculture and livestock, and the instability from Afghanistan will have spillover effects on BRI project in Balochistan which require thorough reassessment. Balochistan is having strategic importance for Pakistan and as well as for global powers. The growing obsession of the US and India with CPEC and BRI cannot be ruled out.

The future of Pakistan and Balochistan lies on the success of CPEC and BRI. Tim Marshall, in his fascinating book “Prisoner of Geography,” rightly says, "There is no Pakistan without Balochistan." In the same way, General Qamar Javed Bajwa former Chief of Army Staff articulates that "Pakistan is incomplete without Balochistan." It is not an exaggeration to say that Balochistan is the nervous system of Pakistan, which needs special attention under CPEC.

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