
China Pakistan Economic Corridor and Regional Development: An Appraisal to Southern Balochistan and Development Programs

Ma Zheng
Jalal Bohier

Development is one of the methods for understanding a region's nature and well-being; it has also been used to determine a region's civilizational patterns. China Pakistan's economic corridor is a major initiative aimed at developing the country through mutual interest and trade. Balochistan in general and Southern Balochistan in particular - Kech, Gwadar and Panjgur districts- has been ignored, development ratio in these districts has remained less than other parts of Pakistan. In this research article, the development projects in these areas of Balochistan have been explored with new approaches. Makran region has been under the threat of terrorism after 2006 and all the focus remained was to tackle the terrorism. With the China Pakistan Economic Corridor project and the Gwadar deep seaport as the focal point and one of the most important parts of the project, the region's worth is boosted and the government is compelled to develop the region. These new development efforts, which have been initiated in the Makran Division's important cities of Gwadar, Turbat, and Pangjur, would improve people's living conditions. In Gwadar city the main development projects under China Pakistan economic corridor are the "East Bay Express way (\$ 168 million), New Gwadar international Airport (\$ 230 million), Construction of Breakwaters (\$ 123 million), Pak China Friendship Hospital (\$ 100 million) and Development of Free Zone (\$ 32 million)". Similarly, from 2013 to 2015 Turbat city was renovated and was linked with other parts of country with motorways and roads. Hence, all these development programs will change the fate of the region which will also boast up the national unity. This research is critical in order to comprehend development projects and their effects on the Makran people.

Key Words: China Pakistan Economic Corridor, Southern Balochistan, Regional Integration Development, Makran

Introduction

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is one of Pakistan's most important economic cooperation projects, and it is widely regarded as a game-changer for Pakistan's and regional development. Along with other parts of Pakistan, Gwadar region the central point of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor will experience new development paradigms which will transform the small town to a metropolitan and trade center. Development of countries and regions has been the concern of the world empires and the modern nation states. Contextually, development has multiple meanings in terms of time and space. Although the concept of development dates back to the dawn of civilization, the primary patterns and concepts of rural and urban development arose with modernity and current development philosophy.¹ The 'concept of development' has been reciprocal to 'construction development' and the 'construction development' is dependent on the economic growth.² On the basis of industrialized and developing countries, the world is presently split into two divisions. This concept is built on the foundations of economic growth and the development of a country's or nation's infrastructure. Indeed, civilizational development is a multi-faceted notion that encompasses advancements in science, language, infrastructure, social systems, and human development. There is no simple or direct definition to development, but most of the expert on economic development defined it as the process of improving the quality of human being on equal bases.³ The main focus of this study piece is on both economic and infrastructure development. To be more specific, the regional development idea encourages economically disadvantaged communities to better their social, cultural, and economic conditions by improving city and town infrastructure. These activities are the methods to create wealth through the expansion of sustainable economic development which improves the life quality.⁴ In the case of Makran region this theory and concept of regional development is more reliable.

The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a multi-faceted initiative that was publicly unveiled in April 2015 during a visit to Pakistan by China's president, Xi Jinping. This project is an infusion of infrastructure, energy, ports, railway networks, and a people to people connection project, which enhance Pakistan's export potential, trade connectivity, and geopolitical relevance. Both china and Pakistan believe that the CPEC will not only complement the economic development of the two countries but will also bring peace and prosperity in less developed regions of Pakistan.⁵ Verily, the diplomatic relations between Pakistan and

China are not new, from the establishment of both the countries they have good relations and now China and Pakistan are celebrating the 70TH anniversary of their diplomatic relations.⁶

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a major project that promises to benefit both countries through trade, infrastructure, energy development, and railroad growth. CPEC is a part of the China's bigger project of "*Belt and Road Initiative*" (BRI) which is an effort to revive the ancient silk rout, this route connects the South Asia, East Asia, Central Asia and Europe. The most important and valuable phase of BRI is the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. CPEC was inaugurated in April 2015, in which fifty-one agreements and memorandum of understanding were signed and were to be completed in two phases. (List of Pakistan-China MoUs signed under the CPEC Initiative in April 2015, 2014). The first phase of CPEC has been completed in the shape of several projects in all parts of Pakistan. In the Punjab province, the development projects were in the form of infrastructure, motorways and energy sector. The projects which are completed in the Punjab province are as follow "*Quaid-e-Azam Solar Park, Sahiwal Coal-fired Power Plant, Metro Train and Multan to Sukkar Motorway*".⁷

Sindh province, too, benefited from the first phase of CPEC in the shape of energy and infrastructural projects. In Sindh, the majority of the first-phase development projects have been finished, while some are still in the works. The main projects which are funded through CPEC in Sindh – "*2*660 MW Coal Power Plant at Port Qasim Karachi, Engro 2*330 MW Thar Coal Power Project, Surface Mine Block II of Thar Coal Field, Hydro China Dawood Farm in Thatta, UEP Wind Farm Thatta, Sachal Wind Farm, Three Gorges Second and third Wind Power Thatta, SSRL Thar Coal Block, Thar Nova Thar Power Project and Ketibunder Seaport Development project*".⁸ These projects will meet the demand for energy in the future, which is one of CPEC's goals in resolving energy challenges in Pakistan in general and in Sindh in particular. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, another Pakistani province, played a key role in the first phase of the CPEC, with energy and infrastructure projects completed on a timely basis. The main projects which have been completed are under construction- "*SukiKinari Hydropower Station, Naran, KhyberPukhtunkhwa, Muigram- Shanghore HHP Chitral, Toren More Kari, KKH Phase II (Thakot -Havelian Section) etc*".⁹

Balochistan is the least developed province of Pakistan; it is the largest province by area which covers 44% percent of land with a dispersed and less population. Majority of population is living in rural area which is more than 70%.¹⁰ Another cause for the province's and region's lack of

development is the province's long-standing security problems. Issue of Balochistan is both political and administrative which can be resolved through development, progress and by providing equal rights to the people the province. Balochistan is divided into six administrative divisions- Quetta Division, Kalat Division, Nasirabad Division, Sibi division, Zhob Division, Makran Division. Development progress in Makran division is the focus of this research article. Makran division is further administratively divided into three districts- Gwadar District, Kech District (Turbat), Punjgur District (Grare, 2013). The population of Makran is 1489042 and has an area of 23,460 square miles (60,761 square km).¹¹ Gwadar district is the main point for the China Pakistan economic Corridor from where all the economic activities between China and Pakistan have to be performed. For this reason, Chinese authorities, with the collaboration with the Pakistani government are meticulously working on the development of the Gwadar district and the region.¹²

Methodology

A number of theories of development and regional development have been considered to understand the main phenomena of development. For this research study, the analytical method approach is applicable. The sources collected are both primary and secondary. As this topic is contemporary, the primary sources are the government records, readings, meeting minutes and the projects themselves. Similarly, the secondary sources are the newspapers, articles and the books written with the theme of China Pakistan Economic Corridor. The primary sources are taken from government offices, China Pakistan Economic Corridor Center Islamabad and China Pakistan official website. Accordingly, a plethora of literature has been produced on China Pakistan economic by the world academia and by other related forums, the secondary sources are mostly the peer-reviewed articles taken from well-known and reputed journals and from the books written and published in China and Pakistan. Both the primary and secondary sources are analyzed to devise a narrative and theory of development under China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Objectives

1. To highlight the main development projects in Southern part of Balochistan with special reference to Gwadar district and the impacts of the projects on the region and the economy of Pakistan.
2. To understand the local approach towards the development projects under China and Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Development projects, Southern Balochistan and CPEC

A plethora of literature is available on the “*China Pakistan Economic corridor*” which discusses its aim and goals. Most of the historians and social scientists have focused on the holistic approach and the future of the project, but now the first phase of the project has been completed and the project is materialized, became a source of production of wealth in different parts of Pakistan.¹³ CPEC is the most significant and viable economic activity in seventy years of Pakistan. This project is a game changer for Pakistan and its economic system, with the completion of this project Pakistan will become the “tiger of Asia”. Balochistan is one of the key owners of the project as most of the activities of “*China Pakistan economic corridor*” will be organized from the port city of Gwadar.¹⁴ Historically, Gwadar city and the district, has been under several powers in modern times (1800-1958), firstly it was under the Khans of Kalat which was given to a prince of Oman in eighteenth century and later the Government of Pakistan purchased from the government of Oman in 1958 in the time of Malik Feroz Khan Noon.¹⁵

Gwadar district and the development projects

Gwadar district is the hub of economic activities of Southern Balochistan, with the establishment of China Pakistan Economic Corridor.¹⁶ Pak Institute for Peace Studies Gwadar has always been important because of its strategic importance and the deep seaport. Gwadar is located at the very initiating point to Gwadar of the Persian Gulf and located at the apex of Indian Ocean which one of the important trade routes of the world. The geographic area of Gwadar city looks like a hammer head peninsula on the western part of Makran.¹⁷ This peninsula has two almost perfect, but naturally curved, semicircular bays on either side, namely the Paddi Zirr (West Bay) and Deymi Zirr (East Bay).¹⁸ Gwadar area has been ruled by several kings throughout history; in the seventeenth century, it was under the power of the Kalat state, which was eventually transferred to a Prince of Oman as a gift. Gwadar was purchased from Oman for \$ 10 million when Pakistan was established as a sovereign country in 1958. With this agreement Gwadar district became a part of State of Pakistan. In 1993 a committee was sent to check the feasibility of deep seaport which shocked the maritime expert because of its value and importance. In this period major development projects were initiated at Gwadar in different phases.¹⁹ China Pakistan Economic Corridor is divided into three phases and is expected to be completed by 2030. The projects will bring prosperity in Pakistan and China will also benefit from the project equally.

The Makran Coastal Highway (653 km), which connects Gwadar and Karachi, was started by the National Highway Authority in 2002 and finished on an urgent basis. This route served as a vital link between two provinces: Southern Balochistan and Karachi. While the Gwadar Development Authority was founded in 2003 to oversee the city's development projects, the Gwadar Port was also constructed under the GDA's control.²⁰ In 2004, Pakistan's NHA began construction of the 820-km long M8 motorway linking Gwadar with Ratodero in Sindh province via Turbat, Hoshab, Awaran and Khuzdar and onwards with the rest of the Motorways of Pakistan. In 2006, the Gwadar Development Authority conceived, developed and adopted a 50-year Master Plan for Gwadar.²¹ In 2005, during the military regime of Pervez Musharraf; the Gwadar ports five berths were completed. The Civil Aviation Authority of Pakistan purchased 4300 acres of land in Gwadar in 2007 for making a new internal airport at an estimated cost of Rs. 7.5 billion. All these projects were a good sign towards the development of the district, but the local people were not satisfied with all these projects as they thought these projects will not change their fate and future.²²

Gwadar port was given over to Chinese authorities in 2013 with the establishment of the "China Pakistan Economic Corridor," which was run by Singapore's PSA international firm. Several Chinese state-owned enterprises are now operating in the Gwadar district. The first of development which was started in 2013 has been completed, now at least 43 companies will invest in Gwadar special economic zone. The Chairman of the China Overseas Ports Mr. Zhang Baozhong said that "*besides infrastructure and energy projects, various industries, including textiles, chemicals, automobiles, and mobiles will be set up in the Gwadar industrial zone, and that they will lead to more employment opportunities in the region*".²³ The city of Gwadar and the Makran region have received special attention, and despite security concerns and repeated attacks, Chinese enterprises are trying to develop the area. Energy, infrastructure, medicine, and education are among the most desirable initiatives that have been completed and some are in the planning stages.²⁴

The Gwadar-East Bay Expressway is one of the most important routes connecting East Bay with the Free Zone, as well as connecting the port to the major National Highway network, which is the most efficient means to move import, export, and transit commodities. The estimated cost of this Expressway was \$ 168 million and was completed with the given cost. The Ministry of Marine Affairs and Gwadar Port Authority supervised the project and sponsored and funded by China Pakistan Economic Corridor

and Government Interest Free loan. The project was initiated in 2017 and completed in October 2020. This East Expressway is a part of the beauty of the City.²⁵ One of the biggest projects which is under process in Gwadar city is of “*New Gwadar International Airport*” Construction of New Gwadar International Airport (NGIA), along with allied facilities for new airport that will be capable of handling a combination of ATR 72, Airbus, (A-300), Boeing (B-737) and Boeing (B-747) for domestic as well international routes. The estimated cost of this project is \$ 230 million which is funded by Chinese Government Grant and supervised by Civil Aviation of Pakistan. The project was initiated in 2019 which is expected to complete by 2023.²⁶ With the help of CPEC a Free Zone is developed on Chinese model to create backup port industry for Gwadar port. For this project total 6800 acres of land has been acquired in the port city. For the main Free Zone area 2800 acres, for GIEDA Industrial Zone 3000 acres and for EPZA Export processing zone 1000 acres. Similar with all these free zone development a number of project will start in the shape of Infrastructure as these industrial zones, for example, access roads, internal roads, water, gas, power, custom facilities, fencing, security, some warehouses, office and other allied infrastructure. These free zones and infrastructures will create more jobs opportunities for Pakistanis and especially for the people of Gwadar. This project is funded and financed by GPA, GIEDA, and EPZA or any Financial Framework Agreement under CPEC. The estimated cost of the project was \$ 32 million which was started in 2016, completed in 2018, where the first Expo was held in January 2018.²⁷ Under the CPEC, Dredging of Berthing Areas Channel is one of the important projects to make the port more reliable and functional all the time. These berths will be built near the Gwadar East Bay. The estimated cost for the project is \$27 million and will be funded and financed by Chinese government concessional Loan and will be supervised by the Ministry of Ports and Shipping of Government of Pakistan. The project is expected to be initiated within this year. This project further strengthens and improves the import and export more smoothly to all over the world.²⁸ Another important project is of Construction of Water breaks to facilitate construction of additional terminals at Gwadar Port by its Operator. The projects estimated cost is \$ 123 million supervised by the Ministry of Maritime Affairs. The business draft is under review which has been presented by COPHCL (<http://cpec.gov.pk/project-details/34>). With the consent of both the Pakistani and Chinese authorities a Smart Port City Master Plan which is to develop the Gwadar on the model of a modern developed city of the world. The details of the Master Plan are still not published. For this project a MoU

has been signed in 2015, a Chinese harbor design institute has been nominated for the Smart city Master Plan.²⁹

Along with infrastructural development, the China Pakistan Economic Project focuses on the development of Gwadar's medical sector, with a hospital being built to provide contemporary and high-quality health care to the city's residents. This project is part of CPEC's second phase of development, and the hospital is currently being built. Only one of the six medical blocks at this hospital has been constructed thus far. The estimated cost of the project is \$ 100 million which is financed by the Chinese Government Grant in the supervision of Government of Balochistan Planning, Development and Reform Commission. Medical health care has been a problem of this area and this state-of-the-art hospital will resolve all the health-related problem of the people of Gwadar city and the region.³⁰

Education and literacy rate in Balochistan have been lower than other parts of Pakistan. An initiative has been taken to educate the people of Gwadar and Makran through CPEC projects and in the second phase focuses on socio-economic development of Gwadar city and the society. China Foundation for Peace and Development, for the promotion of education among the local built a school with the name of China Pakistan Faqeer, in first phase it was only a primary school which is now upgraded to a middle school.³¹ Now, the numbers of students enrolled in this school are 400 which are likely to increase in near future. Secondly, for the promotion of skills and development Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute at Gwadar has been begun to build which is expected to be completed in second phase of CPEC. People of Gwadar district will participate in management and operation of the seaport. It is necessary for them to have skills to get jobs in CPEC projects. The estimated cost of the project is \$ 10 million, financed by the Chinese government grant.³²

These development projects are not only confined to Gwadar city and district but other parts of Makran division also received several projects among which some of them have been completed in the phase-I of CPEC. In Kech district new roads were built, one of them is Gwadar- Turbat-Hosab(M-8) road. The estimated cost of the project \$13 billion the project is inaugurated and completed. Similarly, in November 2020, the Prime Minister of Pakistan Visited and announced several development projects which will be a part of the china Pakistan Economic Corridor. Another project which is recently inaugurated is the Naukandi-Mashkhel-Panjgur road which is connected with M-8 and N-85.³³ There are several projects which were financed by the Chinese government to the Balochistan government directly without the consent and involvement of the Federal

Government. Turbat city which is the administrative headquarter of Makran Division has been renovated with the initiating of CPEC. Turbat University and the medical college were also initiated in this period and which are completed and functional. These two big institutes have made Turbat city as an educational hub for the people of Makran region.³⁴

Table for CPEC projects in Makran

Project	Estimated cost \$	Completion date
Gwadar East-Bay Expressway	168	Completed
Development of Free Zone	32	Completed
New Gwadar International Airport	230	2023
Construction of Breakwaters	123	Under review
Dredging of berthing areas & channels	27	Under review
Pak China Friendship Hospital	100	2022
Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute at Gwadar	10	2022
Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan	4	2022
Gwadar – Turbat – Hoshab (M-8)	13	Completed
“Naukundi-Mashkhel-Panjgur Road Project Connecting With M-8 & N-85”	Under review	Under review

Impacts of the development projects on Makran region

Regional development and its theories have been proved good for the economic growth and production. In the case of Makran Division, as it was underdeveloped and never been the focus of the Federal Government. CPEC is an important project for this region and regional development, which took the attention of the authorities towards an important area and

economic booster for Pakistan. The impacts of these development projects are manifold which includes the development of infrastructure of the region, better economy, job opportunities, skills development, improve the literacy rate. Now, already these projects have devised new jobs for the locals and the life of people is get better. Interaction between the locals and the foreign investors will open new avenues for business. Addition of the Berths will increase the imports and exports of Pakistan. Verily, the projects other than infrastructure bring socio-cultural and economic development in the region. In Makran region the Chinese authorities are trying to transform the society through building schools and vocational training centers. This has a great impact because most of the facilities are free for the local people and the lower-class people can avail these opportunities, this is a good way for eradication of poverty from the region.

Suggestions

Security issues have existed in the Makran region for a long time, and they were exacerbated by the activities of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Balochistan has a long history of security concerns, but the new wave that began with CPEC can be addressed with these development projects. Local residents with a quota of jobs in development projects should be paid a royalty.

Before Initiating projects	The local government (elected) or the local people should be consulted, and their reservation must be listened and
Work progress on project	70% of the administrative and labor force should be taken from the respective district where the project is underway.
After completion of project	After the completion of the projects, the fruits and the production amount should be directly invested on that division or on the particular district.
Stop corruption eradicate poverty	The problem of corruption is more serious for this very strict law should be devise to eradicate corruption, which is the best way to reduce poverty in the region.

Conclusion

The current study focuses on the development projects under China Pakistan Economic Corridor in Makran region. CPEC is now a reality; it is now part of world politics. A number of countries are now attached with this project and are benefitting through this project but some of the countries are busy to derail this project, due to strong diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China they failed. It is imperative now for both the countries to fasten the projects in Makran region to boost up economy of the region. Several future predictions have been presented by the economists, political experts and social scientists from different parts of the world. Some the opponents have considered it as East India Company which came for the purpose of trade to India but conquered and ruled on South Asia for more than two hundred years. Accordingly, some of the well-wishers of the project have given evidences and predictions that this project will make the bonds and relations of two neighboring countries stronger and both the countries will benefit from the project for a long time. Similarly, China Pakistan Economic Corridor has set new records in foreign investment and development which is promoting people to people contact and creating a cultural amalgamation between the Eastern and South Asian people. All the projects which have been completed in Makran region now means of production for the people of Makran in the form of job opportunity, business and other activities. Now, CPEC is the future of Pakistan and development of Makran region is imperative.

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