

Geostrategic Imperatives for Pakistan of Gwadar Port

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The geographical environment is believed to be one of the most important elements influencing the expansion of human civilizations along watercourses. The contiguity of Gwadar Port to the dominant trading routes and energy chokepoints of the world contributes to its prominence in the regional framework. Gwadar will turn Pakistan into a regional corridor due to its geographic location in relation to the enormous supply and consumer market economies of different regions. This study is explanatory and qualitative, and it emphasizes the geostrategic imperatives driving the development of Gwadar Port, including those connected with Pakistan's economy and its position in the region, military strategy, and the development of Baluchistan Province, and concludes that the opening of the port has substantially enhanced the economy and security of Pakistan.

Keywords natural resources, commercial activities, Strait of Hormuz, landlocked states, naval base, security

Introduction

The geographical environment is believed to be one of the most important elements influencing human and social development. One constituent of that environment is the oceans which occupy nearly three-quarters of the earth's surface (Malik 2012). The ancient civilizations always developed along watercourses (Azhar 2015), and waterways have been utilized as trade routes throughout history. Modern commercial activities have further intensified the need for marine and riverine trade routes (Malik 2012) on the basis of which the significance of ports cannot be overlooked in a geoeconomic and geostrategic context (Naseem 2014). Ports can connect a country to the outside world and become an essential nucleus of commercial activities, contributing to the economic development of a state (Afridi, Bibi, and Muhammad 2016). Pakistan is blessed with plenty of natural resources, a diverse geography, and a 990-kilometer

coastline extending toward the west and the southeast, with the established ports of Qasim and Karachi and the country's recently established second marine base of Ormara (Hussain and Hussain 2017).

The name Gwadar is a combination of two Baluchi words, *guad*, meaning "wind" and *dar* meaning "door." It therefore translates as "the Wind's Door" (Dinesh 2021), "the Gateway of Winds" (Hussain 2016), or "the Gate of Air" (Dawn 2008). Pakistan has long dreamt of having a deep-water port at Gwadar. Situated on the Makran coast, Gwadar Port is likely to invigorate the economy and social structure of Pakistan (Khan 2013). It will be part of a trade route for the movement of natural resources from the Central Asian republics (CARs) to the rest of the world, as well as giving easy access to Asia's expanding consumer markets (Hussain and Hussain 2017). Gwadar is just 72 kilometers from the border with Iran and 320 kilometers from Cape al-Hadd in Oman. It is important due to its close proximity to the Persian Gulf and because it is only 400 kilometers from the Strait of Hormuz, through which 40 percent of the world's oil tankers have to pass, carrying oil to Western countries and Japan (Ali 2016).

In addition to its strategic location, Gwadar Port is significant on account of China's massive investment in its world-class docking facilities, on which the Chinese state-owned company, Chinese Overseas Ports Holding Company (COPHC) has a forty-year lease (Dinesh 2021). China is investing around US\$46 billion in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in an effort to secure its future energy needs. The Chinese are fully committed to intensifying and optimizing their strategic relationship with Pakistan over a broad spectrum, as well as promoting the peaceful development of the region (Afridi, Bibi, and Muhammad 2016). CPEC is the flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), and it is seen in Pakistan as a strategic shift in Sino-Pak relations from geopolitics to geoeconomics (Kazi 2020). CPEC is linked to the "Silk Road Economic Belt" (the Belt) on the one hand, and to the "Maritime Silk Road" (the Road) on the other. It has the potential to provide easy, efficient, and cost-effective interconnectivity between the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, and Africa, as well as South and Central Asia (Takrim and Afeef 2015). The BRI, which is projected to cost US\$8 trillion, is a major initiative aimed at minimizing the effects of China's economic downturn and diversifying supply routes for surplus production (Kazi 2020). CPEC, which Premier Li Keqiang of China has designated the initiative's "flagship project," serves as an ideal test-case for China's approach to foreign investment protection (Boni 2019). China intends to boost its bilateral trade to US\$150 billion by spending US\$62 billion on CPEC (Kazi 2020). One of China's primary objectives in relation to CPEC is to expand its energy trade routes to and from the Middle East, on account of which China has agreed to pay for the construction of the Pakistani portion of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline (Khetran and Saeed 2017).

Energy collaboration between China and Pakistan through CPEC will

benefit China by allowing it to diversify its energy supply routes—as Gwadar Port will serve as an alternative to the Malacca Strait—and assist Pakistan by boosting the development of its western regions (Kazi 2020). China plans to construct a refinery at Gwadar Port, as well as oil pipelines connecting Gwadar and Kashgar which will drastically reduce the distance its oil supplies have to be transported. This route will not only be cheaper but also safer than transporting oil by sea. Currently, tankers take twenty days to travel from China to the Persian Gulf; it will only take forty-eight hours for oil to reach China through Gwadar (Afridi, Bibi, and Muhammad 2016). By offering a new trade route, Gwadar resolves China's "Malaccan dilemma" (Dinesh 2021). As one end of CPEC, Gwadar will be linked to Xinjiang by a 900-kilometer road which follows the route of the Indus Highway (Afridi, Bibi, and Muhammad 2016).

Gwadar, situated on the Arabian Sea, is one of the world's largest deep-water ports (Tanoli 2016). Pakistan has the advantage of being the gateway to the Strait of Hormuz in the Indian Ocean (Malik 2012). Gwadar will prove to be a critical element in the guaranteeing of Pakistan's maritime interests in the region due to its geoeconomic and geopolitical impact on the chessboard of global politics (Kalim 2016). All of Pakistan's oil imports come from the west (Azhar 2015), and Gwadar has great strategic value in terms of extending Pakistan's influence in the region from the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean and from Southeast Asia to the Far East. It is also close to the Strait of Hormuz through which more than 13 million barrels of oil per day are transported (Hussain 2020).

Gwadar Port is ideally located to capitalize on the economic possibilities of the energy-rich areas of Afghanistan and the Caspian Sea region (Malik 2012). The port's capability and capacity could also be expanded (Tanoli 2016). Gwadar may also help to strengthen Pakistan's maritime security (Azhar 2015). Pakistan will become an economic gateway as a result of the key communication and commercial connections associated with Gwadar, thus increasing inter-regional trade (Hussain 2020). Pakistan has declared Gwadar Port to be a free economic zone (FEZ) and a duty free port (DFP) (Naseem 2014). The port will offer tax incentives and opportunities for free trade as a way of enticing foreign direct investment (FDI) in the establishment of commercial projects (Tanoli 2016), allowing Pakistan to earn foreign exchange in the form of transit fees, thus bolstering its foreign exchange reserves (Hussain and Hussain 2017). Ships, including oil tankers, have to travel long distances along the coast of Pakistan on their journey to the Far East. Throughout the journey, these ships are susceptible to attack and require the protection of naval vessels that might be used for other tasks (Azhar 2015).

When it was constructed, Gwadar Port had the potential to generate annual transit trade worth more than US\$50 billion (Shahnaz 2015). In 2019, it was anticipated that once the port was operational and its links with the CARs, Iran, and China were developed, about two-thirds of Baluchistan's population would

have an opportunity to participate in port-related activities (Abbas et al. 2019), as thousands of jobs will be generated in a port designed to handle cargo containers weighing more than fifty thousand tonnes. It will attract foreign investors and open new vistas of economic development in the region by generating revenues for Pakistan's national economy and overcoming security challenges. Gwadar Port is an absolute necessity for Pakistan, as the country's existing ports are overloaded with cargo traffic (Shahnaz 2015). The port's maritime transit revenue can be utilized for development purposes. Gwadar has an annual capacity of between three and four hundred million tons, equivalent to the annual volume of traffic of all the ports of India. Gwadar's strategic worth can be comprehended when we realize that Pakistan's seaborne trade accounts for 36.3 percent of its GDP, compared to the world's thirty largest economies whose maritime exports alone account for only about 10 percent. The number of containers being handled by ports around the world has been increasing at a rate of 9 percent per annum. It has been argued that the extent of a country's maritime trade is a measure of the magnitude of its economy (Tanoli 2016). The volume of trade that is projected to pass through Gwadar Port suggests that it has the potential to produce substantial revenue by facilitating economic and foreign policy choices. Gwadar Port, one of three deep-water ports in Pakistan, will play a critical role in the country's economic connectivity with the CARs, the Persian Gulf, East Africa, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and northwestern India (Fazl-e-Haider 2009). Between twenty and thirty oil tankers and other seagoing vessels pass through the energy chokepoint that is the Strait of Hormuz every day, and during peak hours, one tanker passes through every six minutes (Kalim 2016).

It has been estimated that there may be more dry than liquid cargo passing between Pakistan and the CARs, which indicates that a deep-water port for large ships may prove to be a good option (Malik 2012). Gwadar Port should be able to accommodate bulk carriers of up to 50,000 dead weight tonnage (DWT) and container ships of up to 25,000 DWT (Azhar 2015). Gwadar has the potential to be the world's largest deep-water port one day. It has eighty-eight berths and anchorage for mother ships of 100,000-200,000 DWT. The three multi-purpose berths may have a capacity of about 100,000 twenty-foot equivalent units (TEU), capable of handling 270,000 tons of general cargo and 450,000 tons of bulk cargo, while the annual cargo handling potential of Gwadar will be between 300 and 400 million tons (Tanoli 2016). As a trade hub, Gwadar will attract manufacturers and suppliers of goods not just in Pakistan but throughout the region (Abbas et al. 2019). The linking of the emerging Asian market economies with Gwadar will open up opportunities for Pakistani entrepreneurs to expand their trade with China and the CARs (Khan 2013).

Gwadar Port is likely to produce massive revenues for Pakistan by providing transit trade and shipment opportunities to other states (Azhar 2015). It will offer Pakistan extraordinary economic advantages, perhaps putting it at the

center of the region's recovery and giving it the chance to become the region's leading economy and the regional maritime hub of the future (Malik 2012). Gwadar will provide access to the shortest trading routes to the landlocked states of Central Asia (Tanoli 2016). It is also likely to make Pakistan a channel for the petrochemical trade which will stimulate its economic development (Azhar 2015). Establishing east-west trade links through Gwadar, as well as expanding them to China, will assist Pakistan in overcoming its isolation (Shahnaz 2015). There may be opportunities for setting up joint ventures and collaboration in the processing of fish and seafood, oil, and gas, and the exploration of other minerals. Gwadar, being a natural deep-water port, is less costly to maintain than some others (Takrim and Afeef 2015). A huge amount of funds has been allocated for energy generation and the development of infrastructure, which should make up for Pakistan's power generation deficit (Tanoli 2016).

This is an explanatory and qualitative study. In our exploration of the geostrategic significance of Gwadar Port, we have examined the roles played by the major regional and global actors, such as China, India, Iran, Afghanistan, the CARs, and the United States, and the reactions of all the parties concerned. The data for this study have been collected from various secondary sources, including research journals, academic papers, and electronic sources. The data were interpreted using the deductive method of investigation and an analytical and descriptive approach.

Geostrategic Imperatives with Respect to the Economy and the Region

Gwadar Port has gained currency in the light of recent international developments that are increasingly focused on maritime-related economic activities, and it has become an important reference point in discussions concerning the geopolitics and geoeconomics of the South Asian region (Dinesh 2021). In addition to its economic advantages, Gwadar may bring extensive political benefits by providing port services to regional states, specifically to the landlocked CARs. Gwadar Port has the potential to act as a gateway to regional prosperity (Hussain 2020). The only feasible route into landlocked Central Asia is through the ports of either Pakistan or Iran on the Arabian Sea and via Afghanistan. Considering the present state of its relations with Iran, the United States may have no other option but to access the CARs through the Pakistan-Afghanistan route (Azhar 2015). Pakistan has also been exploring the possibility of developing a US\$5 billion gas pipeline in cooperation with Qatar, capable of carrying about 1.6 billion cubic feet of liquified natural gas (LNG) per day. This under-sea pipeline would carry LNG from Qatar's North Dome Fields to Pakistan via Oman (Hussain and Hussain 2017).

Gwadar will give Pakistan access to the energy resources of the CARs, which should help Pakistan's energy shortage (Tanoli 2016). Gwadar Port will also facilitate the transportation of hydrocarbon resources from the CARs to the international market (Naseem 2014). Pakistan also wants to utilize Gwadar Port to facilitate trade and energy transportation to China through Afghanistan and Central Asia (Khan 2013), and for the supply of electric power from the "power-surplus" states of Central Asia to the "power-deficit" nations of South Asia (Anwar 2011). The repercussions of Afghanistan's involvement may also be felt by Baluchistan (Shahnaz 2015). Afghanistan could choose to conduct its trade through the Iranian port of Chahbahar, although that might be contrary to US interests, so the most viable option would be to trade through Gwadar (Malik 2012). Trading through Gwadar substantially reduces the time and distance required for Chinese goods to reach Africa and western Asia—2,500 miles and three to four days, compared to 9,500 miles and two weeks (Zaki 2014). Pakistan needs to pay attention to its energy security in the future and China would be a good source of energy (Hussain 2020).

Pakistan's estimated annual revenue from oil and gas transportation, as well as land-to-sea trade via Pakistan, is about US\$1 million (Khan 2013). Gwadar will enable Pakistan to take advantage of transit trade to the CARs through Afghanistan and stimulate trade opportunities with the Persian Gulf countries (Tanoli 2016). With the improvement of Gwadar Port, trade to and from the CARs will definitely take the most direct route via Gwadar and this will bring increased trade benefits to Pakistan (Malik 2012). The port is providing more options for regional and international shipping, as well as restoring economic ties between China and the CARs. Gwadar Port has a wide area of influence, reaching northward to many of the former Soviet states, westward to Iran, the Gulf, the Middle East, and East Africa, and southward to India and Sri Lanka (Afridi, Bibi, and Muhammad 2016).

The CARs (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kirghizstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan) are important because of their wealth of natural resources. These neighbors of Pakistan have a combined population of 65 million and they rely on Pakistan's ports for all their commercial ties with the outside world (Afridi, Bibi, and Muhammad 2016). The development of Gwadar Port as a regional commercial hub has necessitated the building of adjacent infrastructure to handle imports of the CARs' energy resources (Khetran and Khalid 2019). Chahbahar in Iran and Dubai-World-Port (DWP) in the United Arab Emirates fear competition from Gwadar on account of its strategic location at the entrance to the Strait of Hormuz. Genuine concerns must be addressed by Pakistan in order to establish Gwadar as a regional energy corridor (Malik 2012).

Pakistan's geographical position makes it a gateway between South and East Asia and gives it a pivotal role in the region's economic activities. This role is not just the result of the development of CPEC but has evolved naturally

(Ahmar 2015). The BRI, which emphasizes regional connectivity via economic development, is seen as a new incarnation of the old Silk Route which linked Asia to Europe and Africa in the past (Khetran and Saeed 2017). Together with recent CPEC projects, it is facilitating interconnectivity between South and East Asia in which Pakistan is playing a central role (Hussain and Hussain 2017). CPEC will connect Pakistan to Central Asia via the Eurasian Land Bridge that is planned as part of China's BRI (Khetran and Saeed 2017). Gwadar is a convenient feeder port for the ports of the Persian Gulf and East Africa. It also complements the ports of Karachi and Bin Qasim in terms of cargo transit and is likely to establish itself as Asia's mother port in the coming years (Afridi, Bibi, and Muhammad 2016). CPEC will usher in a strategic relationship between Pakistan and China, with advantages extending throughout West, Central, and South Asia (Khetran and Saeed 2017).

As the regional actors realize its geographical potential, Pakistan is emerging as a center of maritime trade and commercial activities (Khetran and Khalid 2019). Gwadar has attracted between US\$26 billion and US\$46 billion of investment. Annual maritime trade between Pakistan and the rest of the world grew from 42 million tonnes in 2000 to 78 million tonnes in 2015 (Tanoli 2016). The CARs acknowledge the importance of Pakistan as a transit route to the south and an outlet for their landlocked economies and their hydrocarbon exports (Hussain 2020). Gwadar Port is expected to generate billions of US dollars in transit revenues and create about two million jobs (Almagir 2011), so may be considered to be the key to the revival of Pakistan's economy (Chang and Khan 2019), and it will also help Pakistan build up its foreign exchange reserves (Tanoli 2016). As the result of the development of Gwadar Port, Pakistan's commercial prospects will enable it to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with the UAE and Singapore (Khetran and Khalid 2019).

Geostrategic Imperatives with Respect to Military Strategy

In the twenty-first century, some countries are having to devote increasing resources to maritime security (Dinesh 2021). In geostrategic and military terms, Gwadar Port can serve as a strategic listening post for monitoring an eastern adversary's naval activities in the region (Kalim 2016). It is also as an excellent listening post for monitoring naval and other maritime activity in the Gulf (Sakhuja 2013). It is estimated that nearly 36,000 vessels transit Pakistan's area of interest annually (Malik 2012), so Gwadar is a strategically favorable position on the Arabian Sea for both Pakistan and China. This will transform Gwadar and the whole of Baluchistan into a center of economic activity and a focal point of intense geopolitical rivalry (Khetran and Saeed 2017). Gwadar Port has the potential to develop into a key site that will increase Pakistan's geographical

significance in a region that extends from the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean and on to Southeast Asia and the Far East (Naseem 2014). India's growing security cooperation with the US and Israel is considered to be detrimental to regional peace and stability and the overall security balance in Asia (Riffaat and Maini 2016). Only the simultaneous growth of strategic and naval cooperation between Pakistan and China can offset India's strategic and military relationships (Kalim 2016).

Pakistan's strategic depth is restricted from east to west, but this situation would be mitigated by the development of Gwadar (Hussain, Hussain, et al. 2021). Pakistan has depended on the ports of Karachi and Qasim for economic and security purposes, but due to their close proximity to India, these ports have remained vulnerable to disruption (Azhar 2015). For example, during past clashes with India, the Indian navy has blockaded Karachi and limited Pakistan's naval movements (Dinesh 2021). From a military perspective, Gwadar, a deep-water port located about 630 kilometers west of Karachi, seems to provide an ideal outlet to the Indian Ocean (Ali 2013). Long-range military deployments could significantly jeopardize Pakistan's regional maritime interests (Chang and Khan 2019).

Security and development are two sides of the same coin; it is nearly impossible to have one without the other (Shahnaz 2015). Gwadar's geographical position will help mitigate Pakistan's restricted strategic depth (Malik 2012). Indeed, the decision to develop Gwadar as Pakistan's third-largest port was based on geostrategic and military considerations, in particular the fact that it is 460 kilometers from the border with India, too far away to be susceptible to marine assault by the Indian navy (Kalim 2016), and that it offers natural protection from the weather (Malik 2012).

If India becomes a blue-water naval power, it would have far-reaching implications for Pakistan (Kalim 2016). Pakistani military experts have previously expressed grave concerns about India's ability to shut off Pakistan's energy supplies and maritime trade via the port of Karachi (Hussain, Hussain, et al. 2021). In contrast, Gwadar is ideally located both as a naval base and a center of economic activities (Shahnaz 2015). In 2016, the Pakistan navy established "Task Force 88" to provide security for the port of Gwadar, which serves as CPEC's launch pad in Baluchistan (Boni 2019). Pakistan has also taken the prudent decision to establish a sensitive defense zone (SDZ) near Gwadar Port (Naseem 2014). According to security analysts, Gwadar could be defended by the deployment of a single Agosta 90B submarine at the port owing to its strategic position (Hussain and Hussain 2017). Gwadar Port may be able to serve as Pakistan's third naval base after Karachi and Ormara. India has previously threatened to impose a naval blockade of the port of Karachi (Naseem 2014). The strategic position of Gwadar Port will add to Pakistan's strategic depth (Kalim 2016; Malik 2012).

With the development of Gwadar, Pakistan may be able to avoid the kind

of bottleneck its naval forces experienced during the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War and the Kargil conflict of 1999. Pakistan's transit trade and energy supplies were cut off during the 1971 conflict (Kalim 2016). Pakistan's interest in developing Gwadar, according to strategic experts, stems from security concerns regarding India's growing naval capabilities in the Indian Ocean during the 1990s, especially after 1992 (Riffaat and Maini 2016). This became even more important after the Indian navy launched Operation Talwar and another major naval exercise, Summerex, during the Kargil conflict (Dinesh 2021). These exercises were aimed at isolating the port of Karachi, which also contains a naval base, in order to block Pakistan's commercial conduits (Chang and Khan 2019). Pakistan was forced to seek an alternative as a consequence of these events, and Gwadar seemed to be a viable option (Boni 2019). The port is being constructed to handle big tankers and to offer an ideal environment for naval installations. It has a natural draught of 12.5 meters and anticipated dredging works will deepen it to 20 meters (Dinesh 2021).

The establishment of Gwadar Port will allow Pakistan to pursue nuclear assured retaliation defiance, also known as credible minimum deterrence, which is predicated on the deployment of a nuclear force in a secure position ensuring the capacity for retaliatory second-strike capability against an enemy (Hussain, Hussain, et al. 2021). Pakistan may follow India's strategy in putting naval assets and maritime infrastructure beyond the reach of adversaries (Kalim 2016). The port is home to the Pakistani naval base of PNS Akram (Dinesh 2021). The establishment of the Strategic Force Command in Gwadar may enable Pakistan to launch a retaliatory attack (Chang and Khan 2019). Since Gwadar is situated at a considerable distance from Pakistan's eastern neighbor, it will have a longer notice period in the event of an air or naval assault (Malik 2012).

Under the dynamics of a changing regional geostrategic environment, the US will have need of alternative naval bases and Gwadar would be the most obvious choice (Azhar 2015). Washington had been searching for strategic partners in the region, such as India, on account of its troubled relations with the Middle Eastern countries caused by its attempts to establish democratic regimes in the Muslim world (Riffaat and Maini 2016). These relations deteriorated still further after the United States and its NATO allies launched the Global War on Terror (GWOT) in the wake of the 9/11 attacks. The United States has retained a military presence in the region to protect its geostrategic interests (Dinesh 2021), and a military base in close proximity to the Persian Gulf would serve those interests (Boni 2019). Thus, it is possible that the US will one day wish to locate such a base at Gwadar (Kakar 2014). In addition to providing access to Central Asia, Gwadar may help the US in the GWOT by providing an alternative route to Afghanistan and the energy-rich CARs (Azhar 2015). Pakistan's membership of the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism, which brings together the militaries of Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and Tajikistan to strengthen their

counterterrorism cooperation, demonstrates the Pakistani military's critical role in securing CPEC, not just nationally, but regionally (Boni 2019). Gwadar will enable Pakistan to maintain uninterrupted surveillance over areas of the Arabian Sea, facilitating effective reprisal against any hostile action (Malik 2012).

Geostrategic Imperatives with Respect to Baluchistan

Baluchistan is a resource-rich province of Pakistan. It is the largest province in terms of land area, occupying about 43 percent of the country, but it is relatively sparsely populated (Takrim and Afeef 2015). Baluchistan has a 700-kilometer-long coastline on the Arabian Sea, through which it is connected to the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. It has one of the world's largest gold mines (RekoDiq), as well as iron and copper deposits (Saindak mines) (Khetran and Saeed 2017), but despite being rich in natural resources, Baluchistan is the least developed area of Pakistan. The province has great potential and capacity for economic development, especially since the opening of Gwadar Port, which is known as the "fate changer" of Pakistan (Tanoli 2016). Gwadar in Baluchistan has the potential to serve as a link between the sea lanes of the Indian Ocean and the Central Asian countries and China along the 2,200-kilometer land route between Gwadar and Kashgar (Khetran and Saeed 2017). These prospects for commercial growth and prosperity will bring peace and stability to the province of Baluchistan (Khan 2013).

Gwadar Port is a multibillion-dollar Baluchistan-based development project that is changing the world economy (Afridi, Bibi, and Muhammad 2016). Baluchistan, with its abundant natural resources, has the potential to substantially gain from regional economic connectivity (Khetran and Saeed 2017). Pakistan's government wants to link the country to Central Asia through Termiz in Uzbekistan, and this will establish Baluchistan as the region's economic center (Khetran and Khalid 2019). Gwadar will be connected to major cities, enabling Baluchistan to reach its full potential (Takrim and Afeef 2015). Baluchistan in general and Gwadar in particular are anticipated to be critical to the success of CPEC (Khetran and Saeed 2017), and Baluchistan is anticipated to be the second-largest recipient of initial CPEC investments, with US\$7.1 billion out of a total of US\$46 billion (Khetran and Khalid 2019). The aim is that CPEC will make full use of Gwadar Port, located as it is adjacent to the Strait of Hormuz (Zaki 2014). In particular, it serves as a gateway for energy supplies to enter Pakistan and be delivered across the country through a planned pipeline (Fazle-Haider 2009). The economy of Baluchistan will be enhanced as a result of Gwadar which will allow natural resources to be transported more effectively. In 2017, it was expected that over the following eight to ten years, Gwadar Port would provide nearly two million employment opportunities (Khetran and Saeed

2017). The port authorities at Gwadar have indicated that European, Chinese, and Middle Eastern investors plan to establish around three hundred factories in the industrial and duty free economic zones (DFEZ) at Gwadar (Malik 2012). In 2016, it was estimated that approximately 1.7 million skilled workers would move to Gwadar over the next two to three decades (Tanoli 2016).

Gwadar will open up various policy options for Pakistan in terms of its maritime security. The port will provide interconnectivity between oceanic and land transport routes (Azhar 2015), and it will produce economic incentives and benefits for Pakistan by attracting FDI (Tanoli 2016). Skilled human capital from across the world will be attracted to Baluchistan, bringing the province increased international exposure (Azhar 2015). The port's geographical advantages will attract industries to its special industrial zones (Tanoli 2016). A lot of job opportunities will be generated in relation to these projects, thus reducing the unemployment rate in the province (Alamgir 2011). A 9.23-square-kilometer special economic zone (SEZ) is planned for Gwadar with an estimated budget of US\$2 billion which will do much to improve Pakistan's import/export prospects. It will also help Baluchistan exploit its potential and contribute to GDP (Tanoli 2016).

Agro-industry accounts for about 20.9 percent of Pakistan's GDP, and Gwadar will enhance that sector of the economy in Baluchistan. More than 1.7 million people are considering a move to Gwadar within the coming thirty years. It is envisioned that Gwadar will become a regional economic center that will help eradicate economic and social deprivation in Baluchistan. The port will promote employment opportunities in the province's public and private sectors, thus increasing Baluchistan's GDP and per capita income, which are currently the lowest in the country (Tanoli 2016). Gwadar, being the main port on the Makran coast, will contribute to the fisheries industry in the province (Azhar 2015). The construction of residential and industrial areas, roads, and other infrastructure will help modernize Baluchistan, making the province a popular location for industrial development and investment (Abid and Ashfaq 2015).

The incentives Gwadar offers to investors will increase the amount of FDI coming into Baluchistan (Tanoli 2016). Billions of dollars are expected to be generated through transit trade revenues as well as millions of job opportunities (Hussain and Hussain 2017). As a result, the province's poverty rate may eventually decrease. Gwadar Port is significant for Baluchistan because it will destroy certain misconceptions about the province that have been encouraged by separatists and other indigenous groups who would like to destroy national unity (Tanoli 2016). Baluchistan's wealth of natural resources includes untapped hydrocarbon reserves, minerals, and metals. Baluchistan possesses about 29 trillion cubic feet of gas and oil reserves, equivalent to 6 billion barrels (Hussain and Hussain 2017). This will ensure continuity of supply in the short term and contribute to the national exchequer (Azhar 2015).

The development of Gwadar Port will make a great contribution to Pakistan's economy (Hussain, Rafiq, et al. 2021). The tourism and hotel industries will be developed as the number of foreign investors visiting the project increases (Fazl-e-Haider 2009). Gwadar city will grow and become a center of regional economic activity as well as the location of a geostrategically significant port. The development of Gwadar Port will not only enhance the living standards of the Baluchi people but may also help to tackle security problems in Baluchistan (Hussain 2016). The province's literacy rate could also be improved (Fazl-e-Haider 2009). The province may thus be transformed into a twenty-first century society rather than a primitive tribal society tied to the land (Naseem 2014). Gwadar Port will stimulate growth and development in all parts of the province (Fazl-e-Haider 2009).

Conclusion

We must conclude that Gwadar Port is highly important due to its strategic location and the massive investment it has received from China. In the hope that CPEC will fulfill its future energy needs, China is investing around US\$46 billion in the venture. CPEC is the flagship project of China's BRI, a major initiative that is projected to cost US\$8 trillion. According to China's calculations, its US\$62 billion investment in CPEC will boost the value of its bilateral trade to US\$150 billion. CPEC will also benefit China by diversifying its energy supply routes, as transportation of oil and gas via Gwadar Port will serve as a good alternative to the long sea voyage through the Malacca Strait. At the same time, CPEC will boost the development of Pakistan's western regions. Gwadar is of great strategic value for Pakistan in terms of extending its influence in the region from the Persian Gulf to the Indian Ocean, and beyond to Southeast Asia and the Far East, as well as allowing Pakistan to earn foreign exchange through transit fees. Pakistan also has military ambitions for Gwadar. In particular, joint use of the naval base by China's People's Liberation Army Navy and the Naval Strategic Force of Pakistan as a deterrent against India is a possibility. Gwadar will enable Pakistan to maintain uninterrupted surveillance over portions of the Arabian Sea, giving it the ability to launch a reprisal against any hostile action.

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