



## Chinese Policies Towards Warm Waters and Baloch Militancy

Asmat Naseem,<sup>1</sup> & Manzoor Khan Afridi<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract:

China is an evolving economic power, yet despite governing a large portion of the global land, it lacks access to warm waters that can be used throughout the year. China's desire to play an important role in the Indian Ocean stems from the country's historical ties to the region, as well as the presence of vital sea trade routes in the region. It has long-term economic and political-strategic interests in the Indian Ocean. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project aims to connect Pakistan and China through highways, oil and gas pipelines, railways, and an optical fiber link stretching from Gwadar to Xinjiang. The project, which is the largest in China-Pakistan bilateral relations, is beset by challenges. In the evolving regional dynamics, Balochistan as an energy and trade corridor could strengthen China-Pakistan relations and provide opportunities for shared benefits. However, a number of external powers are involved, and they are playing a role in fueling unrest in Balochistan, which is a stumbling block in China's policies toward warm waters.

**Key Words:** Balochistan, Indian Ocean, CPEC, China, Pakistan, Gwadar, Xinjiang, warm waters

### INTRODUCTION

For several decades, it was considerably effortless to overlook the strategic implications of China's growing economic weight, yet in recent years, the focus has shifted to a distinct and rapidly approaching geo-strategic milestone indicating that China may overtake the United States as the world's largest economy. National interests are pursued by states in various ways. The most important are bilateral ties and bilateral trade and investment agreements (Nye Jr, 1999). Pakistan and China are "all-weather" allies, cooperating on a variety of bilateral projects aimed at mutual development and advancement. The two countries signed their first bilateral trade agreement in 1963. China, despite being a global industrial superpower, lacks year-round access to warm waters. From China to Shanghai, the journey takes 16,000 kilometers and 2-3 months. It spends a lot of money; it imposes a lot of taxes and fees. While Gwadar port is thousands of kilometers away from China, it is open all year. In fact, the growth of Balochistan benefits the Chinese economy (Shah, 2017). China considers Pakistan to be pivotal. Gwadar port serves the interests of both Pakistan and China. Geostrategic ally, Pakistan will provide China with a strategic warm-water port.

According to reports, China is shipping 80 percent of its oil needs across the perilous Malacca Strait. The Chinese oil pipeline and railroad connecting Gwadar Port to Western China provides them with

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<sup>1</sup> PhD Scholar, Department of Politics & International Relations, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: [asmatnaseem11@gmail.com](mailto:asmatnaseem11@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Politics & International Relations, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: [manzoor.afridi@iiu.edu.pk](mailto:manzoor.afridi@iiu.edu.pk)

a faster and more efficient means of acquiring oil from the Middle East. Chinese engineers are currently working on a feasibility study for a rail and pipeline line that would allow Gwadar to accommodate the majority of oil tankers bound for China. The CPEC project's goal is to connect Pakistan's Gwadar port and China's Kashgar port. In fact, more than 70% of Chinese trade is conducted via maritime routes across the Indian Ocean (Ramachandran, 2015). This route takes through the pirate-infested Malacca Strait. The route is now being guarded by American and Indian fleets in order to protect container ships from piracy. If a dispute arises, China's energy supply will be cut off. This initiative reduces trade partner distances by more than 10,000 kilometers. China should have its import and export capital without a disruption. Shipping from China, on the other hand, takes 10 days, as opposed to the current 15-day travel time (Ahmed, 2017). Because of the shorter travel time and more convenient pathway, this reduces transportation costs for Chinese goods.

Balochistan, located between the Arabian Sea and the Iranian mountains, is rich in minerals and energy. Balochistan's economic activity will grow exponentially as a result of the Gwadar Port. China has legal ownership of the Gwadar port as a result of significant investment in both economic and technological fields. Gwadar Port is a financial and commercial port that serves all regional and global communities. China's administration has rejected propaganda that this port would be used for military applications. It would be fully functional and used for economic and commercial purposes (Khan, 2019). China has also invested in a new highway that will connect the port of Gwadar with Karachi. As it calls for a new Balochistan province, the Baloch democratic movement poses a geopolitical threat to China. In South and Southwest Asia, this transition will have significant ramifications. Furthermore, Pakistan's international status has been further complicated by the regional threat posed by India, Afghanistan, Iran, and other Central Asian states. By constructing gas pipelines, these countries have an evident political or economic interest in destabilizing Balochistan (Farooqui & Aftab, 2018).

This study focuses on these research questions: What is the strategic value of Baluchistan for China in the contemporary geopolitical and geo-economic situation? How Baloch insurgency impacts the China's advancement towards the warm waters?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This research work is aimed at China's and Pakistan's desires as well as their positions with reference to Balochistan. It will look into whether their rapidly increasing cooperation poses a threat to the interests of United States and India in the region. This research will highlight the significance of Balochistan for China in the South Asian geopolitical landscape. This is still an ongoing problem.

Analyzing within this context, Nadir emphasized Pakistan's strategic location in his book. This is one of Pakistan's economic means. Balochistan represents Pakistan's opportunity to transition from an aid-oriented economy to one based on trade and energy transit. Pakistan should capitalize on its strategic geography and take advantage of its centralized location among several states. Pakistan is strategically located between Southeast Asia, South Asia, Central Asia, West Asia, and China. Pakistan may be linked to regional variables, energy resources, and demographics (Grare, 2013). The author emphasized the significance of Gwadar port as a crossroads for all possible trading and

transportation routes originating in Central Asian republics, China, and even Russia. Gwadar port would serve as an important economic focal point for some of the most important Asian and Gulf countries. This study investigates the function of Gwadar port as well as its geographic significance for China and Pakistan.

Larry Flynt's quote perfectly analyzes the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Local separatist agendas such as the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) and Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), as well as external discontentment from Iran, Afghanistan, and India, pose a number of distractions and temptations to halt CPEC project (Bibi, 2017). Pakistan and China are determined to weather the storm and complete this massive project. With a firm grip on the CPEC and a clear vision, both countries will be able to achieve economic growth and prosperity. Srikanth Kondapalli wrote a chapter titled "Indian Perspectives on China: Concerns and Prospects" in the book "China's Rise - Threat or Opportunity?". He argues that China is becoming a rising superpower. China is an East Asian nation with significant strategic importance as it is attempting to strengthen its position in international relations through diplomatic, political and economic means (Kondapalli, 2010). China is eager to maintain its global unipolar dominance. The book discusses China's difficulties in dealing with issues of contamination, water supply, and energy supply. The book's authors were upbeat and optimistic about China's future.

As United States withdraws from Afghanistan, China perceives readiness to take the next step in to the Gwadar. This is likely to lead to the development of road links between Gwadar and Central Asia, which will then be linked to China. This will help to alleviate China's so-called "Malacca problem," in which the Middle East has barred China from importing oil from the region. China is currently building a large portion of its Central Asian train network. A gas pipeline from Gwadar could help Turkey meet its energy needs without using the Malacca Strait. China could set up a monitoring station along the Persian Gulf from which it could potentially take out Gwadar. Gwadar has global geopolitical implications because the Gulf Region contains 75% of the world's proven oil reserves and 50% of the world's proven gas reserves. The Strait of Hormuz transports approximately 16 million barrels of oil per day. The Gulf region accounts for roughly 90 percent of imported oil and more than 40 percent of global supply (Al-Maamary, Kazem, & Chaichan, 2017). The significance of Gwadar is continuously increasing, because of the Chinese presence there.

Dr. Talat Shabbir researched and documented the relationship between China and Pakistan in the context of future possibilities and choices in his book "Creating Shared Futures, Pakistan China: A Journey of Trust and Friendship." This book is a brilliant and prompt assessment of the multifaceted partnership and what it means for both countries in the future. He has traced the history of this relationship from its beginning to where we are now. He has brought to light the various facets of these ties, which range from diplomatic, political, economic, and strategic in nature. According to his book, one element stands out: trust, a very rare state of mutual trust that any two neighbours enjoy." This book demonstrates that no matter what happened in the world, the bond between Pakistan and China grew deeper and stronger. This is a distinguishing feature of the bilateral relationship. The author encapsulated the essence of a bilateral relationship. This relationship has stood the test of time, and both parties have continued to support each other during difficult times. It is, indeed, a one-of-a-kind model of inter-state relations. CPEC is very

important for both Pakistan and China, and both sides will continue to work on it in the second phase, with the goal of focusing on industrial development in Pakistan.

In his book, Joseph S. Nye, Jr., examined India's military capabilities. He stated that India's military capabilities are undeniably impressive in South Asia, but not in other countries. However, in addition to being a maritime entity, Singapore wields considerable power in regional politics. Security concerns have governed international relations rather than economic considerations. It is perplexing those relations with India are strained. More than five wars or non-combatant events have occurred between the two countries (Nye Jr, 2010). Since 1979, the regional power balance with Pakistan has played a significant role in Indian-Afghan relations. When it comes to Afghanistan, India's main foreign policy goal is to combat Pakistan's expansion in West Asia and to use Afghanistan as a vital pipeline to Central Asia. Another factor is climate change, which has an impact on the global economy. In terms of energy security, the European Union also relies on various regions. The rise of China as a global economic power creates a new market for oil. Individuals competing desires and approaches were depicted in the book. The author failed to convey that China's energy insecurity is not a major issue.

China's rapid economic growth has resulted to a pinnacle in petroleum production. China consumes approximately 8.2 percent of the world's oil, compared to the 4.5 percent that it tends to produce. The book's author predicts that Chinese intake will triple to three times its current level. To meet the administration's order, China would need to import 60 percent of its crude. In this chapter, the author examines long-term supply issues and makes policy recommendations for China (Zhao & Wu, 2007). The author criticized China's role in the global energy crisis. Because China is actively involved in Pakistan's economic and political development, this is a fantastic opportunity for the country. The study would be useful in assessing the current state of the Gwadar port and the involved parties in it.

### **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Researchers sought to conduct their studies using a specific research methodology derived from a specific theoretical approach. In this case, the researcher will focus his analysis on "Complex Interdependence Theory," taking into account the topic "China's policy on hot water and security challenges ahead: A Baloch militancy case study," in which the researcher examines China's conflicting and opposing interests in order to achieve its strategic goals through policy implementation (Oatley, 2019). The majority of modern theorists believe that, regardless of whether a state is dominant or not, all states must maintain close relations with other states in order to achieve their goals and objectives. International organizations, companies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and governments have proposed a different and innovative form of foreign policy to address the various challenges, both in reducing the extreme viewpoints of the world and improving common awareness. The establishment of the "People's Republic of China" (PRC) has the potential to revitalize individual powers associated with political, diplomatic, strategic and economic powers in the twenty-first century.

In comparison to the Cold War, this theory tends to take a more pragmatic approach as a result of how the current Chinese governments has implied foreign policies that are closely tied to the international relations theory of complex interdependence. The Complex Interdependence Theory

clearly illustrates China-Pakistan relations in the 21st century, following the end of the Cold War. Because future investment and trading opportunities are so valuable, China and Pakistan are becoming increasingly interdependent and will soon become even more indebted to one another. Existing policies in both countries are now attempting a more concerted effort to define the level of mutual understanding that can lead to mutual collaboration in all aspects of the relationship between the two states.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This research was based on mixed research methods. In essence, qualitative and quantitative research entails observation. This study is both analytical and exploratory in nature. In a descriptive study, the goal is to discuss and clarify a topic while also providing additional information. Official government hearings, testimony, and online interviews provided by key policymakers in public, news releases, government studies, court rulings, opinion polling, and political histories are examples of primary sources. In terms of the secondary evidence used in this study, it should be noted that a large portion of the background information for this study was derived primarily from the books and journal papers discussed in the literature review.

### **GEOGRAPHY OF CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC)**

Geographically, the CPEC initiates at the port of Gwadar, which is located at the mouth of the Persian Gulf and close to the Strait of Hormuz, a major oil shipping route. The route concludes in the western Chinese province of Xinjiang. The economic corridor may well include more than 50 bridges, with three bridges being built on the Karachi-Lahore highway over the rivers Sutlej, Ravi, and Indus (Bibi, 2017). It would benefit the economic growth, development, and infrastructural facilities of both states, predominantly benefitting the masses of the entire region.

### **Strategic Implications for China in Balochistan**

China's major move to secure its energy needs includes the construction of a seaport in Pakistan's southwest corner. Beijing will concentrate its efforts in South and Southeast Asia, where critical commodities such as oil, natural gas, and other commodities for China's economic development must pass. There, China will face India, a powerful naval power with distinct geostrategic advantages. The CPEC allows Pakistan to realize its full strategic and economic potential, and it is rightly regarded as a "Game Changer" for Pakistan and the region. The benefits of the project will be realized over time, necessitating continued commitment from national leaders. This economic corridor will connect China and the Middle East via highways, railways, and natural gas and oil pipelines. China expects that the CPEC will actually enable oil and gas from the Persian Gulf to be piped through Balochistan instead of the Malacca Strait, which is predominantly controlled by the United States. The presence of the Chinese in Gwadar will undoubtedly put the Indo-US hegemony in the Indian Ocean to the test (Perveen & Khalil, 2015). Given the US desire to maintain maritime supremacy, a prospective power struggle in the Indian Ocean between India and the US is more likely to characterize the region than the Chinese threat. Furthermore, the port provides China with a strategic foothold in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean, which concerns India and irritates the United States, which is located on the other side of the Hurmuz Strait. The Chinese investment in the Gwadar port will have long-term economic implications. Gwadar provides China with a tactical



position in the energy-rich Caspian Region, providing a substitute trade route for western Xinjiang province, allowing it to use it as a trade route through Gwadar deep seaport (Hussain, 2021).

Aside from port application, an existing land link can facilitate China improve its ever-expanding trade with Central Asian states, the Middle East, and Africa by minimizing the sea distance to 2,500 km instead of 10,000 km. Despite the fact that security in Balochistan is anything but ideal, China remains dedicated to providing Islamabad with all financial and technical support for the development and progress of any economic venture. China can improve its economy by significantly reducing the time taken to transport goods and energy via the CPEC.

### **TRENDS OF BALOCH MILITANCY**

Since 2015, there has been a consistent and significant decrease in the number of Baloch sub-nationalist terrorist attacks (BSTGs). According to one estimate, the number of terrorist attacks carried out by BSNGs has decreased from 194 in 2015 to 51 in 2019. There has been a 74% decrease in terrorist attacks over the last five years. This is no small accomplishment, and it demonstrates the effectiveness of Pakistan's counter-terrorism measures (Baloch, Mustafa, Kakar, & Kakar, 2021). In 2011, the Majeed Brigade declared itself a Fedayeen group and began committing only terrorist acts. They claimed responsibility for the first suicide attack, which killed 13 people and was directed at Naseer Mengal, in 2011 (Bhattacharya, 2021). Although such attacks have not caused much damage to date, they are likely to continue and, despite their rarity, have garnered a great deal of media attention both in Pakistan and abroad.

The alleged policy of enforced disappearances and killing militants and then dumping their bodies by LEAs, as well as reliance on excessive force, has led Baloch militants to enact suicide bombing. That is not to say that India, Afghanistan, and Iran, which back the militants, do not take advantage of this fault line. The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) is one of several militant groups fighting for an independent Baloch nation or considerable independency (Project, 2021). Both Pakistani and Chinese aspirations in the region are seen as a potential danger by the group, which labels them as exploitative. Balochistan is rich with natural resources such as minerals, but it is also one of the country's undeveloped and uneducated provinces. As domestic community groups become disenchanted with the ongoing Chinese-backed infrastructural projects associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, animosity toward Chinese migrant workers and related interests has reached a new high (CPEC) (Jaleel, Talha, & Mahesar, 2018). China's infrastructure projects in Balochistan provide little practical value to community members, but they do contribute to further integration of Balochistan with the rest of Pakistan by improving transportation and industrial networks. The Baloch Raji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS) umbrella group of Baloch nationalists includes the Baloch Liberation Front (BLF), the Baloch Republican Guard, and the Baloch Republic Army. In Balochistan, the BRAS and its affiliated groups are typically anti-Pakistan, and both Pakistan and China are viewed as threats (Noraiee, 2020).

While the groups generally operate individually to accomplish their objectives, they have been known to make a concerted effort to launch attacks. Aside from the Baloch insurgency, there is concern that domestic militant organizations particularly the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and international insurgent organisations (Al-Qaeda as well as the Islamic State) will exploit the CPEC's related projects to exert significant effort on behalf of the country, thereby harming economic

growth while also intensifying attacks on Chinese developmental projects, companies, and workers. In this context, it's worth noting that the Islamic State had also declared Jihad against China, condemning the Chinese government's treatment of the country's Uighur Muslim population (Karoui, 2021). Eventually, Pakistan will need CPEC just as much as China. While China has repeatedly expressed security problems, it is also trapped between a rock and a hard place, regarding the magnitude of its slowly sinking investment in CPEC and the need to seek solutions to its overdependence on the Malacca Strait (McCartney, 2021). China, on the other hand, will continue to stay, and the insurgency will continue. If the BLA cannot be brought to the table or systematically dismantled, the outlook for the security threat landscape continues to remain bleak.

### **Geostrategic Implications for Maritime Security**

The cumulative effects of globalization have been transmogrified into a system of mutual interdependence for economic growth and an output by exchange with respective productions and natural resources, giving rise to a surge in maritime security around the world (Varnavsky, 2020). In the Arabian Sea, guaranteeing the uninterrupted flow of transshipment and navigational autonomy has become a top priority for global powers. In order to meet its growing demand for energy supplies, which is reliant on maritime deliveries from foreign nations, Beijing is more likely to maintain an economic rather than a militaristic perspective in relation to (IOR). With the presence of great powers in the region, China may be tempted to maintain its presence at sea to protect its strategic interests (Sahu, 2020). Gwadar's strategic, economic, and military potential would bring Pakistan and China closer together in terms of shipping, navigational autonomy, and the enforcement of international maritime laws, as well as coastal defence. Due to its geographical benefits of being 400 kilometers away from the Strait of Hormuz, Gwadar has been designated the "crown jewel" in China's string of pearls, implying military and strategic significance in light of China's 2009 proposal to the US Pacific Fleet Commander indicating that the Indian Ocean could be accepted as China's sphere of influence if the US reduced warships manipulating regional influence. Gwadar could actually enable Pakistan to benefit from Sino-Pak cooperation while also gaining strategic clout in its relations with India and the US (Jetly, 2021). Given the military and maritime capabilities of Japan, India, and China, the US may be expected to pursue a policy similar to that of the British Empire in the late 1800s (Shakoor). Hypothetically, if the US maintained control of Gwadar, it would serve as a useful platform for achieving US goals such as maintaining hegemony, controlling hydrocarbon and mineral reservoirs in the Persian Gulf, Central and South Asia while subsequently containing China and Russia as well (Safdar, Aqeel, Hussain, & Asghar, 2021).

Concerns between India and the United States have grown as a result of China's involvement in Pakistan, which is seen as a perceived threat (Ladwig III, 2009). In order to counterbalance China's influence in the designated maritime regions, the US is expected to rely on Indian and Japanese naval support. Due to the construction of Gwadar seaport in a bid to gain control of the Strait of Hormuz, India has been establishing naval bases and strategic listening posts in Madagascar, Mauritius, and the Seychelles Islands. It considers the Pakistan-China alliance a tangible threat that has been materialized due to the construction of Gwadar seaport.

### **The Indian Perceptions**

Gwadar is seen by New Delhi as a Chinese naval base with the potential to grow into a strategic naval base with nuclear submarines and aircraft carriers over time. China's influence in Gwadar is expected to derail India's plan to monopolize regional waterways. The Indian navy has struggled to evolve from a littoral naval force to the region's largest blue-water naval force (Krupakar, 2017). In order to have control of the Malacca Strait, the Indian Navy has been consolidating military positions in the Andaman and Nicobar archipelagos. India's primary focus is to establish itself as the dominant power in the Indian Ocean with the support of the United States and Australia. China has been trying to acquire strategic seaports in Gwadar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, and the South China Sea, among other places, as part of the String of Pearls Strategy (Dinesh, 2021). Because the Strait of Malacca transports 80% of China's oil, the location of these shipping ports on the global map resembles a figure of string of pearls, which could be regarded a Chinese line of defense for attempting to control oil movement.

China required a balancer to help counter India in order to mitigate the impact of its hegemonic rise. Pakistan is the region's only state capable of acting as a counterpoint to China (Rajagopalan, 2020). China is well aware of the significance of the Pakistan card in this regard. The joint project between Pakistan and China to build Gwadar seaport aspires to provide a logistics marine base for the Chinese navy, allowing China to maintain its presence in the Indian Ocean. The emergence of Pak-China strategic and maritime cooperation has become inevitable in countering the militarized Indo-Israel nexus in the region (Kumar, 2021). The seaport of Gwadar will provide China with strategic footholds in the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean region. As a full-fledged and offshore naval base of China's Plan, Gwadar could prove to be a frightful prophecy. Gwadar is the world's third largest seaport, and it may be able to accommodate Chinese submarines and defender naval ships, ensuring the safety of the Arabian Sea and the security of its energy supply lines, as well as supporting Pakistan in reinforcing its naval forces against the outnumbered expansion of the Indian navy.

## **CONCLUSION**

This research study has extensively assessed China's strategic and multidimensional aspects with reference to CPEC and Gwadar port. It cannot overlook its role in contemporary regional affairs because it is a major regional player having its geostrategic and geoeconomic relations with all the states within the region. Moreover, Balochistan plays a distinct role in China's warm-water policies. As a rising global power, China's thirst for Middle Eastern resources, particularly crude oil, is insatiable. China has to rely on the US Navy, which patrols the waters surrounding the Middle East's oil fields, as well as the Malacca Strait, through which nearly all of China's oil and commercial products pass (Manhas, 2020). As a result, a pipeline connecting Balochistan to Xinjiang, China's western province, will satiate China's thirst while reducing its reliance on Americans. Yet, the Baloch insurgency could pose a serious threat to China's interests in Pakistan.

In 2013, Pakistan and China signed a historic CPEC agreement. The CPEC project, worth billions of dollars, will connect Pakistan's Gwadar Arabian Sea port with China's landlocked Xinjiang region. China now has direct access to the warm waters of the Arabian Sea because of the 2,700-kilometer route. CPEC is being hailed as a strategic game changer in Pakistan, and China sees it as the pinnacle of their Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Insurgents viewed the CPEC as an attack on Baloch land and rights. They were of the view that outsiders from Punjab and other parts of Pakistan would



marginalize them and threaten their cultural survival, resulting in regional demographic imbalances. China and Pakistan should eventually include India to join the CPEC project because, in the global context, China, India, and Pakistan all have nuclear weapons, yet China and India on the other hand have similar populations, sizes, and economies.

Because both states strive to be large economies and influential international powers, the economic factor could be quite similar between China and India. The focus of this research was to comprehend Baloch unrest as a major challenge to China's hot water policies, as well as to address Baloch concerns about the successful completion of the CPEC and the political, strategic, and economic aspects of Gwadar port. Internal factors such as extremism, provincial road rivalry, regional autonomy, and Baloch militancy were discussed, and global factors such as the new international order and China's strategy with reference to Gwadar port as well as the role of international actors in Balochistan was extensively discussed. Adopting the peace and reconciliation process to achieve regional peace and stability, as well as the region's connection to economic dividends and the common good is a way-out to amicably address all these issues.

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