

Academic Session: Political Dimensions of CPEC

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Chair: **Dr. Tahir Kamran**

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CHINA PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR: FORGING A COMMON DESTINY

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Abstract: *The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is often presented as profit-seeking venture that excessively focuses on trade, investment and economic matters. The objective of this paper is to argue that for the CPEC to become a success story it is important for China and Pakistan to live up to their promises and truly create win-win outcomes. This can only be achieved by using the enhanced connectivity to further people-to-people exchanges, cultural exchanges and heritage projects to bring about a solid foundation, mutual understanding and a common purpose from which more tangible infrastructural projects can take place. The paper will provide a rather philosophical and constructivist approach to the CPEC project, and shall incentivise opinion makers and policy makers alike to consider the importance of cultural and people to people exchanges as a basis for turning CPEC into a defining regional initiative.*

Keywords: CPEC, Sino-Pakistan relations, civilisational identity, Belt and Road Initiative, cooperation and integration

Introduction

In March 2015, the Chinese government issued a white paper on the Belt and Road initiative called ‘Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road’. This document encapsulates a number of bilateral agreements that have been coined in the months and years hitherto and turned them into a defining grand strategy of China. One of the projects to fall under the Belt and Road project is the CPEC, which was announced in 2013 during a state visit of China’s president Xi Jinping. Through a variety of infrastructure and energy projects, CPEC is poised to address Pakistan’s energy concerns and enhance regional trade and connectivity. Whereas the majority of countries along the Belt and Road are still awaiting concrete projects and investment opportunities, Pakistan is well on its way in implementing projects and initiatives. It comes as no surprise that a policy slogan of such seemingly grandiose scale engenders great expectations and simultaneously raises eyebrows and provides ground for academia and opinion makers to share their concerns, doubts, and analysis on its relevance.

As goes for the whole Belt and Road initiative, CPEC is often presented as a profit-seeking venture that excessively focuses on trade and investment related matters. If this were to be true, this would not only mean a continuation on a grander scale of what has been happening for decades, it would most of all be a squandered opportunity to generate also non-tangible benefits. This paper puts forward the argument that to give credibility and make the CPEC into a success story, it is quintessential for both the Chinese and Pakistan government to live up to their win-win promises by generating benefits for the Pakistani and Chinese people alike; benefits that outweigh the mere financial and tangible profits (roads, railways and ports). One could hereby think of enhancing the livelihoods of marginalised groups of society, creating equitable and improved education systems along the CPEC, cultural exchanges and fostering a spirit of mutual appreciation and understanding.

For China to simply enter Pakistan, administering a number of projects, and leaving upon completion would be damaging. It could not only leave the host country with a high number of unforeseen costs in future maintenance, but would also question the credibility of both China and Pakistan. Moreover, despite their ‘irreplaceable, all-weather’ relationship, public opinion in Pakistan tends to be wary and sceptical towards China’s intentions. Therefore, China needs to carefully read the context in which CPEC will develop. Thoughtfulness towards contemporary socio-economic and political conditions is imperative, but it is as important for China to be aware of the history, culture, and perceptions that prevail in Pakistan with regards to old Silk Road and CPEC. It will prove to be a true challenge for Chinese policy makers and diplomats to curtail the negative voices and provide the host countries and populace with a viable, coherent and constructive message on what (and when) to expect from the CPEC initiative.

It is now, in the early stages of implementation that there is still room to do this, and shape CPEC’s characteristics and direction, and to inform the Pakistan government and people alike on the intentions, rationale (historical, political, and economical), and common goals behind CPEC. Underlying misunderstandings and negative perceptions need to be forged into a mutual drive or, in the words of Xi Jinping a ‘community of destiny’¹ that transcends existing differences as well as the interest of a single nation or state. Just as it was the case for the ancient Silk Road, civilizational dialogue, people-to-people, educational and cultural exchanges must be at the core of the CPEC. Especially in a global context where security threats loom, and globalisation has driven people closer, and simultaneously farther away, thereby inciting forces of nativism and ‘otherness’ – mutual understanding, respect and appreciation for ones differences and similarities is essential. The

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civilizational and cultural elements as described in the Belt and Road should be taken as the foundation from which CPEC and all its infrastructure investment and trade facilitation efforts take place.

This paper will commence with a theoretical and philosophical framework that underlines the importance of forging a common destiny and civilizational identity as a premise for the CPEC to flourish. The second part will briefly assess the current Sino-Pakistan relationship in relation to CPEC, with specific emphasis on some of the concerns that have surfaced. Last but not least, the paper will set forth a number of recommendations and concrete methods in which China and Pakistan can address some of these concerns whilst enhancing a common destiny, improving mutual understanding and forging a civilizational identity that transcends existing cultural, ethnic and religious differences, and bring about gains that go beyond the mere physical and tangible.

Forging a common destiny

China should draw on the legacy of the historical Silk Road, where cultural heritage has almost overshadowed its commercial significance.

The message Xi Jinping intended to convey when launching the CPEC was one of ‘shared interests, destiny and responsibility’. Yet, with news headlines and policy documents boasting high numbers of investment in infrastructure, the remit of CPEC seems limited. China needs to send a more comprehensive and inclusive message if it wants CPEC to be truly successful. The projects should be approached with the incentive to create a long-lasting impact within different groups of society, hereby safeguarding its inclusivity. A quantitative glance at China’s authoritative document ‘Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road’, shows that the words ‘culture’ and ‘civilisation’ are mentioned a mere twelve times. The essence of the intended message regarding culture and civilizational exchange can be captured in the following excerpt from that same document:

‘[T]he Initiative is harmonious and inclusive. It advocates tolerance among civilizations,... supports dialogues among different civilizations on the principles of seeking common ground while shelving differences and drawing on each other’s strengths, so that all countries can coexist in peace for common prosperity’.

Notwithstanding these ambitious words, this paper will advocate for an augmented role for cultural and civilizational dimension in the Belt and Road initiative, and CPEC in particular. China should draw on the legacy of the historical Silk Road, where cultural heritage has almost overshadowed its commercial significance. Both Pakistan and China should not allow that for CPEC the commercial value will completely eclipse the cultural one. Yan discusses the lack of attention for non-tangible benefits that go beyond trade and security cooperation, and states that the Belt and Road initiative ‘could serve as a cultural bridge’². Its significance should not solely be measured by kilometres of asphalt, or the production of more megawatts: ‘for global civilization, the significance of the Belt and Road goes far beyond the narrow commercial interests and security concerns. As the Belt and Road cuts across the world’s major civilizations, it is expected to bring new opportunities and possibilities for global [and regional] integration’.

The following section of the paper will draw on this, arguing from a constructivist and philosophical angle to capitalise on better connectivity. It will emphasize the importance of a ‘civilizational identity’, culture and a common destiny along the CPEC in order to move beyond mere material benefits.

Towards a constructivist approach

Many have studied and examined the role of culture and civilisation in global politics and its impact on world order³. Because the range and complexity of the term culture itself, the nature of its relevance is intensely contested amongst scholars and policy makers. Nonetheless, in recent years a prevalent image of culture as a force which distinguishes and divides ethnic and religious communities seems to have prevailed, and this view has been widely adopted and gained prominence following the publication of Samuel Huntington’s ‘Clash of Civilisations?’⁴. Various scholars have blamed the forces of globalisation as being a vehicle for the powerful to culturally dominate the weaker, and that while bringing people closer together, it enhances the sense of regionalism and difference amongst people from diverse cultures and civilisations⁵. This is a rather dangerous approach to international relations.

This paper will depart from these rather pessimistic notions of culture and civilisations as divisive forces in contemporary world politics and societies. This conceptual departure requires a constructivist approach to international relations. One needs to depart from Morgenthau’s⁶ realism in defining international relations and global dynamics as an empirical science that studies facts rather than values and aspirations. More room is required for normative and subjective dimensions of world politics, paradigms, processes and projects.

The CPEC is to become a new paradigm that will define and inspire generations to come. It should seize the opportunity of enhanced connectivity and increased communications to educate, enjoy, appreciate and learn from different

ethnicities, cultures and belief systems; and through that create a ‘civilizational identity’ that transcends existing boundaries and upholds a common destiny. Civilizational identity is here to be interpreted as “a form of identity which locates the immediate ethnic or national community within the context of a broader, cultural community; a transnational community, often extensive in geographical scope”⁷. The Chinese and Pakistan government should aspire and drive CPEC to become such a collection of communities which endures across lengthy periods of time and which comprises both a material and philosophical dimension⁸. China should avoid imposing its identity or narrative of CPEC. It should rather allow Pakistan and China to develop a civilizational identity, encompassing a multiplicity of languages, ethnicities, and religious denominations, thus creating a collective narrative. It is important however to approach civilizational identity as a fluid concept, providing the opportunity for China and Pakistan to be part of a normative community, ‘one which is not necessarily fixed, but capable of change, evolution, diversity, and even inconsistency’⁹. A claim to civilizational identity can thus become an ‘important source in helping to bring about common values, priorities, goals, and norms.’¹⁰

Cultural sensitivity and peaceful coexistence

For CPEC to become an efficacious venture, the forging of a civilizational identity needs be consorted with a more constructive sensitive consideration and use of culture. To take an inconsiderate approach to the importance of cultural differences in shaping global processes, in this case a multiannual investment scheme is a dangerous endeavour, and one that China and Pakistan should avoid. A lack of sensitivity to the cultural context in which policies or institutions evolve, or to which they will be applied, can produce friction, misunderstanding, resentment, or even the failure of such policies and institutions. Cultures are often treated as given, unitary elements in world politics, however China should be well aware that cultures are fluid and socially constructed in accordance with the sign of times. Therefore, as Edward Said (1993)¹¹ argues “cultures are neither given nor organic or spontaneous, but socially constructed frameworks of interpretations.”¹² Along the CPEC, these are created from selective representations of the ‘self’ and ‘other’ in both the past and present, and should be understood as representations that are not necessarily fixed, but are dynamic, constantly in the process of re-presentations in the context of contemporary needs and forces.¹³

In practice, China needs be attentive towards all tensions and expectations that are at play in along the CPEC. Despite the fact that China will propose and pitch the project as a new common paradigm with a common destiny, the initiative taps into diverse needs for different provinces, and will play out in distinct cultures that through different social constructs, differing geographical proximity, past experiences and present developments have all established a different view and perception of China. It is paramount for China to understand this and approach the CPEC by accepting, respecting and acknowledging the distinct cultures that are present and realise they are similarly matched by different interpretations. Only through acknowledging these differences can China move towards a mode of coexistence in which common goals and desires that are supported by all stakeholders.

CPEC and Sino-Pakistan relations

In February 2014, during his meeting with President of Pakistan Mamnoon Hussain, Xi Jinping proposed to forge a ‘China-Pakistan Community of Shared Destiny’¹⁴. For both China and Pakistan, CPEC is seen as an essential element in improving regional connectivity and trade. Despite what is often described as an ‘all weather’ friendship, Sino-Pakistan relations have faced some ups and downs. The CPEC will provide great opportunities to substantiate the relationship, but will simultaneously lay bare a number of persisting weaknesses and frustrations in the bilateral relationship. It will challenge the foundations of the relationship, which in the past 64 years has mainly revolved around governmental and military exchanges with trade and people-to-people exchanges playing second fiddle. Notwithstanding a 2012 Pew¹⁵ research that found a clear 90% majority of Pakistan’s population reflecting upon the Sino-Pakistan relation as positive. Nevertheless, there are some issues of concern to be addressed if CPEC is to become a true inclusive win-win endeavour. This part will briefly assess the current state of Sino-Pakistan trade and people-to-people relations.

Trade: Chinese investors tend to prefer their own people rather than building human resource potential in Pakistan, they have dumped Chinese goods that have destroyed the SME industry in some sectors, and Chinese fruits and vegetables are flooding the Pakistan market at the detriment of local producers¹⁶. In 2006 China and Pakistan signed an FTA which sparked hopes for facilitating Pakistani exports to China, however trade remains rather low: ‘on the whole, the FTA has benefited China more than Pakistan as the latter’s exports are unable to compete in the Chinese market...the relative advantage it [Pakistan] had in producing finished textiles has now been usurped by the ability of Chinese factories to produced finished goods at a lower unit price.’¹⁷ It often seems that China’s economic interests in Pakistan are primarily based on securing its overland energy supply, and investments limited to sectors with heavy state involvement. To exemplify the dissatisfaction Dwivedi¹⁸ states: ‘the media image of China as benevolent developing brother trying to help the other poorer brother is not what common people see in places like Gilgit-Baltistan...Kashmir and Balochistan.’ There seems to be little added value, and favouritism in CPEC projects at the cost of local the local populace prevails. As Kabraji states: ‘...there is growing discontent among the parts of the local population in these areas who content that they rarely see the benefits of Chinese investments

because Chinese companies bring their own equipment and personnel, which does not lead to much-needed job and skills creation.¹⁹

This showcases that China needs to carefully read the regional context in which CPEC will develop and provide the Pakistani populace with a viable, inclusive and coherent alternative to the current situation. Both the Chinese and Pakistani government need to make sure that the benefits of the CPEC spill-over to disadvantaged regions and people that are not necessarily in close proximity to the Corridor. Nonetheless, a better analysis is warranted on how CPEC will alter trade patterns, investment opportunities and the living conditions of people in Pakistan.

People-to-people relations: With the Sino-Pakistan relationship being driven by mainly high-level military and government exchanges, people-to-people exchanges remain limited, and make the relationship rather one-dimensional. Nonetheless, in recent years, there have been numerous initiatives to incrementally improve this facet of the relationship. Of late the media have adopted a stronger position in promoting the rhetoric and image of a strong partnership. The role of the media has significantly improved, but programming should further diversify to include broadcasts on history, culture and art, and allow for critical voices. Examples of initiatives geared towards improving mutual understanding are the establishment of the China-Pakistan Media Centre, the Pak-China Media Alliance, China Radio International which is hosting daily Urdu service and the opening of the Confucius Institute. Additionally, the Pakistan-China Institute aims to improve mutual understanding by providing a platform for research, conferences and seminars on topics of pertinence to China-Pakistan relations.

Notwithstanding the beautiful wording that is often used to describe the relationship, the number of people-to-people exchanges remains distressingly low. In the words of Kabraji²⁰: ‘the influence of Chinese soft power in Pakistan is curtailed by the limited people-to-people contacts, and its heavy reliance on official elite, military and governmental links’.²¹ There is a clear urgency for the populace in both countries to increase mutual understanding beyond ‘the barriers of religion, culture and language’²². CPEC must morph Sino-Pakistan relations into a common destiny and a paradigm of which the exchanges lead to common solutions, mutual inspiration, and in which vested interests and ideas are challenged in a constructive fashion through dialogue, discussions and academia, and people-to-people exchanges.

CPEC as a meeting point – Recommendations

In order for the CPEC to become a success story a move that goes beyond tangible benefits is required. Drawing on the experience of the ancient Silk Road, there are numerous avenues that can be followed to ensure a strengthened, constructive and mutually beneficial dialogue. In fact, in present days, the cultural meaning of the ancient Silk Road has almost overshadowed its commercial one, and China and Pakistan should draw on this legacy.

This paper presented a theoretical analysis to support the concept of a civilizational identity and the importance of culture and people-to-people exchanges within the CPEC. Of course abstract analysis is not sufficient and theory must be translated into practice. This last section will, therefore, outline some possible avenues of action that could facilitate the creation of such civilizational identity that transcends existing differences and truly creates win-win outcomes in the context of a common destiny.

Tourism: In June 2015, the tourism ministers of countries along the former Silk Road, together with representatives of the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) met in Xi’an and discussed the establishment of an integrated tourism market along the land and maritime Silk Road²³. An integrated approach, based on a unitary vision of the Silk Road, rather than a conception of the Silk Road as separate parts in different countries, is fundamental in the creation of a shared identity based on culture and civilization. Thus, more efforts should be undertaken in order to promote the Xi’an and other similar initiatives and ensure that the narrative they create are shared by all countries involved. In addition, Silk Road heritage (buildings, roads, stories, paintings, objects) should be maintained and promoted as tourist destinations in order to institute a common history, and signify the beauty of that what was established centuries ago, and what can now be replicated in an updated version in the CPEC.

Scientific and educational exchanges: The CPEC is likely to become a project that will have a bearing on the generations to come. Information provision on CPEC through the increase of educational exchanges and academic cooperation is indispensable. China is already leading the way with offering a wide variety of scholarships to international students. Such educational exchanges in the spirit of Europe’s Erasmus Programme should be further facilitated to stimulate the interaction between China and Pakistani students and scholars alike. Even for those people with no access to higher education, a method needs to be developed for them to be informed on the potential tangible and intangible benefits the CPEC holds for them. Better access to education for the rural populace in both China and Pakistan should be an integral part of such initiative. All of this should inspire people to get acquainted and experience the wide variety of cultures, philosophies, histories, developments, and sources of knowledge that are now within range through enhanced connectivity. Especially in Pakistan such policies should address the badly needed improvement in vocational and technical training.

Both Pakistani and Chinese businessmen have expressed their hope that CPEC will enhance cooperation in the agriculture sector, still a linchpin for China and Pakistan's economy²⁴. Yet, there seems to be no streamlined effort to transfer technological knowhow. In addition to the transfer of technological knowhow, scientific exchanges should primarily focus on salient issues of pertinence to Sino-Pakistan relations and the wider region. These salient cross-cutting issues are to be addressed from a common standpoint, and provide the opportunity to create lasting, broadly supported solutions, driving a spirit of cooperation and common purpose towards solving the issues at stake. To find solutions in a consorted effort on such projects can offshoot spill-over effects that go beyond the mere cooperation and studying of cross-boundary issues. It can enhance the appeal of CPEC by for example linking these joint research projects to the Sustainable Development Goals and other international initiatives. In their article Dong et al. have identified six major salient issues that warrant scientific projects and where competences, synergies and complementarity amongst China and Pakistan can lead to an outcome that is greater than the sum of its parts. The proposed scientific research areas are the following: the sustainable usage of land and water resources; innovative models of sustainable development in different countries and spatial ecological patterns; trans-boundary monitoring of anti-desertification, drought, earth quacks, water and soil erosion and natural disasters; impact assessments on climate change and cooperative mechanism on poverty alleviation.²⁵

Conclusion

Despite the general positive reception of CPEC, some challenges and concerns towards its implementation remain. The security dimension, political and financial feasibility, and its level of inclusiveness have been discussed at length ever since its announcement in 2013. Some regions and ethnical groups are said to receive more benefits from CPEC than others, and China has been blamed for favoritism towards its own enterprises.

Ideally the CPEC will turn out to become a project of an unprecedented scale, that will change regions, societies, and trade links in a positive fashion and will move the Sino-Pakistan relationship towards a 'community of destiny' based on a civilizational identity that transcends existing differences and reservations. As is often the case, this is easier said than done. The author is aware that in practice there are certainly limits to some of what has been stated. The paper should, therefore, be considered as a source of inspiration and guidance in making the CPEC a true social project, rather than an authoritative policy document. It is important that the CPEC initiative is inclusive, rather than exclusive, and that it remains a rather fluid concept that allows for the extension and inclusion of new geographic areas that want to enjoy the fruits of increased connectivity.

To make the project into a true success, as was the case for the ancient Silk Road, civilizational dialogue (through people-to-people exchanges, scientific and educational exchanges), the promotion of Silk Road heritage and tourism must have a fundamental role in the CPEC. These exchanges and dialogues should establish a common desire, leading to an environment of unified perceptions, clear communication, common goals, as the foundation from which infrastructural and transport projects are administered.

It is a challenge for the Chinese government and Pakistan government to act in the interest of the people in both rural and urban areas, establish transparent and clear communication channels, and prove that CPEC is not just a political slogan, but actually means and achieves something in practice. If China can truly create a connectivity project in which a process is enabled that can open a courteous exchange of views between the two governments, interest groups, and individuals with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect, CPEC might just become a defining regional initiative for the 21st century.

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RECONFIGURATION OF INTERESTS AND IDENTITIES: SYMBOLIC POLITICS OF PAK-CHINA ECONOMIC CORRIDOR AND PAKISTANI FEDERATION

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Abstract: *Considering that “resource extraction is part of a regime of rule involving technologies, rationalities and institutions, made intelligible by regimes of truth that organize understanding and experience”¹, a recent body of literature at the intersection of geography, politics and anthropology asserts that these “hegemonic truths are challenged and struggled over through cultural politics”². However, in place of a fixed understanding of ‘culture’, ‘identities’ and ‘interest’ a more fluid understanding of these theoretical categories is advocated to make sense of not only material but symbolic relevance of struggles pivoted around interests and identities. By putting in conversation political ecology of resource politics, subaltern theory of subject formation and politics of federalism in Pakistan, this paper seeks to answer the following questions in connection with Pak-China Economic Corridor (PCEC): 1) What is the regime of truth mobilized to legitimize PCEC? 2) What kind of reconfiguration of identity politics among different interest groups (ethnic, sectarian, juridical) PCEC necessitates? 3) What are the implications for the federal structure of Pakistani state? Using the critical assumptions of interpretive methodology that material world could be only studied through the subjectivities of human actors and social contingencies, the paper mobilizes policy statements, individual and party positions expressed through print and electronic media to argue that PCEC offers a power context in which major ethnic identities will be internally reconfigured and externally re-aligned to maximize their interests. This will offer some serious challenges to the federal structure of the state. The responsibility of academic research is to foresee and provide theoretical tools to meet the challenges ahead of state and society in Pakistan.*

Keywords: CPEC, symbolic politics, identities and interests, Pakistani federation

Introduction

In April this year, Pakistan and China signed a host of agreement relating to infrastructural development commonly termed as Pakistan China Economic Corridor. The investment portfolio has been variously hailed as “historic event,” “momentous development”³, “game-changer,” and “fate-changer”⁴. Within the ambit of this multipurpose, extensive infrastructural and economic development project, China pledges 46 billion US dollars to Pakistan for its materialization. This, according to Anatol Lieven, “... is some four and a half times the total US economic aid to Pakistan since 9/11.” The timing of the project, in terms of local economic requirements, and global political environment is also significant. It is heralded as an injection of vital force to a decrepit Pakistani economy which is hard hit by terrorism, security threats, and rampant corruption. In terms of global politics, the dwindling energy supplies from the Middle East and ever-increasing uncertainties around the access is making the global players look for alternative route and sources to their supplies. What could be a rosier scenario than a win-win situation for both China and Pakistan where Pakistan gets to be the space which is inscribed by major power interests? In this game-changer, any economic investment would mean increasing stakes in the security of the people and place. Pakistan is emerging as an ambitious economic player from under the debilitating spread of terrorism and a fragile democratic tradition.

As Majed Akhter puts it, “What’s not to like? On the surface, the Chinese commitment is, therefore, to be welcomed. It is, after all, a project for Pakistan’s national development.” Even if we forget about Akhter’s concerns of internal colonization for the time being, the project poses formidable challenges to the state and society of Pakistan at multiple levels. The analysis of these challenges requires a careful attention to the question of scale. Challenges multiply with the increase in scale. For example, a regional level analysis will have to look into the question of war on terror, Bloch separatist movement, role of India, Afghanistan, Iran and other middle eastern countries whose interests could be threatened by the materialization of the objectives of this project. The contingencies of different scales itself thwarts any comprehensive analysis of the situation to be presented in one paper. For the purpose of this paper, we look into the implications of this project for the federal structure of Pakistani state.

The paper argues that “resource extraction is part of a regime of rule involving technologies, rationalities and institutions, made intelligible by regimes of truth that organize understanding and experience”⁵. By mobilizing a recent body of literature at the intersection of geography, politics and anthropology, it asserts that these “hegemonic truths are challenged and struggled over through cultural politics”⁶. However, in place of a fixed understanding of ‘culture’, ‘identities’ and ‘interest’ a more fluid understanding of these theoretical categories is required to make sense of not only material but symbolic relevance of struggles pivoted around interests and identities.

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By putting in conversation political ecology of resource politics, subaltern theory of subject formation and politics of federalism in Pakistan, this paper seeks to answer the following questions in connection with Pak-China Economic Corridor (PCEC):

- ✓ What is the regime of truth mobilized to legitimize PCEC?
- ✓ What kind of reconfiguration of identity politics among different interest groups (ethnic, sectarian, juridical) PCEC necessitates?
- ✓ What are the implications for the federal structure of Pakistani state?

In what follows, we will start with challenging the major narratives of identity and interest mobilized to justify the need and desirability of CPEC.

Regimes of Truth: Investment in National and Ethnic identities

Struggles around resources are not merely contested in the material domain of physical access and extraction but are equally contested in the cultural domain of symbolic politics. Similarly different actors do not merely invest in physical infrastructure and extractive technologies; they also invest in symbolic infrastructure and extractive claims and discourses. So, any analysis of the struggles around interests has to make sense of simultaneous investment in material and symbolic as the economic calculus of profit merely glosses over the intrinsic complexities of struggles for resources. This paper makes a case for a more nuanced understanding of symbolic investments alongside the economic investments. These symbolic investments create a parallel axis of conflict and struggle where different regimes of truth are mobilized to put forward right and claims of different actors. In the case of PCEC, we will explain the two sites of conflicting symbolic investments. These two sites are national and, for the want of a better word, sub-national or ethnic identities.

National Identity and National Interests

As has been mentioned before, the federal government takes pride in mobilizing the historic sum of \$ 46 billion dollar for the national development. The regime of truth mobilized on the part of central government could be understood in terms of ideologies of nationalism, stewardship and development.

While simultaneously investing in the economic infrastructure by allocating resources, the central government invests in its own identity as the representative of the larger Pakistani nation. As the rightful constitutional agent of a sovereign federal state, the government claims its right of taking care of the interest of the nation on behalf of the collective population. It jealously guards its right to legitimate violence to by oppressing any challenges to its authority as much as possible. It considers itself the general guardian of law and order and the properties and interests of all the population who submit to its authority. During Lawyer's Movement, Aitzaz Ahsan's poem "*Riasat ho to maa-n ke jesi*" clearly depicted this idealized version of modern state as political utopia.

However, by doing so, it glosses over the sheer structural inequalities within the larger collective identity of Pakistani nationalism. People who point out these fissures and fractures within the imagined collectivity, and insist on their own distinct identity (presumably at the cost of national identity), are outrightly rejected as separatists and traitors. Pervez Musharraf's portrayal of Bloch Sardars clearly fits in this picture when he state: "They were, and remain, against Pakistan. They are separatists and will remain so."

Extraction and Development: Making its claim on the basis of constitutional legitimacy and being the representative of the supreme power of the state, central government considers itself responsible for moral and economic development of its population. In short, it takes on itself, what Cowen and Shenton call, the role of stewardship. It puts forward narratives of 'development' and underdevelopment. Seen in this light, Blochistan is imagined, represented, and contested as underdeveloped space compared to the other parts of the country and the centre finds itself obliged by the sheer moral obligation of endowing the underprivileged with the gift of development. This task is further justified with the help of a complementary argument that the provincial government of Blochistan does not have, "will, wit or resources" to provide development to its own people. "Ideas of improvement predicated on [Nationalism's] constructions of cultural difference, inform contemporary discourses of development – the imperative to efficiently maximize resource use, a goal best directed by technocratic experts, who lead the less-educated towards an enlightened, prosperous future."

Through the prism of CPEC, Blochistan is seen as 'the new frontier of development' which requires central government's sincere efforts to help Blochistan stand on equal economic footing with other areas of Pakistan. Those who oppose it are termed as 'unpatriotic' decadent and self-seeking tribals. Further, the discursive construction of Bloch people within these narrative is made unproblematic and simplistic by claiming that they are being held hostage by the traditional tribal leaders. These leaders want to keep them beholden to their whims and caprice and entangled in the decadent tradition. These people are also portrayed as anti-development. Former president Musharraf sums it up: "Some of the sardars are very vicious, unforgiving and decadent. They believe in keeping their tribes backward and under subjugation."

Sub-National Identity and Interest

As a mirror image of Pakistani Nationalism, Bloch nationalism inverts the moral value and ideological contours of Pakistani nationalism to espouse a nationalism of its own. The adherents of Bloch nationalism try to unpack the structural asymmetry of Pakistani state's federal structure. The fractures in the 'collective identity', it claims, are covered over with the discourse of nationalism and national interest. Beneath the surface, however, cracks keep troubling the stabilizing efforts of the federal government. Bloch nationalists prize open these cracks by challenging the 'representative identity' of the state. By pointing out their own 'insignificance' and 'helplessness' within the infrastructure of the central state, they blame that Pakistani state is basically a Punjabi state. The following statement by Sardar Akhter Mengal in connection with Gawadar Port is a representative example: "I have talked about these apprehensions some 20 years ago that Gwadar is being developed not for the Baloch people but for Punjab." Their grievances are met with heavy handedness and outright indifference.

Appropriation: Against the narratives of stewardship and national and local development of the national government, Bloch nationalist put forward the narratives of 'appropriation'. It is claimed that central government is 'appropriating' the resources of government for the benefit of mainly Punjabi elite. The spatial imaginary of Bloch, appropriate the idiom of identity and interest within the bounded political terrain of what is called Baluchistan. Whatever resources are found within that territory must be utilized first and foremost in the favor of local people. However, development has always brought a raw deal to the people of Blochistan.

The whole process, then, is termed as internal colonization by the Pakistani state. Without any hope of remedies within the asymmetrical political structures, they take up arms and development is confronted with resistance. This resistance, which is termed by the central government as resistance to development and modernity by parochialism, in fact, is not resistance to the idea of development itself but, as Majed Akhter puts it, "first and foremost, a rejection of the colonizer's *version* of modernity." The onus of responsibility is invested in the federal state and the logic of development is inverted. "The question, actually, is not why politically and intellectually active Baloch reject the development of the colonizer. The question, instead, is why nearly 70 years after the end of the British Empire, Pakistan continues to act like a colonizing power within its own borders."

Challenges to the Federal State

This political picture of the state which emerges out of these narratives is what Ranajit Guha calls 'dominance without hegemony'. In such political configurations oppressive state apparatuses are mobilized to coerce populations within the ambit of political unity. Political project of state building leaves out or fails to persuade people to share a common set of objectives. Resistance strategy on the part of recalcitrant elements targets the symbols of cultural and political oppression and there is no dearth of such incidents in case of Bloch resistance. From Ziarat residency to burning Pakistani flags, from attacking army facilities to national project, examples abound. There seems to be no end of this conflict in sight. The federal government seems have been trying to coerce Baloch into domination since Independence and has failed miserably.

However, buying into such narratives would mean simplification of the problems at best and outright intellectual lethargy at worst. These narratives take national and ethnic identities as already pre-figured and complete. The master-slave dialectics of this identity dyad does not capture the intricacies and contingencies of the problem. This paper takes CPEC is a spatio-temporal configuration of threats and promises and argues that the identities will be reconfigured within a contingent complex of interests and identities as the project materializes.

As has been mentioned earlier, both narratives gloss over the structural inequalities within them. There is no singular Bloch identity not there is any monolithic national identity apart from the continuous symbolic investments. Neither there is a singular agency of the state nor a singular internally complete Bloch nationalism. The structural analysis of the conflict and identity merely creates a binary of friends and foes and does not account for a huge grey area in between them. The postmodern insists on 'subject effects' instead of a pre-formed subject requires us to come up with a fluid conceptualization of subject, interest, agency and identity.

In order to understand the contingent and contextual formation of subject (in terms of subject effect), we draw on Spivak's idea of "agential performativity." Within this framework most of the people of Pakistan occupy as Spivak calls it "a space without identity." Within the binary difference of nationalism and sub-nationalism, most of the people occupy a space which is not only deprived of any identity but also agency. But it is not a 'negative space'. How to account for agency and identity of the 'doubly displaced' in the nationalist narratives of identity and subjectivity? Spivak finds solution to this question in what she calls "permission to be figurative – the right to the metonym/synecdoche political performance of collectivity" What is this permission to be figurative? This brings in the question of thinking beyond the oppression of both versions of nationalism and providing people right to choose their identities and interests according to the situation without being congenitally tied to pre-given identities. The following quote from Spivak will help understand this performative complex.

Agency presumes collectivity, which is where a group acts by synecdoche: the part that seems to agree is taken to stand for the whole. we put aside the surplus of my subjectivity and metonymise myself, count myself as the part by which I am connected to the *particular predicament* so that I can claim collectivity, and engage in action validated by that very collective. *A performative contradiction connects the metonymy and the synecdoche into agential identity*. All calls to collectivity are metonymic because *attached to a situation*. And they work by synecdoche. (Authors' emphasis)

In this performative complex, individual has at his/her disposal multiplicity of partial identities which s/he mobilizes in a context specific scenario to make the best of the situation. But this synecdochic mobilization of individual identity is always for the sake of aligning oneself with a collectivity along the metonymic axis.

This theoretical formulation of subjects with fluid identity helps understand why people, at times, work against the interests of their immediate collectivity. For example, when Akber Bugti was killed, why Kalpar Bugti tribe sided with military? It destabilizes the singular identities within universal/particular binaries. At the same time, it also problematizes the national identity/interest complex by creating the possibility of appreciating why not all Punjabis side with the state.

Conditions of possibility of this synecdochic/metonymic performative complex will allow the possibility of a national hegemony and materialize a national project like PCEC without

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FIGHTING FIRE WITH WATER: EVALUATING A CPEC-BASED HUMAN SECURITY APPROACH TO FOSTERING STABILITY IN BALOCHISTAN

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***Abstract:** The principal aim of this study is to assess the feasibility of using the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as a structural platform for fostering stability in Pakistan's Balochistan province. It will be argued that an approach such as the one that has been implemented to date, which relies principally on the coercive use of force, is unlikely to yield long-term stability in the province. Conversely, a human security approach based on the CPEC initiative may yield positive benefits in terms of stability in Balochistan, by addressing the socio-economic and political grievances that drive the conflict. The final section of the paper will offer some policy recommendations to guide the implementation of such an approach.*

Keywords: Balochistan; human security; development; FDI; CPEC; One Belt One Road; OBOR; counterinsurgency

Introduction

Pakistan's Balochistan province has been the stage of a recurring conflict that has been affecting the stability of the country for decades. With a conspicuous section of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) set to intersect Pakistan's southwestern province, Islamabad and Beijing's stakes in the Balochistan have never been higher.

The USD 46 billion infrastructural investment project – China's biggest overseas investment project to date – consists of extensive investment in Pakistan's transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructure, which seeks to link the Pakistani port of Gwadar in Balochistan to the city of Kashgar, in China's northwestern Xinjiang province. However, the insurgency in Balochistan is frequently invoked as one of the principal obstacles that are likely to jeopardize the ambitious CPEC initiative. The megaproject presents an unprecedented opportunity for Pakistani and Chinese officials to engage the Baloch nationalist movement in a constructive manner.

The principal purpose of this paper is to assess the feasibility of using the CPEC as a structural platform for implementing a non-military approach to curbing Baloch insurgency in Pakistan. This policy-prescriptive study will rely on a combination of primary and secondary sources to construe an accurate picture of the principal factors that are driving the conflict, differentiating between its historical drivers and the present-day grievances that are fuelling the instability. The subsequent section will seek to explain the recurrent nature of the conflict, identifying the factors that are prolonging the conflict. The final section of the paper will propose policy recommendations for Pakistani and Chinese policymakers to foster stability in Balochistan by implementing CPEC-based measures which adhere to principles of human security.

Understanding the Baloch Nationalist Movement

Balochistan can be understood as a land that is rife with paradoxes. Despite being Pakistan's largest province, constituting approximately 46 percent of the total area, it is also the least populous, accounting for only 5 per cent of the country's population. Despite the presence of abundant natural resources, including huge gas and copper reserves, Balochistan is also the least developed of Pakistan's four provinces.¹ The paradox of Balochistan is no more apparent than in the fact that in this province, the lack of stability has hindered development, and the lack of development has also been a major source of instability.

Relations between Baloch nationalists and the central government have been far from idyllic since the founding of Pakistan in 1947, intermittently bursting out into violence. Since the last decade, the region has been in the grip of its fifth irredentist uprising since the territory was first annexed by Pakistan in 1948², demonstrating that the issue of Baloch nationalism is a persistent Achilles heel for Islamabad's policymakers.

The organizations that currently comprise the nationalist landscape reflect the historical, political and social evolution of Baloch nationalism, with different actors often pursuing diverse goals through different (sometimes conflicting) strategies.³ Consequently, the Baloch nationalist movement cannot be understood as a unitary organization, as its vision and leadership remains highly fractured. Today, the Baloch insurgency is constituted by at least seven different armed groups, all of which are driven by secular and nationalist ideologies.⁴

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Fuelling the Fire: Drivers of Conflict

The insurgency in Balochistan is the result of both historical and contemporary factors, and has implications for stability throughout Pakistan as well as in neighboring countries – especially in view of the greater intraregional connectivity envisioned by China's new Silk Road⁵ initiative, of which the CPEC is a crucial component.

Historical Drivers of Conflict: A number of particularly deep-rooted historical factors driving the Baloch insurgency have meant that a lasting resolution to the conflict in Balochistan has yet to be attained, resulting in intermittent outbursts of violence. These historical drivers of conflict include weak tribal alliances, economic marginalization, exploitation of local resources by the federal government, and ethnic rivalries.

Weak Tribal Alliances: The primordial development of a Baloch national identity can be traced back to the pre-colonial era, when Balochistan was a deeply fragmented society organized around tribal structures. The British later exploited this lack of cohesion by partitioning Balochistan into seven regions, to ensure greater control over the province and facilitate access to Afghanistan. The partition contributed towards exacerbating tribal enmities, which had a detrimental effect on the infrastructure and economic development of Balochistan relative to other parts of British India.⁶ The fragmentation of Baloch society along tribal lines also prevented the fledging of a cohesive nationalist movement from forming in the lead up to the creation of Pakistan in 1947. Indeed, Baloch secessionism was pursued by just a handful of tribal chiefs without a unified ideological narrative, a trend that would carry on well into the twenty first century.⁷ This lack of cohesion subsequently led to the forcible annexation of Balochistan by the nascent central government in Islamabad just a day after the partition of India in 1947, ushering in decades of uneasy relations between the Baloch and the central government.⁸

Economic Oppression and Resource Exploitation: One of the principal historical drivers of instability in Balochistan is the continued pattern of economic marginalization. Despite the government's occasional attempts to co-opt Balochs through development projects, none have achieved any significant degree of success.

Closely related to the issue of relative economic underdevelopment is the grievance concerning resource exploitation, which continues to be invoked by Baloch leaders as a rationale for secession. Despite being Pakistan's richest province in terms of natural gas, Balochistan has benefited relatively little from its gas resources when compared to the provinces of Punjab and Sindh.⁹ This is largely due to the fact the 1973 constitution differentiated gas wellhead prices for each province on the basis of the provinces' per capita income in 1953. This greatly disadvantaged Balochistan, which receives comparatively far less gas royalties than Sindh and Punjab.¹⁰ The economic underdevelopment and perceived exploitation of Balochistan's resources by Pakistan's central governments are issues that have persisted until today.

Ethnic Rivalries: Another conflict driver that dates back to the colonial era is the ethnic enmity between Balochs and Pashtuns. The British fought several wars in Afghanistan with the strategic objective of creating a buffer zone against Russian expansion. They developed extensive transportation networks in the northern parts of present day Pakistani Balochistan, which are predominantly inhabited by ethnic Pashtuns. Consequently, thanks to the infrastructure and commercial links developed during the British era, the Pashtuns in northern Balochistan have benefited from greater economic development than the Balochs in the province, leading to a greater feeling of marginalization among the Baloch.¹¹

Historically, the Balochs' violent response has been fomented by their rivalry with the Punjabi – Pakistan's principal ethnic group, which accounts for approximately 45 per cent of the population.¹² A persistent grievance that finds expression in Baloch nationalism is the Punjabi's perceived domination of the civil and military administration of the state.¹³ Once again this issue dates back to the colonial era, when the British favored Punjabi control of the region by entrusting the political, administrative and military institutions to this ethnic group while completely excluding Balochs.¹⁴ This feeling of domination by the Punjabis contributed towards numerous outbursts of violence throughout Pakistan's history, until in 1977 General Muhammad Zia's military government managed to negotiate a precarious, 25-year long ceasefire with Baloch nationalists by releasing Baloch prisoners and allowing nationalists to run in elections, as long as they were not affiliated with any political party. As a result, Balochistan was largely peaceful in 1980s and 1990s. However, the historical roots of the conflict were never addressed, allowing for a renewed outburst of hostilities.¹⁵ The 1999 military coup that brought General Pervez Musharraf to power contributed to the feeling of alienation among the Balochs, which view the army as lacking local representation due to its domination by the interests of the Punjabi.¹⁶ Long-simmering tensions broke out again during Musharraf's military rule in 2004, largely due to economic issues relating to the construction of the Gwadar deep-sea port. Violence escalated further in 2006 when the Baloch leader Nawab Akbar Bugti was killed by the army, and many other Baloch leaders disappeared or were detained by the Pakistani government.¹⁷

Current Drivers of Conflict

“Parliamentary politics is not an option for us so we’re forced to make politics with weapons” Khair Bux Marri, Baloch leader¹⁸

Many of the historical drivers of conflict remain yet unresolved, continuing to drive the insurgency. For instance, the political marginalization of the Baloch by part of the central government has persisted until today. This was apparent in the 2002 polls, when the military manipulated the elections and strengthened its long-standing alliance with the region’s religious leaders.¹⁹ The eligibility criteria for candidates were changed to require university degrees, effectively preventing some prominent Baloch nationalist leaders from running, and ultimately favouring the Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) – a coalition of Islamic parties – in Balochistan. Likewise, one of the principal grievances voiced by today’s nationalist movement is the sidelining of Baloch representatives in the CPEC decision-making process, particularly in relation to the construction of the deep-sea port in Gwadar.

Continued Economic Marginalization and Resource Exploitation

Similarly, many of the Baloch’s historical economic grievances still persist today, even if adapted to the changed socio-economic context. The persistent underdevelopment of Balochistan is testified by the fact that the province has the highest poverty rate, the highest infant and mortality rate and the lowest literacy rate in Pakistan.²⁰ Moreover, the exploitation of local resources remains a persistent source of tension. Indeed, the outbreak of the 2004 conflict was largely influenced by issues relating to the allocation of the proceeds from Sui gas fields, and the distribution of the gas itself, which was allegedly being used to heat Punjabi homes and businesses.²¹ As a result, Baloch insurgents have frequently targeted gas pipelines as a way of manifesting their disillusionment with the central government.

In addition to the persistent historical grievances related to economic and political marginalization, other contemporary factors have added to the complexity of the factors that are currently fueling the Baloch insurgency. These include the military’s severe response to nationalist claims and the construction of the CPEC, particularly the deep-sea port in Gwadar.

CPEC: Eastern vs. Western Route

“It’s not a deal between China and Pakistan; it is a deal between China and the Punjab province.” Brahamdagh Bugti, Baloch leader²²

A major source of dispute that drives the current round of the Baloch insurgency relates to the route for the CPEC’s infrastructural development projects. The CPEC project is divided into two principal routes: the western alignment²³ and the eastern alignment²⁴. Policymakers have prioritized the eastern alignment, which bypasses most of Balochistan, stating that the original western alignment has been deferred until the other route is completed.²⁵

Pakistani and Chinese officials have deliberated to prioritize the construction of the eastern alignment for two principal reasons. First, it is generally considered more secure than the western route, which passes through some of the more volatile areas of Balochistan; second Chinese companies are willing to undertake the construction of the eastern alignment on a BOT (build-operate-transfer) basis, whereas this is not the case for the alternative route.²⁶ Some Baloch leaders have condemned Islamabad for deliberately changing the route of the corridor to favour the province of Punjab, depriving Balochistan of the development and employment opportunities that the CPEC is expected to produce.²⁷

The controversy over the sequencing for the development of the CPEC routes has been heightened by budgeting issues concerning the construction of the two alignments. During a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Communication, the Pakistani National Highway Authority (NHA) which is in charge of the construction of the road infrastructure for the economic corridor, admitted that the Pakistani government has allocated a generous Rs110 billion for the construction of the eastern alignment, while earmarking a mere Rs20 billion²⁸ for the western route.²⁹ For many Baloch nationalists, this conspicuous imbalance in budget allocation constitutes yet another example of the government’s policies of economic marginalization of Balochistan in favour of Punjab.

Gwadar

The construction of the deep-sea port in Gwadar is one of the primary drivers of today’s conflict. Despite its significance, the central government has largely excluded Balochs from both the decision-making and construction process. The project is being managed entirely by the federal government, with little or no local say in the matter. Moreover, preference for the construction of the infrastructure is given to Chinese laborers and firms, thus generating very little local employment.³⁰ Consequently, the inhabitants of Balochistan fear that the CPEC may jeopardize the precarious demographic balance in the province by attracting foreign workers while displacing local families.³¹ The growing segregation between the

Balochs and the increasing influx of foreigners and non-Balochs is exemplified by the construction of a parallel town exclusively for workers at Gwadar.³²

Moreover, the Pakistani government and the Chinese government will respectively take 50% and 48% of the proceeds of the Gwadar port, leaving only 2% for Balochistan.³³ Consequently, many in the province view Gwadar as part of a greater agenda to further the colonization of Balochistan by part of Punjabis and other patrons of the military and bureaucracy.

The Military's Repressive Response

The economic and political marginalization of the Balochs in Gwadar has led to mounting opposition and resentment by part of the locals. This increased animosity has contributed to the adoption of even more repressive measures by part of the military, leading to a spiral of violence. The kidnapping and unlawful detention of dissidents has become commonplace, further polarizing Baloch moderates against the government. A report by the Pakistan Security Research Unit notes, "Islamabad's militarized approach has led to [...] violence, widespread human rights abuses, mass internal displacement and the deaths of hundreds of civilian and armed personnel."³⁴

Ethnic Violence and Education Issues

The war in Afghanistan has led to an influx of both Pashtun refugees and extremist militants operating under the banner of the Taliban, inviting even more federal army and paramilitary troops into the province. Feeling numerically marginalized, the Baloch have responded by targeting non-Baloch settlers, particularly Pashtuns and Punjabis. The ethnic violence, in turn, has had serious consequences for Balochistan's already feeble education system, as many of the teachers and educators in Balochistan come from the province of Punjab. Between 2008 and 2010 alone, at least 22 Punjabi teachers were killed by Baloch nationalists, resulting in many teachers having fled or being moved outside the province and thus weakening the education system.³⁵ Indeed, Balochistan has the lowest literacy rate of Pakistan's four provinces. Consequently, Baloch nationalist leaders have invoked the lack of education as an example of Islamabad's inability, or unwillingness, to provide basic services to the people of Balochistan, negating the Baloch the opportunity to improve their social and economic conditions through education.

Explaining the Protractedness of the Conflict

One of the most striking features of the Baloch insurgency that emerges when assessing the historical trajectory of the nationalist issue is the protractedness of the conflict. The cycles of renewed violence have been a persistent feature in Balochistan since the founding days of the Pakistani nation. This may be explained, at least in part, by the fact that the Pakistani government's approach to the issue of Balochistan has remained largely immutable over the decades, in many cases even contributing to the polarization of the Baloch: coercion has historically been the principal instrument for dealing with the Baloch insurgency.³⁶

Another factor contributing to the persistence of conflict in Balochistan is the emergence of criminal activities perpetrated by actors who benefit from the lack of stability and security in Pakistan's southwestern province. Indeed, Balochistan is strategically located at the heart of the major arms and drug smuggling corridor between Afghanistan and Iran.³⁷ Smuggling and extortion from natural resource extraction companies provides the lion's share of the funding for the insurgency.³⁸ This is facilitated by the fact that nationalist militants have easy access to weapons due to the regional instability and the province's long, porous border with Afghanistan.³⁹

Policy Recommendations: Bolstering Human Security through CPEC

A lasting solution to the conflict in Balochistan can only be achieved if the socio-economic and political issues that are driving the conflict are addressed. The approach that has been adopted by the government of Pakistan, which is founded predominantly on the use of military coercion, is inherently ill suited for resolving these grievances. As such, a comprehensive strategy that is capable of restoring the Baloch people's faith in not only the ability, but also the willingness of the central government to further their interests is required.

In this context, a human security based approach may provide a more viable expedient. The principal difference between such an approach and a military operation – such as the one that has been pursued to date in Balochistan by the government of Pakistan – is the fact that a human security perspective aims at protecting the needs of the individuals and communities, as opposed to the interests of the central government. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor could provide an effective framework for the implementation of such an approach, particularly if measures are taken to convince the local population of the benefits of such an initiative. With this in mind, the following section of the paper will seek to provide some policy recommendations for Pakistani and Chinese officials.

The principles of human security are the following, as defined by Mary Kaldor, one of the founders and foremost exponents of this perspective.⁴⁰

I. Primacy of Human Rights

The primacy of human rights is what differentiates the human security approach from traditional state-centric approaches. What this principle entails is that the primary objective is protecting civilians rather than defeating an adversary. To this extent human rights are expanded to include economic and social rights, as well as political and civil rights.

Policy recommendations:

- ✓ The governments of China and Pakistan must prioritize the construction of the CPEC along the western alignment. Despite the fact that this route passes through parts of the country that are currently less stable, any investment along this route is likely to yield exponential benefits in terms of security in the long run. Pakistan's security forces, enhanced by deeper Sino-Pakistani collaboration, would be fundamental actors to ensure the creation of a secure space for the development projects to take place in is created, so as to boost confidence of investors and the local population.
- ✓ Alongside traditional military operations, the government of Pakistan must prioritize policing operations in Balochistan. The benefits of such an initiative would be numerous. Firstly, this would hamper the activities of the vast network of criminal enterprises in Balochistan that have an interest in perpetuating instability. Secondly, enhanced policing would help protect Chinese workers and other non-Balochs from ethnic violence. Thirdly, the improved security would promote an image of the central government as being in control of the situation in Balochistan, regaining the goodwill of the population.
- ✓ The Pakistani government ought to allocate a larger share of the CPEC proceeds (particularly the ones from the Gwadar port) towards bolstering the economic and social development of Balochistan. In particular, the education sector needs to be improved, so as to provide the Baloch youth with more employment opportunities and dry up the recruitment pool for young militants. This includes measures to ensure that locals receive adequate training to make the most of the countless job opportunities that will soon be knocking on their doors.
- ✓ The governments of China and Pakistan should consider expanding investment in the provision of collaborative services such as the China-Pakistan Friendship Hospital and Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute in Balochistan.⁴¹

II. Legitimate political authority

Human security can only be guaranteed by a rule of law that depends on the existence of legitimate institutions that gains the trust of the population and have some enforcement capacity. In this context, the political process is of paramount importance.

Policy recommendations:

- ✓ To this extent, the issue of Balochistan cannot be effectively addressed without providing some form of political representation. This would include allowing for some form of Baloch representation in the CPEC decision-making process, both at the provincial and federal level.
- ✓ Balochistan needs to be brought back into the political spotlight, with more political meetings held in the province.⁴²

III. Effective multilateralism

This essentially entails engaging different actors to create a cohesive and unified effort to further the goal of human security.

Policy recommendations:

- ✓ Given China's priority for ensuring security and stability along the CPEC route to safeguard its economic interests, Chinese security forces ought to broaden their cooperation with Pakistani counterparts, for instance through the sharing of equipment and intelligence, joint training exercises and collaborative stabilization operations.
- ✓ Concrete initiatives to involve neighboring countries such as Iran, India, Afghanistan and Central Asian states in the CPEC, or the greater OBOR initiative, ought to be explored at the highest levels. For instance, the proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline and the Iran-Pakistan gas project could potentially be integrated with the CPEC initiative to bolster regional energy relations.

IV. Bottom-up approach

The people that inhabit zones of insecurity are the only ones that are able to sustain long-term security. Communication, consultation, and dialogue are indispensable tools for human security, not merely to gain the goodwill of the population nor even to gain knowledge and understanding, but to empower those who will have to be responsible for security in the long run.

Policy recommendations:

- ✓ A comprehensive public awareness campaign demonstrating the beneficial effects of CPEC for the Baloch population must be introduced, for instance in terms of attracting development and generating employment. This would foster a feeling that the local population has a stake in the stability of the region and in the success of the CPEC project, as opposed to viewing it merely as a means of economic exploitation.

V. Regional focus

A focus on the wider region of conflict, as opposed to only the areas of ongoing insecurity, is necessary to address the spillover effects often brought about by violence, particularly in regions with porous borders, of which Afghanistan is a prime example.

Policy recommendations:

- ✓ Both China and Pakistan must take concrete steps towards stabilizing the wider region, particularly China's Xinjiang province and Afghanistan, so as to reduce destabilizing spillovers and deny militants any operational safe haven.

VI. Clear civilian command.

This means that the military must operate in support of law and order, and in adherence to rules of engagement that are more similar to those of police work than to the procedures of armed combat.

Policy recommendations:

- ✓ In order to apply this principle to the context of Balochistan, Pakistan's security forces must act in strict adherence to the rule of law. Refraining from unlawful detentions, targeted killings and human rights abuses is of paramount importance, so as to ensure that the Balochs enjoy equal protection before the law not only formally, but also in practice. This would entail, for instance, clear and transparent investigations into missing persons. In turn, this would serve to curb the feeling of marginalization amongst the Baloch, providing the space for a more moderate Baloch identity to emerge, thus decrease the support base for violent nationalism.

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DEVELOPMENT OF INTERNATIONAL LAW FOR REGIONAL STABILITY AND SECURITY VIS-À-VIS THE CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR

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***Abstract:** In national laws, the development of the law of contract is a direct result of the laissez-faire economic system, as the right to property and freedom of business, require a strong legal system that can provide the matrix within which such a system can effectively function. The same is true at the international level. The relations between states require an internationally binding set of rules and regulations for smooth maintenance of relations between states. However, the increasing trade and consequent interaction between states and businesses' requires an even more dependable and effective international legal mechanism to be in place for the success of such ventures. To quite an extent, international law has already developed to meet these needs, however, the regional and sub regional trade blocs, and economic corridors require that international law continues to develop to provide the necessary set of dependable regulatory framework and dispute resolution mechanisms for the full utilization and success of such endeavours. In this background, this paper argues that with the proliferation of regional economic understandings such as corridors and pipelines, the necessity of an effective international legal regime has increased manifold. The recently initiated China-Pakistan economic corridor highlights Pakistan's interest in such a development. This paper shall explore the impact of this initiative on development of international law for regional stability and security and examine any shortcomings in present international legal regime, and accordingly make suggestions and recommendations to make it more robust and responsive towards the emerging challenges. The methodology adopted shall be the use of secondary data sources and carrying out of a qualitative discourse analysis of available literature on the said topic.*

Keywords: CPEC, international law, regional stability, security

Background

Pakistan has been facing tough challenges on the economic front. This was exacerbated by the challenge of terrorism and weak governance mechanisms. This led to an overall grim predictions for Pakistan's future, with many pundits predicting dismal scenarios, and talk of failed state and failing state doing the rounds of intellectual circles. In this background the civil-military sides of the government have gotten together to fight a decisive and firm battle against terrorism, both in FATA and settled areas. This has not just stemmed the tide, but as per reports considerably weakened the terrorists. This in turn provided an environment where the Chinese and Pakistani government could move to the implementation stage of a project which was under consideration of the two governments since the Musharraf era. On the political front the instability of the *dharna* period subsided, creating a comparatively stable political environment. All the political parties seem to be on the same page, as far as the project of the Economic Corridor is concerned. This in itself is a positive sign, as the internal political bickering is not conducive to long term projects of public good and instead short term projects are carried out, which can be completed within the time span of an election cycle. This is particularly true of Pakistan, which in addition, to the normal political infighting of parties, also has to contend with the nationalist politics, which makes national projects more difficult to carry out, as they are used for gaining political mileage in their own constituencies.

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor is materializing at a time when Pakistan is at the brink of a turnaround from a down ward trend, led by instability due to terrorism, and fuelled by poor economic indicators, and weak governance. The decisive action against the militants in the last couple of years, seems to have stemmed the tide, and brought the country back from the brink. In addition, the recently announced China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has brought fresh hope of economic stability. This could prove a much needed impetus by the economy. This corridor has great potential if it is successfully carried out in a transparent and efficient manner. It has strategic implications, as it shows a moving away of from a US centric approach. Many analysts feel that it has the potential to decisively break the encirclement that India was trying to hedge us in with the help of Karzai's supporters in Afghanistan. In this background CPEC indeed has the potential of a game changer. However, any international agreement of this sort, would require multiple internationally binding agreements and treaties. This would also require some dispute resolution mechanisms to be put in place. This strong matrix of international law, based on protecting economic interests of the two countries with the likelihood of other countries joining in later, is likely to have the potential to strengthen regional stability through development of international law.

This paper is based on the assumption that the project will go through as planned. The paper will discuss only the public international law aspect, and not go into the realm of private international law. The project is multi pronged. It is basically a corridor from Kashghar to Gwadar, with a warm water state of the art port at Gwadar. In addition it shall have multiple energy programmes, and build infrastructure which will connect the route. At a later date, industrial parks shall be set up.

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The paper shall first discuss the Importance of the issue in Part II, then briefly discuss what CPEC entails in Part III, and examine what is International law; its importance, characteristics, and how it is formed, and how essential a functional international law regime is for a project like CPEC to succeed, and how in turn such a project will contribute to such a regime and the final part will conclude the Paper.

Importance of the Issue

International law is a necessary pre requisite for the implementation of any such project which involves more than one country. This Paper will look at the necessity of international law from the perspective of it being a pre-requisite for any such project to function, and also the fact that such a project will lead to further developing of international law compliance and norms, both of these would help bring stability and security to the region. We live in a region which is tense and conflict prone. There are contested borders and active disagreements over a number of issues between countries in the region. In addition, some regional countries have no respect for international law, with the prime example being Afghanistan, which inspite of having signed the treaty recognizing Durand Line, and having reaffirmed it twice later, as an international border, still denies it as an accepted border. On the other hand India, having itself gone to the United Nations for the resolution of the Kashmir dispute, not does not wish to solve it under international law. In this specific background such a project has even further importance as encouraging the region to get involved in internationally binding economic agreements of mutual benefits, as this would encourage cooperation and rule formation and compliance, by creating an incentive for it in the region, particularly when there is the possibility that some of these neighbours and others may later join in, in some parts of the project.

The World is now moving towards geo-economic strategy. The thrust is on free trade markets, trade or economic corridors, and trans-states pipelines etc. Some such examples, are of course the European Union, NAFTA, with regard to free trade, but regarding corridors, there is the ASEAN-Korea Free Trade Area (AKFTA) an Optimal Free Trade, the Southern Economic Corridor, the Southern Economic Corridor's (SEC) of Cambodia and Loa. Then the Walvis Bay Corridor (WBC), which is a network of routes that links the SADC to the Port of Walvis Bay on Namibia's southwest coast, offering the region a gateway to transatlantic trade routes and markets. The WBC is composed of the Port of Walvis Bay, the Trans Kalahari Corridor, the Trans Caprivi Corridor, the Trans Cunene Corridor and the Trans Oranje Corridor. It runs through Namibia, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Angola and South Africa and indirectly to the Democratic Republic of Congo. The corridor system consists of roads, railways, and shipping services. Then there is the EU Corridor from Latvia to Frankfurt, to name a few.

In addition, in the region, India has never seriously tried to resolve its differences with Pakistan, and has been wary of its economic development and been trying to isolate Pakistan, especially since 9/11. In this background it is reported that Mr. Modi and India have expressed their reservations internationally and nationally about the CPEC. Recently the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Modi termed the CPEC to be 'unacceptable' to India¹ as according to the Indian External Affairs Minister this Corridor passes through the Pakistan Kashmir². However, once the investment goes through, then it is likely that India will be forced to become a party to it, or at least be forced to respect Pakistan's enhanced strategic and economic power, in addition, to its current military one, and deal through normal diplomatic channels rather than threat of use of force.

In view of these issues it is important to explore the need for a robust international regime for regional peace and stability, and the role that the proposed CPEC can play in encouraging adherence to international law.

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor

The Asian Development Bank describes Economic corridors, as to be either between countries or inside a country. Their purpose is to connect "economic agents." This has to be on a defined route, and in the process link the "demand and supply sides of markets" (Asian Development Bank, 1998). This is done through establishing or developing a network of connectivities; railroads, highways, and ports. Any such major initiative would require setting up an overarching institutional structure and set an agreement would require binding agreements, treaties and laws, to help bring predictability which is essential for any investor. Another definition provided by the Asian Development Bank is that "Economic corridors connect economic agents in a defined geography and region. They provide important connections between economic nodes or hubs." The main purpose of an economic corridor, is "Economic," it has additional advantages or subsidiary goals, such as; strategic, political, development of backward areas, etc.³

The China Pakistan Economic Corridor is a roughly 3,000 km long network, constituting, roads and roads. It is to link Kashgar in Xinjian region to Gwadar, as a part of the larger Chinese initiative of "Belt and Road." This expounds the proposal of the Chinese President Mr Xi Jinping in 2013, of establishing a "Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road." This is meant to connect China with Asia, Africa and Europe. So this is part of a greater economic and trade connectivity programme. The four key areas of the CPEC, are the development of the Gwadar Port, and transport infrastructure connecting it to China, as well as energy and industrial cooperation⁴.

Prof. Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Reform said, “CPEC is a strategic project between iron brothers China and Pakistan to cast them into community of shared destiny. This will be a fate changer for billions of people in the region through regional integration and connectivity.”

International Law and How It is a prerequisite for CPEC and will help foster the Development of International Law Regime in the Region

International law has its origins in the need to regulate relations between states. By necessity the first two main areas of concern were war and status of diplomats. This gradually expanded as the states multiplied and technology advanced. The first books and works on international law appeared in the 18th Century onwards. Hugo Grotius is considered to be the father of international law. International law has two main source; treaties and customary international law. Treaties are binding agreements between states. This has now become the most common form of creating of international obligations. Treaties have particularly multiplied manifold after the Second World War. The main reasons are perhaps that the world has an overarching political body, in the shape of the United Nations Organisation. This makes it easier for countries to negotiate a treaty, covenant or compact under its aegis. United Nations is the repository of all international treaties, this is in keeping with the rule given in the UN Charter that there shall be no secret treaties. With the states having permanent representatives in both New York and Geneva, it is easier to negotiate treaties. The other, and more traditional form of international law making is the development of customary international law. Customary international is developed over time, when states act in a particular manner, in the belief that they are legally obligated to do so. Therefore, there are two elements to it; state practice, and the ‘*opinio juris*’, or the psychological element that states feel that they are bound by those rules. Development of customary international law necessarily takes time, as custom has to be evolved over time, through repetition, whereas a treaty can be negotiated in a much shorter time. This is why although traditionally customary international law was the main form of formation of international law, it has now been replaced by treaties. Treaties have the added advantage that they don’t have to be proved, as they are in writing. There may be issues on interpretation, as there are with all laws, but not with the content, whereas with customary international law, one may have to prove that a particular custom has become law, and is also applicable on the concerned countries. International law rapidly developed after the Second World War. Now, with the World having become a Global Village, the ambit of international law encompasses everything. The instrument of control by the leading nations has also become through international law and international institutions, such as the United Nations, World Bank, World Trading Organisation, etc. This shows the importance that it has gained, and also the fact that new imperialism is not so much geographic, as economic. And the developed world feels that the relations amongst states should be controlled through such institutions rather than force. This may be a negative aspect in some ways, but shows how important the law has become. These countries have settled down into peaceful co-existence and are living by mutually established norms, in the shared belief that a defined normative behavioral paradigm is each state’s best interests. Whenever economics take centre stage, then countries have an interest to uphold and develop law. This paper will explore how the proposed China Pakistan Economic Corridor has the potential to do the same for this region.

As discussed above modern international law developed through the states’ need for regulating international relations in a dependable and normative manner. This was done through the development of norms through state practice and acceptance over a period of time. Necessarily the first things that the states agreed upon was the protection and treatment of diplomats and conduct of warfare, as these were the two most common international concerns between states. In our region, on the other hand in some aspects international law is known more for the breach than for compliance, there is a strong need for the development of international law. One prime example is the Durand Line, which in spite of having signed and reaffirmed twice, Afghanistan still denies.

There are many theories as to why sovereign states follow international law for various reasons. Although, this is considered a difficult question to answer, however, the primary reasons are thought to be the game theory of ‘public choice’, and the desire for legitimacy. The first means that it is mutually beneficial for states to follow international law, as it is in everyone’s overall interest. The Second means that states feel that they are morally obligated to follow international law, as they are bound by it.

The proposed project, as discussed above, has many aspects, with the primary being China’s access to salt water port of Gawadar, and secondly development of energy and infrastructure and connecting roads. In addition, it is hoped that once the project nears completion, some other states may also in some manner join in. If this happens, this would further create a group of treaties amongst these states, which would be implemented under the relevant laws of the laws of nations. This would encourage the states to abide by those laws, and encourage the practice of developing defined set of rules for mutual exchange and dispute resolution. Economic interconnectedness would force the states

Laws relate to peace. It is only when there is peace is there law, otherwise it is lawlessness. Economic interests force the parties to devise set standards and norms according to which they can live. As everyone has an interest in establishment of norms and upholding of the same.

Conclusion

The China Pakistan Economic corridor, and any other such interstate projects, such as gas pipelines, are likely to enhance the participating states' interests in the stability and smooth running of such projects. Global experience and trends show that the World sees greater strategic advantage in economic development and regulating their affairs through well defined mutually agreed mechanisms, and jostle for interests within that framework, rather than by violating them. This would provide a fillip to the tendency to comply with international law in the region, and would require a greater adherence to international law instruments. This project is likely to bring multipronged advantages to Pakistan, such as economic, strategic, security, etc. And at the same time has the advantage of mutuality, as the driving force behind it is China, which sees its own advantages in it. In the words of the Federal Minister for Planning, Development & Reform, "The Corridor is a fusion of multiple developments in the global, regional, bilateral and domestic contexts. The ultimate objective is peace, prosperity and well being of the people of the two countries, the region and the world."

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