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Gwadar Port as an Emerging Hub in New Great Game: Opportunities and Challenges for Pakistan

Abstract

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Keywords: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Geopolitics, Trade Routes Chabahar Port, Regional Rivalries

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Abstract

Gwadar Port has emerged as a crucial player in global trade and geopolitics, particularly in the New Great Game unfolding in Central Asia. Initially envisioned as a trade and transit hub, it now serves as a strategic asset for China, securing energy supply routes through CPEC and expanding its influence in the Indian Ocean. India perceives Gwadar as a threat to its regional dominance and counters it by investing in Iran's Chabahar Port to strengthen connectivity with Central Asia. The United States also opposes China's growing presence in the region, raising concerns over strategic dominance. Meanwhile, Central Asian states view Gwadar as a key trade corridor providing access to warm waters. However, regional tensions, security challenges, and competing interests hinder their full potential. This study explores Gwadar's economic and strategic significance, the evolving power dynamics surrounding it, and policy recommendations for Pakistan to establish Gwadar as a major global trade and economic hub.

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[China-Pakistan Economic Corridor \(CPEC\)](#), [Geopolitics](#), [Trade Routes](#) [Chabahar Port](#), [Regional Rivalries](#)

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Introduction

Economic warfare and geostrategic supremacy are as crucial in today's globalized world as military power and alliances. Sea-ports play a pivotal role in shaping regional and global power dynamics, serving as essential hubs for

trade and strategic influence (Mahan, 1911). Pakistan's Gwadar Port is a prime example offering significant economic potential while positioning the country as a key transit hub in the evolving New Great Game involving South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East (Kleveman,

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2003). China, as a key investor, seeks to enhance trade connectivity by linking its western region of Xinjiang to the Middle East via the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Small, 2015). This has raised concerns among India and the U.S., who view China's involvement in Gwadar as a potential naval expansion in the Indian Ocean (Holmes, 2008). In response, India has strengthened its strategic partnership with Iran, developing the Chabahar Port to bypass Pakistan and reduce reliance on Gwadar (Jorisch, 2013). The Strait of Hormuz's proximity to Gwadar further elevates its strategic importance, offering landlocked Central Asian states direct access to warm waters (Bochkarev, 2012). However, regional rivalries, security concerns, and internal instability pose significant hurdles (Ullah, 2014). Additionally, China's "String of Pearls" strategy, which includes port investments in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Myanmar, has heightened tensions with India, which sees it as an effort to encircle its maritime interests (Diwakar, 2013).

This study analyzes Gwadar's strategic and economic potential, evaluates regional power struggles, and explores policy recommendations for Pakistan. Using Alfred Thayer Mahan's theory of sea power, this research examines Gwadar's role in global trade and security (Mahan, 1911).

Review of Literature

Research on Gwadar Port remains limited due to the project's relative infancy. Most studies conducted before its operational phase were theoretical and lacked empirical data, making it difficult to assess its long-term impact (Kleveman, 2003). Given the strategic importance of maritime trade, several scholars have examined the geopolitical and economic implications of Gwadar within the evolving New Great Game in South and Central Asia. Chellaney (2010), in *The Asian Juggernaut*, explores how China, Japan, and the U.S. compete for maritime supremacy. He highlights that China's growing naval and economic power is reshaping regional dynamics, particularly in response to India's strategic concerns over Gwadar. Similarly, Misra and Clarke (2013), in *Pakistan's Stability Paradox*, discuss how Pakistan's strategic vulnerabilities, including security concerns and terrorism, influence the development of Gwadar as a trade hub. Caplain (2010), in *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power*, underscores the Indian Ocean's geopolitical importance, drawing attention to China's increasing influence through maritime infrastructure, including Gwadar. Gupta (2012), in *Indian Ocean Region*, reinforces this perspective by analyzing regional cooperation trends and how Gwadar aligns with China's broader String of Pearls strategy.

Yusuf and Nabeshima (2010), in *Changing the Industrial Geography in Asia*, examine China-India

economic competition, arguing that Gwadar could shift trade patterns and industrial power in South Asia and beyond. Khan (2015), in *China's Gwadar and India's Chabahar: Analyzing Geo-Strategic and Economic Competition*, explores how Gwadar and Chabahar serve as competing maritime hubs, with India seeking to bypass Pakistan through Iranian cooperation. Li (2014), in *China's Power and Asian Security*, assesses China's growing military and economic clout, emphasizing how Gwadar provides Beijing with strategic leverage in the Indian Ocean. Pavlins and Giragosian (1996), in *The Great Game: Pipeline Politics in Central Asia*, discuss energy geopolitics, arguing that Gwadar could become a pivotal hub for Central Asian energy exports, competing with alternative routes backed by Western and Indian interests. Despite these analyses, Gwadar's full potential remains contingent on regional stability, security challenges, and Pakistan's policy direction (Small, 2015). This literature review underscores the strategic importance of Gwadar while highlighting the complex geopolitical rivalry surrounding its development.

Theoretical Framework:

Sea Power and Alfred Thayer Mahan's Naval Strategy

Two eminent naval strategists, Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914) and Julian Corbett, significantly shaped modern maritime theories. Of these, Mahan's ideas have stood the test of time and remain highly relevant to contemporary geopolitics, particularly in analyzing the strategic importance of Gwadar Port (Pruitt, 2000). Mahan's central thesis, as outlined in *The Influence of Sea Power upon History* (1891), emphasizes that sea power determines national strength. He argues that control over strategic maritime locations enhances economic and military dominance, a concept that applies to China's growing naval presence at Gwadar (Mahan, 1911). Mahan identifies three key factors in evaluating a port's strategic value:

1. Geographical Position – Its location relative to major trade routes and rival ports.
2. Commercial and Military Utility – Its economic significance and naval capabilities.
3. Defensive and Offensive Potential – Its ability to secure trade and support military operations (Kurrer, 2012).

Application to Gwadar Port

Gwadar's proximity to the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's busiest oil transit points, makes it a crucial refueling and logistical hub for China. Mahan stressed that access to overseas coaling and refueling stations is vital for sustaining naval power, a principle that aligns with China's investment in Gwadar as a naval outpost

(Potter, 1981). Furthermore, Mahan emphasized fleet concentration as the principle that naval forces should remain unified and offensive-oriented. The presence of Chinese naval forces at Gwadar could counterbalance India's influence in the Indian Ocean, a strategic move that aligns with Mahan's concept of using sea power for geopolitical advantage (Vego, 2009). Mahan also highlighted the importance of communication and supply lines, which are essential for sustaining naval dominance. Gwadar, when linked with CPEC and China's "String of Pearls" strategy, enhances Beijing's access to energy routes and trade networks, strengthening its regional hegemony (Chau, 2014).

Limitations of Mahan's Theory in Modern Naval Strategy

While Mahan focused on offensive naval strategies, he underestimated the role of economic warfare and trade disruption. Modern naval power increasingly relies on maritime trade security, economic blockades, and cyber warfare, aspects not fully addressed in his works (Mahan, 1911). Additionally, his skepticism towards using naval forces to protect merchant shipping contrasts with today's emphasis on securing global trade routes, a key concern for China and Pakistan at Gwadar (Chau, 2014). Mahan's sea power theory provides a valuable framework for understanding Gwadar's strategic role in global geopolitics. China's expansion at Gwadar aligns with his principles of naval dominance, logistical expansion, and strategic positioning. However, modern naval strategies incorporate economic warfare, trade security, and hybrid conflicts, requiring an updated application of his theories to contemporary maritime power struggles.

Application of the Concept of Alfred Thayer Mahan on Gwadar Port

The Twin notions of the New Great Game and the naval theory of Mahan are applied to the prospects, challenges and possible course of the Gwadar port. As mentioned earlier, Mahan's theory constitutes a landmark work in the strategy of the sea ports and the naval facilities. The application of the theory proceeds in two ways. First, the general principles of the theory are taken, and the concrete facts and issues of the Gwadar Port are analyzed in the light of those general principles. Then some concrete and specific points of the Gwadar port are analyzed to see to what extent the theory confirms or reject those points. The phrase Great Game in international politics always refers to the historic struggle between The USSR and Great Britain. It was Lt. Arthur Connolly of the 6th Bengal Native Light Cavalry who coined this famous phrase known as "Great Game" (Hopkirk, 1992). Hopkirk further elaborates that the commercial interests of Great Britain brought it against

the USSR. Great Britain wanted to extend its influence for trade purposes. Contrary to it, The USSR wanted to access Indian Ocean. It was thought by The Soviet strategists that accessing Afghanistan would enable them to materialize their imperial designs. For this purpose, the Soviet troops and Britain forces fought on the battlefield (Mohammad, 2014). This fierce competition between these imperial powers ended on the agreement that they declared Afghanistan as a buffer state. It was suggested by Rudyard Kipling Kim that this area would become the center of fierce war among the different states. In his words, "When everyone is dead, the Great Game is finished, not before". (Alam, 2005).

Analysis Of New Great Game

Gwadar port has become a hub of regional as well as world politics at this time. The regional great powers like Russia and China have put their strong feet in Central Asia to contain penetrating influence of the United States of America and its allies under the banner of NATO. Other important countries like Iran, Turkey and Pakistan are straining their every audacity to get share from this Game know as New Great Game. For a student of International Relation, New Great Game is a classic example to understand the nature of conflicting ideologies of world politics. The states are demonstrating rational behavior in this game. Capitalism and Communism again have come in colliding position. Conflict of interest remains present even between China and Russia who want to contain Capitalism. Again Iran, Turkey and Pakistan being Muslim states want to penetrate their influence in the Muslim states. (Makni, 2008).

Significance of Central Asian States

At present, the region has become a hub of world politics. The regional politics is affecting Russia and China. Iran's involvement in this game is affecting politics of the Gulf Region. Saudi Arabia supports the USA, and she supported the Taliban's regime to pursue policy of hegemony in Middle East. The two major states of South Asia have come to this region to exert their own influence, and they are competing with each other. The strategic and economic rivalry is also affecting the politics of South Asia. In simple words, Central Asia is connecting different regions like Gulf, Middle East, South Asia, East Asia, Europe and Indian Ocean. This connectivity has evolved into conflict of interests. Having 30 billion barrels of proved oil reserves, Kazakhstan ranked 12th in the world, and Azerbaijan ranked 20th, having seven billion barrels. Turkmenistan ranked 42nd, having 600 million barrels, and Uzbekistan ranked 43rd, having 594 million barrels. Saudi Arabia ranked 1st in the world, having 266.8 billion of barrels and Croatia ranked 66th, having 79.15 million barrels. The total proved oil

reserves of the world in 2009 were 1332 billion barrels (Kurecic, 2010). Kazakhstan occupies a substantial position among the states of central Asian republics. Kazakhstan will be able to sell up to ten million barrels of crude oil per day to the world by 2020, as much as Saudi Arabia. This prospect is a potential nightmare for the international oil cartel OPEC. The Kashagan field has kicked off a crucial stage in the New Great Game. Kazakhstan is among the three major Uranium producing states of the world. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are providing 20% requirement of Uranium to the states of the world. If Kazakhstan becomes leading producer of Uranium of the world the worth of the states will be enhanced on the international stage. (Miguel A. Marten Peres, 2010). Pakistan is suffering shortfall of 5000MW. This shortfall has adversely affected the social, political and economic condition of Pakistan. Unemployment and Social violence have increased. It is an acknowledged fact that strong foundations of a state are erected on the basis of strong economy. The overall growth rate of Pakistan is 3 to 4 % which can be increased up to 7 to 8 % if shortfall is controlled. (Ahmad D. S., 2013). The Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline (TAPI) is a 7.6 billion dollar project backed by Asian Development Bank. The pipeline will be completed in 2018 and will fulfill 25% of energy shortfall of Pakistan. Similarly The Central Asia South Asia Regional Electricity Trade Project (CASA1000) has also been designed to provide electricity to Pakistan from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The whole of struggle of Pakistan revolves around strategic and economic interests. (Bochkarev, 2012)

Geo-Economic Importance of Gwadar Port and New Great Game

The economic importance of Gwadar Port is very much. It can play an important role in the economy of Pakistan. Pakistan should follow the Chinese example of lifting the level of Xinjiang region. Pakistan will be blessed to revive Balochistan and bring it back in the mainstream by developing Gwadar Port. China wishes to build Kashgar as a new center of trade for the whole region. After 1979 special economic zones were developed in this region and Central Asian traders are encouraged to participate in Sundays in which they can display their commodities. Pakistan can benefit from the trade with China provided it develops its local industry. It is facing enormous energy crisis and it can only get the lion's share of benefit if it upgrades its internal industrial potential. (Ahmad D. S., 2013)

Significance of Gwadar Port for Pakistan

The significance of the Gwadar port has been well established by now. The entire Pak-China Economic Corridor revolves around the centerpiece of this port. General Musharraf retired President of Pakistan

summarized the critical importance of the port for the South and Central Asian region when he said that "If we see this whole region, it is like a funnel. The top of the funnel is this wide area of Central Asia and China's western region. And this funnel gets narrowed on through Afghanistan and Pakistan and the end of this funnel is Gwadar port" groundbreaking ceremony 2002 (Malik, 2012). Seen through the futuristic prism, this port seems the economic funnel for the whole region. If this port is not operationalized, then the region including Pakistan would suffer heavily since their major route for business and linkages with the Middle East and then the region beyond would be blocked. The development of many shipyards depends on the port and the mineral resources of Balochistan would also get lot of room for export to the Middle East and the world beyond. China's stakes in the port and its ownership chances increased with each passing moment. The initial cost of development was borne by the Chinese government for it paid as much as 80 percent of the initial capital to be invested in the structure. This is why many political pundits were surprised when a Singaporean company obtained the operating rights of the port in 2006. (Chengappa, 2004). The second takeover, however, was even more shocking although it was not unexpected. When China got the operating rights for the port, India became suspicious and raised many objections and concerns but most of these concerns were ungrounded only meant to keep Pakistan backward and impoverished. Indian defense minister of that time A K. Antony categorically declared that the matter of Pak-China deal on Gwadar port is of serious concern for India (Antony, 2013). Pakistan can have enormous economic benefits from the port and China too can get access through Middle Eastern and Gulf countries via the shortest route and there is the military dimension of the issue of Gwadar port as well. The Gas and Oil of the gulf countries can reach the Chinese province of Xinjiang with great speed and many of the Chinese products can be exported through this corridor. To incentivize China into offering the construction and operation cost, Pakistan offered it to build a fifteen kilo meters long pipeline which will run from the western Chinese province of Xinjiang to Gwadar. The Chinese energy transit will be facilitated, and Pakistan will get the line rent and the strategic advantages as the Chinese will enhance their dependence upon Pakistan. China can also plan to build an oil refinery on the port so that the oil imported through the sea route can be processed there and distributed to different countries. Gwadar port can also provide a focal point for the Chinese where their ships can stay and refuel and their trade with the western countries, Middle East and even the Central Asia can be enhanced. As China is investing a lot in the Central Asian region for energy, it can use Gwadar Port to enhance energy bonds and

integrate the entire region into one unit under its own auspices.

Gwadar Port and the Strategic Leverage for Pakistan

Gwadar is now a real and powerful signpost of the increasing cooperative relationship between Pakistan and China. Pakistan is also likely to get much strategic leverage as its isolation from the region around can be ended with the completion and functioning of the Gwadar Port isolation which has been plaguing the country since independence. This Port has the capacity to become one day, the largest deep seaport of the world and it's also considered a gateway to the Arabian Sea both for the western China and the Central Asian states. Although there are still many hurdles in the way, the port is surely going to become a two-way outlet for the exchange of products and energy from east to west and from north to south. If Pakistan has any long-term objectives in the Arabian Sea, the Indian Ocean and the Gulf countries, then Gwadar is going to play a very helping hand in materializing these objectives. Traders, investors and businessmen are the real sign of the progress of a country and not the amount of foreign aid or relief a country receives, and Gwadar is going to bring much trade, investment and business in the country. The challenges are also quite formidable. Iran has direct access to the Central Asian countries coupled with their pleasant relations with those states whereas Pakistan must pass through the Afghan corridor of Wah khan to reach the Central Asian states. Now Pakistan has to first build good and trustworthy relations with Afghanistan and incentivize it to give our goods and energy lines access to the Central Asian states and secondly to hope that the security situation of the Afghan nation remains stable enough that they can implement any pledges which Pakistan can manage to extract from their side. On the face of it, the construction of Chahbahar Port by India might be a reflection of its desire to build transport infrastructures and enhance its trade opportunities but actually this is a grand design to encircle Pakistan and kill its prospects of expanding the trade and energy links into the Central Asian states since their energy exports would have already diverted to the Chahbahar Port. Pak China collaboration in Central Asia will support their economies. It will also decrease the rising effect of India in the region. Since all the Central Asian states are landlocked, they have no access to sea. Gwadar Port will provide the shortest and more convenient route to the Central Asian States. (Anwar, [2011](#))

The prospects for the successful completion of the Gwadar Port depend on several contingent factors but there are some real chances of it seeing the light of day. For one thing, China is too much dependent on foreign energy particularly on oil from the Middle East to leave

the Gwadar Port incomplete. It spends a huge amount of cash on the transit charges for the energy it gets from the Middle Eastern countries to its Eastern ports. One time investment in the Gwadar Port and its related railway and road infrastructure can provide China a huge lifeline from where it can transport huge volumes of oil and gas at affordable prices and with less consumption of time as well. These conditions must be met if China wants to compete with Americans and become the next superpower. Just as Americans made close strategic and economic alliances with the post war European countries, and then it really achieved the status of the superpower, the Chinese too need to relinquish the hands-off approach or isolationism and actively engage in the regional and global affairs. Since energy forms a key pillar of the development of China, its requirement in the land will keep growing arithmetically if not exponentially. (Jetly, [2012](#))

Worth of Gwadar Port for China

As for China, it carries out most of its trade from the Melaka straight where international power rivalry and threats of piracy are ever so great. Thus, Gwadar can ease much of the pressure China has to handle and the compromises it must make. On the military plan, China can not only guard against Pakistan and Indian advances in the region, but it can also emerge as a dominant naval power in the Indian Sea if Gwadar is utilized as a refueling and resting place. Even if Gwadar Port does not become an exclusively Chinese base and it is operated jointly by Pakistan and China, then the two countries being India's rivals, they will adequately handle and check Indian designs in the Arabian Sea and beyond. Although regional and international voices have been raised against the prospects of China getting the full control of naval base of Gwadar, yet as the geostrategic analyst James Holmes believes that "Since China may be looking to weight its options in the region to check India, the possibility of a Chinese base at Gwadar cannot be ruled out" (Holmes, [2008](#)). Both the location of the port and the expanding Chinese naval vessels and soaring strategic ambitions make it even more likely that someday Chinese might financially or politically compel Pakistan to let it build a base over there.

This is where most of the Indian concerns come into play. Some concerns can be raised internationally but others can only ponder and prepare it for the consequences of if the project materializes. That Gwadar is a bone of contention for India is nothing new. It raised eyebrows at the project from the very outset. From its own perspective, Pakistan is likely to gain supremacy above India in the central region since those states would naturally incline toward this Port for trade and transit. Another major Indian concern is the direct Chinese involvement and financial ownership of the project. And

Chinese acquisition of the full operational rights is a strategic nightmare of India comes true. So much so that it is stoking insurgency in Balochistan and giving assistance in both financial and military terms to Tehreek Taliban Pakistan for sabotaging the project of China Pak Economic Corridor and threaten away the Chinese from the road and energy projects. Pakistan has reserved special security squad and budget for providing security to the Chinese engineers and workers. The recent flair-up in tensions and increasingly hot rhetoric between Pakistan and India has also a lot to do with the Gwadar project. India strongly feels that its maritime interests can be hampered if the project sees the day of light. (Ullah, 2014).

Energy Needs of China a Huge Boost for Gwadar Port

China consumes twelve percent of the total world energy, second only to the United States which consumes 24 percent. Of this heavy volume, China imports more than sixty percent and more than half of its total imports come from the Middle East from the Strait of Hurmoz. As Brigadier Suba Sindhu notes, Chinese demand is likely to ascend to more than 16 million barrels per day till the year 2025 and much of this energy is going to come from the Middle East (Bongiorni, 2007). The Chinese companies are signing multiple contracts out of which they have finalized one with Saudi Arabia, under which the crude Saudi oil will be brought inside China through the Eastern ports and then refined here for China's own needs. China is also in the process of completing or has already completed many energy import deals with the neighboring Central Asian States so that the economic growth goes on without hurdles. Yet its dependence on the Middle Eastern oil cannot be reduced very quickly hence the prospects for the Gwadar Port become more and more bright. Since there is a plan to build an airport near the Gwadar Deep Sea Port, the air-busses can also move from one country to the other carrying the urgent trade goods and passengers who happen to travel to the port. This will give additional incentive to the Chinese companies to invest in the Gwadar Port and hence diversify the investing entities. As in a research paper explains that "In spite of the fact that it might consume to a year for the arrangement to be marked, Gwadar might be the most westerly in a string of Chinese-supported ports circling its huge opponent, India, which was speedy to express concern over the approaching exchange". (Saqib, 2013).

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

The CPEC is a network of railway lines, roads and energy projects which is envisaged to bring the Chinese provinces adjacent to Pakistan in connection with the Gulf countries and reduce the current distance of 12000

kilometers which the Middle Eastern oil has to travel to reach the Chinese city of Kashghar. Former President says that "This port would prove to be trade corridor for Central Asian states, China and the Gulf as 60 per cent trade of oil and gas is done through this route"(Shahid, 2007). In addition, the CPEC is poised to generate electricity more than 20000 Megawatts for Pakistan. So, the whole of South Asia is likely to benefit from the project and likely to bring stability and prosperity to the region (Xinhua, 2013). Besides the usual railway, road and Oil and Gas links predicted for the economic corridor, a major physical infrastructure is the 2700 kilometers long road link between Kashghar and Gwadar through Khunjrab and a railway line between Khunjrab and Gwadar for freight transportation. The Khunjrab line can relate to Chinese cities, Iran, the Central Asia and even India if relations obtain a strong and stable footing (Sial, 2014). The Karachi-Lahore motorway is also a part of the CPEC project and the KKH will also be refurbished in the same way. The Karakorum highway links the Gilgit Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtoon Khawa regions with Chinese territory. The corridor however faces several regional and internal threats and constraints which both Pakistan and China will have to very calculate and adjust accordingly. (Singh S. , 2008)

Challenges to Gwadar Port:

Origin of the Issue and Its Possible Hurdles

Soon after the independence of Pakistan, when the princely states were made to accede either to Pakistan or to India, Qallat which was a major state in Balochistan refused to join Pakistan. Its leader Muhammad Yar Khan demanded full independence for the State which would have set up a very bad example for the rest of the Princely states and the territorial integrity of the nation would have been in jeopardy. The Pakistan army forced the Balochistan region into affiliation with Pakistan and thus this trouble has a long history to it. Some tribal people ruled over different tribes headed by one chief who would determine the rules of collective behavior for that tribe. When the state of Pakistan annexed that tribally governed region, the state rule seemed against the very temperament and culture of Baloch people. Such insurgencies have forced the Pakistani state to deploy some fifty thousand Frontier Constabulary FC forces which are paramilitary armed personnel under the ministry of interior. These troops are often engaged in battles with Baloch insurgents and thus the sense of insecurity among the common people is also increasing. Since India and Afghanistan are also involved or at least alleged to be involved in stoking the insurgencies, Gwadar Port and its security has a clear international dimension to it. (Sikri, 2009).

The Baloch insurgents believe that Baloch territory is their exclusive property and handing it over to China is a

violation of their basic ownership rights. China is perceived to be working either for the federal government alone or even worse, only for the Punjab government. Despite repeated assertions by the Chinese foreign ministry and their diplomatic staff housed in Pakistan that they are interested in the progress of the entire Pakistan without discrimination, their engineers are being targeted by different Baloch militant organizations whose arming and financial sources are hard to establish in the Pakistani land hence logically many international powers are supporting them. Besides Baloch insurgency, Baloch territory is also plagued by sectarian violence. As (Walsh, 2013) reports, Hazards and Shias are the particular target of Sunni armed organizations like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Sipah-e-Sihaba whose venomous ideology has wreaked havoc in the entire country and now they are ruining the prospects of the completion of Gwadar Port as well.

Indian Concerns

The reaction of Indian media and its coloring of the project reflected the reservations and strong concerns India feels. One example of this reaction is the famous headline of a prominent Indian newspaper which read like “Chinese hand reaches Persian Gulf mouth” (Gupta, 2012). In the same vein, the naval chief of India in 2003 expressed grave alarm at how China was increasing commercial and strategic ties with Indian neighbors and the Gwadar Port received particular attention in the expression of such concerns on the part of Indian think-tanks and politicians. India, however, did not limit its reaction to talks and conferences alone, it actively tried to gain advance information about the Gwadar project through its spy agencies and this was found out by the Pakistani police who arrested an Indian agent and seized from him the map of the Gwadar Port and its adjacent localities. India fears encirclement at the hands of Chinese commercial and military empire since from its perspective, China is spreading its tentacles everywhere across Asia. Different Chinese projects are either completed or in the pipeline both around the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea. Nepal has offered China to build a dry port worth 14 million \$ near its Tibetan border. Now Nepal also bordering India, logically it would have grave reservations at the project since the economic integration and mastery which India aspires over the whole SAARC region will be shattered with such projects. In the same region and vicinity, China will be constructing additional five ports all of them targeting directly the Indian market. (Izzadeen, 2009)

Indian Steps for Stalling the Gwadar Port Project

India is developing the port of Chahbahar. It wishes to develop the port as a counter to the Gwadar port. Pakistan's relations with Iran remain murky even after the

signing of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline. Iran wishes to connect with Central Asia and Afghanistan through the port of Chahbahar. “Iran's response to Gwadar Port has been to construct its own Chahbahar Port and compete with Pakistan in capturing access route and energy related trade from Afghanistan and Central Asia. In its efforts, Iran has an upper hand over Pakistan due to its close relations with the Central Asian States, particularly with Afghanistan. Iran allows Afghanistan to use Chahbahar Port with low Port fees”. The competition between Gwadar and Chahbahar may not be viewed through the lens of zero-sum game, but it will be relative in success provided how well the players in the region exert their influence. (Khan, 2013)

The New Naval Doctrine of India

India is leaving no stone unturned for stopping Gwadar Port from becoming an international trade hub and global transit route. The heavy Indian investment into building rail and road networks of Afghanistan and Iran are meant to divert all trade to the Chahbahar Port and fail the Gwadar port and thus reduce China's influence in the region while economically encircling and strangulating Pakistan. The authorities in Pakistan and China must prepare themselves for tough competition from the Chahbahar Port because India is very closely following the development of Gwadar, and many agents have been caught by the police of Pakistan who were operating from Karachi and providing sensitive intelligence and maps about the strategic routes and maps of Gwadar. (Athwal, 2007).

To get some idea of what is militarily and strategically at stake for India and how Gwadar can subvert some of the Indian designs on the region, one might have some look on the Indian New Naval doctrine and its implications for the region. This new naval doctrine envisages free shipping routes for India in the Arabian Sea and strong presence for countering Chinese influence. The doctrine focuses on the Chinese nuclear submarine missiles and the Chinese ties with the Indian Ocean rim countries especially Pakistan. In response, India is endeavoring to build a blue sea navy which has aircraft carriers, heavy anti-aircraft machinery and other offensive weapons (Rehman I. , 2012). It also plans to have many submarines which are difficult to detect through the conventional sonar systems and a domestic capability which can enable it to present itself as a global and big maritime power having the power to counter Chinese presence and hinder their crucial strategic objectives.

The Iranian Outlook on the Subject

Iran has also a lot of stakes in the Chahbahar and Gwadar Port prospects. Naturally, it deems the construction of the Gwadar Port as its rival because both the ports are

aiming at the same target of Central Asia, and this is also one reason why the Iran Pakistan gas pipeline is not seeing the light of day. Iran however has certain advantages over Pakistan when it comes to getting access to the Central Asian states because of its close and cordial ties with many of the states over there. The status of becoming a transit hub for Central Asia and Afghanistan is also more feasible for the Chahbahar port and Iran is gradually gaining some influence in the Afghan power corridors as well. Iran also allows Afghanistan to use the port of Chahbahar with lower costs. Pakistani experts believe that the Iranian Port can inflict heavy financial losses on the Gwadar port. And India is not oblivious to this fact as under the north-south agreement, she has pledged to further enhance the assistance for the development of the Chahbahar port. Various transit and infrastructural hick-ups still lie in the way, but both the countries and Afghanistan are trying to sort out these issues at the earliest. Another grand strategy is also under serious consideration and some facets of this strategy are being completed as well. This strategy is to link the Iranian port of Chahbahar with Central Asia through Afghanistan and then ahead to Russia and finally end up in Saint Petersburg. Since India is already pledging with Iran about the permanent place at the Chahbahar port, the Indian goods and products can get permanent access to Central Asian states, and it can fetch energy directly from those states and even Russia as well. There are serious signs that this project is underway. India has already provided more than dollar 136 million for the construction of the road which will link up the Port of Chahbahar with the main highway network of Afghanistan. (Christine, 2015).

The Challenge from Chahbahar Port

Now we may look at the port of Chahbahar, its geostrategic importance and how it magnifies the importance of the Gwadar Port even further. This port is located only 70 kilometers to the west of Gwadar Port. India is spending huge amounts of money and assisting Iran in all sorts of way so that the Chahbahar Port becomes operational, and it can gain geostrategic advantage against China and Pakistan (Robert, 2010). India also expects to get access to the Central Asian huge energy reserves and the still untapped consumer markets through this port. Gwadar Port strongest competition for trade is also expected to come from Chahbahar because India wants to bypass Pakistan and relinquish its need for this rival country for getting access to the Middle East and Central Asia. Traditionally, Pakistan has been a sort of hurdle between India and the Middle East but the Indian operating rights of the Chahbahar port can help them overcome this limitation. The highway which India plans to build from Chahbahar through Afghanistan to Central Asia can become a huge trade route in which

India envisages Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asian states as converging into a single consumer market for Indian products and the high-tech Indian industry particularly in the information technology sector. Iran, which is only suffocating under international sanctions wants to get maximum high technology input from India and the port provides both a brilliant convergence point. (Christine, 2015).

Global Challenges

There are a lot of global challenges to Gwadar Port. However, some positives also came out of the trends sparked by both globalization and the global market crisis. In the first case, mass migration of industrial zones and factories migrated from Asia to the southeast Asian and Chinese regions. This brought massive economic dividends and political influence into those countries (Rasgotra, 2007). There was massive consumption and accommodation of the Asian manpower and to some extent the problem of unemployment was managed. Then the global market crisis had another unexpected influence in that besides Russia, the Asian giants began to rival and even overtake European and American markets in various aspects. Thus, if the trade is burgeoning and Asia is getting its turn for global growth and political supremacy, then surely the role of sports cannot be ignored in this regard. In this way the legendary economic growth of China can change the geopolitical dynamics of the region. So that the annual Chinese growth of economy has been exceeding the seven percent benchmark and its share of the global GDP, and the global market has been constantly on the rise. In 1985, the share of China in global GDP was just 2.5 percent, whereas in 2006, it was more than 6.7 percent and this share exceeds the German share of global GDP until that period. (Yusuf, 2010).

Results and Discussion

Alfred Thayer Mahan explicitly pointed out the worth of sea power in his books. He suggested that to maintain supremacy in the world the state must maintain its hold on sea lanes. A state which has control over sea routes can exert enormous influence on its enemy states. Great Britain remained hegemonic for many years because of its naval powers. The construction of ports is part of naval power. A state needs an efficient network of ports to play an active part in world trade. The major states of the world are trying to connect themselves through roads, railways, sea, and ports. It is the age of globalization, and the states have come close to one another. In this age, the trade of hydrocarbon resources is a major feature of world politics. In the trade of energy resources, the role of the port has become obvious. The New Great Game denotes a tug of war among the different states to capture the resources of energy of Central Asian states. The energy-rich Russia's backyard states are landlocked. For

the transportation of oil and to the world market, they must rely on those states which share borders with the sea and have an efficient network of roads and ports. The USA, Russia, China, India, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan are the major states that are playing this game in their style. Every above-mentioned state has its worth. Each has a strong potential that cannot be denied. The Turkish deep seaport which is known as Ceyhan also carries strategic worth because it allows these energy-rich states to access the European market. The Iranian ports known as Chahbahar and Bandar Abbas have also assumed great significance. Chahbahar has brought India and Iran into a strategic partnership. The perspective of these efforts of the states is to pursue energy security. In fact, all these states are required to secure continuous supply of oil and gas at cheap rate to run the engine of national industries. Pakistan is also a key player of New Great Game and provides a link between the two regions of the world. The states of South Asia particularly India are energy deficient states. The states of Central Asia are rich in the reserve of oil and gas. Through Afghanistan, Pakistan is providing a link to these two regions. Keeping in view the worth of geo-strategic location of Pakistan, President of Pakistan General (R), Perviaz Musharraf boldly took the decision to construct Gwadar Deep Sea Port. As he was a practical soldier so he aptly realized the strategic worth of Gwadar. China is assisting Pakistan for the construction of Gwadar port keeping in view its global interests.

The internal and external challenges are interlinked. The major challenge to Gwadar Deep Sea Port and China Pakistan Economic Corridor is militant activities. The banned militant outfits which have trans-border network want to destabilize the region. The abetment by Iran and India is adding fuel to the fire for Pakistan and China. Evidences have been given the Pakistan intelligence agencies that Indian intelligence agencies have been involved in the criminal activities against the state which have been occurring in Balochistan. Both Iran and China do not want to see functionality of Gwadar Deep Sea Port. Both of these mega projects which are being financed by China which is posing challenge to India for becoming regional hegemon. Pak- China alliance is also posing threats to American interests in the region.

Now, Pakistan and China has become strategic partner. China has also brought Pakistan into Shanghai Cooperation Organization. India has also been granted membership of SCO. The energy rich states of Central Asia are also part of this China -Russia led regional block. This long term cooperation requires that these states can only be functional if the transportation routes for oil and gas are made functional. When it is clear that the players of New Great Game are seeking alliances with a view to find out ways of extracting and transporting oil and gas. The intensity of New Great Game is revolving around the common notion of energy alliance. These alliances

whether they are of China and Pakistan on the issue of Gwadar Deep Sea Port or they are between India and Iran on the issue of Chahbahar. There is also another way to look at this emerging hub of New Great Game those energy deficient states of South Asia and East Asia can connect to energy rich states of Central Asia. The energy trade in particular and the trade of other goods can be channelized among these regions through this Port. The geographic location of Gwadar Port is obvious. It can increase the geo-strategic and geo-economic links among the regional states.

Thus the hypothesis whether Gwadar Port can enhance the strategic partnership among Pakistan, Central Asia States, China and other regional states can be proved smoothly. There is also Gwadar Port can play a pivotal role for Pakistan to become a key player in the New Great Game. To prove it, a detailed overlook has been made in the above lines. China Pakistan Economic Corridor illustrates the fact that both of these states have put themselves into long term strategic partnership. A huge investment from China on this project does not focus only on energy trade. It is a major decision in the regional politics and it is bringing transformation in ally's pattern. The tilt of Pakistan is also increasing towards Russia. At the same, the relations among the USA, India and Iran are also gaining grounds. In fact, in the regional politics, the USA and India want to contain China. China and Russia also want to contain Western influence in this region. These blocks are seeking alliance and other instruments to prove their worth. Gwadar Deep Sea Port is a major instrument in the hands of Pakistan and China to enhance strategic and economic links with the states of Central Asia, South Asia and East Asia. Gwadar Port can also provide access to the states of South Asia and East Asia to provide access to energy resources of African continent and European market.

Recommendations

The prospects and dreams attached with Gwadar Port are no doubt realistic and well within reach. Pakistan can experience huge economic transformations if it harnesses the opportunities brought about by the Gwadar Port and the China Pak Economic Corridor. But many steps will have to be taken for the dream to come true. The differences between various provinces regarding the location of roads and routes must be properly negotiated. The smaller provinces must be taken into confidence and the economic rights of each province should be ascertained to the maximum. Many projects have already been wrecked by the poor security situation of the country. Too much investment has already been lost in the way of insecurity and peace less. The government must try to provide maximum security to the project builders. The contractors and investors must be taken

into confidence so that they can bankroll this entire adventure.

India has already been exposed by even the foreign media and the internal intelligence agencies that it has been financing and arming various types of militancy and even possibly some militant wings to destabilize Pakistan. The same is the case with the Gwadar port and the CPEC project. There are clear indications that Indian-financed spying has been going on in the Balochistan area. Our foreign office must play its part and highlight India's subversive role in the Pakistani territories. Thus, some deterrence may be achieved and India might be dissuaded from such criminal activities through the fear of exposure in the international community. On the other side, Indians must also be told clearly that Chinese presence in the Pakistani region and even their possible naval presence in the Gwadar port are not aimed at them. Pakistan only wants to boost its defense and incentivize the Chinese to invest and operate the port. The country does not harbor any ill intentions towards any country.

The Central Asian countries themselves require much attention from the Pakistan government and people. Thus Pakistan needs to expedite the process of port construction and on the other hand befriend and take into confidence the Central Asian states. Our Foreign Office should play a more proactive role in the strengthening of relations between Central Asian states and the political leadership might make visits to these countries for wooing their approval. Pakistan must develop bilateral links with the states of Central Asia. Irritants like support of Pakistan for Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) must be ended. Pakistan should render services to these states in the field of science and technology, banking, and military assistance. Pakistan should take advantage of being Muslim state. Free trade should be promoted. Security should be given to goods of these states at the time of import and export significance of Gwadar Port be projected. Pakistan should also try to connect itself with Central Asia via route. Pakistan should strictly follow policy of peaceful coexistence. Pakistan despite being a nuclear power cannot afford conventional war at large scale. Therefore, differences with India should be reconciled. Negotiations with Taliban should be done. Positive image in the eyes of regional states and at international level be set.

Russia and China have strong influence in Central Asia. Pakistan must develop cordial relations with these socialist states. Pakistan must not heavily rely upon western block. It is a matter of common understanding that states should have friendly relations with the states of region. Unfortunately, Pakistan does not have cordial relations with India and Russia. Pakistan cannot exploit. ECO is not functioning effectively. This is the strongest and the most effective platform through which Pakistan

can maximize advantage from Central Asian States. ECO must strengthen relations among the member states. ECO should follow ASEAN as model. Bilateral and Multilateral trade links and agreements are promoted through it. The member states must resolve their inter states conflicts through it.

Conclusion

Gwadar Port is pivotal for political strategic and economic interests of Pakistan in this region. It also shows that regional powers including China must not see Pakistan as a pawn state in the hands of larger ones and that it can shift and modify its own policies according to the changing behavior of other states and its own evolving interests. The Chinese leadership also had its vision of one road one belt and the string of pearls policy. Economically the port has begun to show the dividends as the government has exported some shipments of local fish catchment and thus the people are benefiting from the facility.

In recent years there have been some very tense moments in the Pak Iran relations when the Iranian government alleged that Pakistani Balochistan is housing such militants who come stealthily, cross the border into Iran and mount attacks on the Iranian militia forces. Jundullah has been particularly mentioned in this regard. Now given the close ties between India and Iran, the Chahbahar rivalry is getting more broad and deep dimensions. Another tension is likely to raise and further dampen the prospects for the Gwadar Port and CPEC investment. This issue is the division of investment capital between different provinces of Pakistan. Many journalists who are covering the news and incidents relating to the Gwadar port never neglect to mention the irony that although Gwadar, the base of the Pak-China economic corridor and the apple of Chinese eyes, is located in Balochistan, most of the investments are in fact being made in Punjab. The performance and competing work of the Punjab chief minister is also mentioned in this regard. But even if we keep the media hype aside, it is quite easily observable that the inequality between different provinces of the Pakistani state is increasing. Although the ultimate effect of the poor performance and incompetence of the governments has promised to build the western alignment of the CPEC, which passes mainly through the provinces of Khyber Pakhtoon Khawa and Balochistan, the eastern alignment which passes through the Punjab and Sindh province is being built first. Recently the Punjab government has started recruiting special task force for the protection of the Chinese workers and engineers on the CPEC route in Punjab. This suggests how serious is the Punjab government in the prospects of the CPEC and wants to supplement governmental efforts for protecting Chinese investors.

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