

## **Baloch Nationalism and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a part of China's One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR) that China has designed as a tool to become a regional and then a global power. CPEC, which connects Kashgar in China with Gwadar in Pakistan, was met with enthusiasm in Pakistan as it is seen as a solution to Pakistan's current economic problems and an opportunity that will make Pakistan one of the most strategically important countries in the region. But this enthusiasm is not shared by Baloch nationalists in Pakistan. Baloch nationalists fear that they will completely lose control of their own resources and become the minority in the Balochistan due to CPEC and oppose it. In their opposition to CPEC, they have protested and also taken to violence. Therefore Baloch nationalism is seen as one of the challenges faced by CPEC.

The aim of the article is twofold. Firstly the article discusses why Baloch nationalists oppose to CPEC, secondly argues the reasons for Baloch nationalism cannot be a serious roadblock to CPEC.

**Keywords:** *Pakistan, China, CPEC, OBOR, Baloch nationalism*

**\* Views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not reflect the views of the institution**

### **Introduction**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that connects Kashgar in China with Gwadar in Pakistan is the flagship project of the One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR) which is the revitalisation of the Silk Road, later renamed the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

CPEC as a part of OBOR has been met with enthusiasm in Pakistan, seen as a solution to its economic problems and an opportunity to be key state in the region. For this reason CPEC is described as a game changer in Pakistan.

Nonetheless CPEC faces some challenges due to the regional geopolitical dynamics and domestic problems of the two countries. It is often claimed that one such challenge is Baloch nationalism because Baloch nationalists object to CPEC on various grounds and do not want the project to be realised. Resultantly, Balochistan seems to be inhospitable terrain for CPEC.

The article explains the reasons for Baloch nationalists' opposition to CPEC and puts forward the argument that in spite of this opposition, Baloch nationalism may not constitute a roadblock for CPEC.

### **Baloch Nationalism**

Pakistan has ethnic, lingual, religious and sectarian diversity. It has six major ethnic groups and other ethnic minorities (Worldatlas), there are many provincial languages. Majority of Pakistanis is Muslim; Christianity and Hinduism are also

practiced. For ethnic, linguistic and religious diversities Pakistan has not given the appearance of an integrated nation since its foundation in 1947. Some scholars define Pakistan as a state in turmoil (Barithwaite and D'Costa, 2018) and a salad bowl of ethnic and regional identities (Madan, 2009). With regard to reasons for why Pakistan has not given the appearance of an integrated nation, Pakistanis point to foreign powers that practiced "divide and rule" policy. While much emphasis has been laid on foreign powers' "divide and rule" policy, there are other reasons directly related to Pakistan people and governments as Ahmar says (2014), Pakistan lacked leadership or political force that can unite the people of Pakistan and also lacked ownership by the all segments of society. For exogenous and endogenous reasons, Pakistani nationalism is considered by some as a myth. Regardless of whether Pakistani nationalism is a myth or reality, it is argued that Pakistani nationalism which should have strengthened by now (Ahmar, 2014) advances by day and soon Pakistan will take its place within the world community as the most closely bonded nation (Hussain and Khan, 2012). Pakistani nationalism certainly can develop through creating the feelings of oneness, patriotism, unity and national integration.

But while Pakistani nationalism may be advancing, it does not change the fact that there are ethnic separatist movements in the country. One of these separatist movements is that of Baloch nationalists.

The question of "what is the objective of Baloch nationalists" has not a clear-cut answer. Some Baloch nationalists state that the aim was previously provincial autonomy within the Federation of Pakistan until 2006, since that year aim has been transformed into a call for independent Baloch state (Akbar, 2014). Nonetheless it seems that there is not a consensus among nationalists about what the objective is, there is a separation between nationalists who support for an independent Balochistan and who seek provincial autonomy.

If we were to define nationalism as the sentiment of belonging to a nation and the desire to protect the interests of that nation, we cannot claim that nationalism developed easily in Baloch society. The development of nationalism within Baloch society was spread out over years and can be analysed under three main periods. The first is the pre-colonial period. At this time, the concepts of "state" or "state authority" were meaningless for Baloch society that was split up into different tribes. In the 18th century the Khan of Kalat established a Baloch army consisting of 25,000 men and 1,000 camels and tried to collect some Baloch tribes under a military and administrative system (Singh, 2016), which might be seen as an initiative for the formation of state and national consciousness. However, this and similar initiatives at the time were not significant enough to lower tensions among tribes. The second period is colonial rule by Britain. During this period the tribes resisted colonial power, however their resistance did not yield tangible results in terms of nationalism. That Britain played tribal leaders against each other caused tensions to rise even higher among tribes. As tension between tribes increased, Baloch society became even more fragmented, and therefore an organised national resistance against colonial power did not appear. Despite the fragmented nature of Baloch society, sporadic resistance against colonial power continued (Singh 2016). The process that really set off nationalism in Baloch society is the third period under Pakistan sovereignty. The conviction by Pakistani leaders that a strong central administration was needed for Pakistan and efforts to

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collect power at the centre since Pakistan's founding, and their efforts to directly hold political power in Balochistan is seen as the main source of Baloch nationalism. Baloch nationalism was further stoked with the Baloch being excluded from the military and civilian bureaucracy. Therefore Baloch nationalism is essentially a form of nationalism shaped by opposition to the Pakistani state and its policies. One of the most open proofs of this point is that Baloch nationalists have declared the day of independence of Pakistan to be the "Black Day" (Akins, 2017).

Very soon after the foundation of Pakistan, in 1948, Baloch nationalists rose up and uprisings continued in later years. Baloch nationalists, who saw Pakistani sovereignty as a strict centralised system and thought they were excluded from government rebelled against the central government many times in 1948, 1958, 1962, 1973-1977 and 2005 (Grare, 2013). Many Baloch nationalist groups such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), the Baloch Republican Army (BRA) involved in the militancy (Feyyaz, 2013), carried out attacks targeting the central government (Grare, 2006). The reasons for the uprisings and attacks are given as Baloch nationalists losing their trust in the democratic process and thinking that armed struggle is the only way to ensure their rights are upheld.

For Baloch nationalism mainly shaped by opposition to the Pakistani centre and its policies, we can outline this as a centre-periphery conflict between the Pakistani centre and Balochistan. In this context, while Pakistani centre has tried to reduce the powers of its provinces, Baloch nationalist fervour has been deepening and also expanding. Baloch nationalists who call for an independent Baloch state also want the unification of the Baloch population in Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan under a single flag (Iqbal, 2009). The greatest Baloch population (more than six million) lives in Pakistan (No Major Change in Ethnic Balance of Balochistan 2017). The Baloch population of Iran is around 1.5 million (Baloch People, 2018); while the Baloch population of Afghanistan is around 500,000 (UNPO, 2017). As numbers indicate Pakistan has the highest Baloch population, but this does not mean that the population of Balochistan consists entirely of the Baloch. According to 2017 data, 61 per cent of the population of Balochistan consists of the Baloch, while 33 per cent consists of the Pashtun (No Major Change in Ethnic Balance of Balochistan 2017). There is a competition between the two major ethnic groups in Balochistan for political and economic superiority, government jobs and resource allocation. They accuse each other of asserting hegemony (Gazdar, Kaker, Khan, 2010). Kakar (2015) points out that the differences between two ethnic groups have sharpened over time. That means in addition to centre-periphery conflict between Balochistan and Pakistani centre, there is also tension within the region. On the other hand Gazdar and his friends (2010) state that many of Baloch nationalists' demand such as favourable treatment are also echoed by Pashtun counterparts, they both complain Pakistani central state policies towards Balochistan. From this perspective, despite of the competition and tension between the two ethnic groups, risk of open conflict between them seems to be low.

Iran and Afghanistan's attitude towards Baloch nationalism lies beyond the scope of this article, but for Pakistan the separation of Balochistan from Pakistan is unacceptable for a number of reasons. While the proportion of the Baloch population within 200 million in Pakistan is very low, Balochistan makes up 43.6

per cent of the country's landmass. The separation of Balochistan from Pakistan would mean Pakistan diminishing to nearly half of its current size.

Furthermore, while the desert and mountain country of Balochistan is Pakistan's driest and poorest region, it has strategic importance for three reasons.

The first is that Balochistan is quite rich in natural resources such as natural gas, gold, silver, coal, iron, copper, marble and sulphur. Balochistan contains 20 per cent of Pakistan's natural resources (Grare, 2006), contributes around a third of Pakistan's output of natural gas (Gazdar, Kaker, Khan, 2010) Balochistan's separation from Pakistan will result in Pakistan losing a significant amount of natural resources.

Secondly, Balochistan contain almost the entire coastline of Pakistan. The Gwadar Port, which is of strategic importance for maritime trade is located on this coastline which connects Central Asia, South Asia and the Middle East. This gives it the potential to become the centre of global trade (Anwar, 2011). Balochistan is therefore described as the "strategic pearl" (Khalil-ur-Rehman, 2011) and is valuable for all regional and global actors due to the Port of Gwadar. Balochistan splitting away from Pakistan would result in Pakistan losing its significance in regional politics.

Thirdly, Balochistan is of strategic importance for the security of Pakistan: it is the border zone with Iran and Afghanistan and two of Pakistan's three naval bases (Ormara and Gwadar) are in Balochistan. Once the buffer zone for India, Balochistan now plays this role for Pakistan (Imran and Akram-ul-Haq, 2016).

These qualities which make Balochistan inseparable for Pakistan also make it Pakistan's soft belly. As Gazdar and his friends (2010) underlines, the struggle between Pakistani centre and Balochistan is over the ownership of natural resources. The natural resources in Balochistan, unsurprisingly has encouraged Baloch separatists to have an independent state. Baloch separatists underline that once they become an independent state, their natural resources will be used by the Baloch for the Baloch alone. Moreover what encourages Baloch separatist is not just natural resources in Balochistan but also foreign powers that see Balochistan as a strategically important area of influence. Pakistani media reported that Baloch nationalists/separatists have been supported by external factors (Iqbal 2009), especially by Afghanistan, India and Iran to destabilize and disintegrate Pakistan. Iqbal (2012) argues that Baloch insurgency cannot be continued without foreign assistance and main problem in Balochistan is foreign interference.

### **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who visited Central Asian and South East Asian countries in 2013 proposed the One Belt One Road Initiative (OBOR), which will connect Asia, Europe and Africa and is in a sense the restoration of the historical Silk Road.

OBOR consists of six corridors and one maritime silk road:

\*New Eurasian Land Bridge, running from Western China to Western Russia

\*China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor, running from Northern China to Eastern Russia

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\*China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor, running from Western China to Turkey

\*China-Indochina Peninsula Corridor, running from Southern China to Singapore

\*China-Myanmar-Bangladesh-India Corridor, running from Southern China to Myanmar

\*China-Pakistan Corridor, running from South Western China to Pakistan

\*Maritime Silk Road, running from the Chinese Coast through Singapore to the Mediterranean

OBOR covers 65 countries, accounting for more than half of the world's population and 40 per cent of the global economy. The aim of OBOR is to develop economic, trade and financial relations among the 65 states and increase investments. However, OBOR is not just an economic project and there is political dimension to it. As a Chinese project, OBOR is the realisation of President Xi's emphasis on constructive engagement in foreign policy. OBOR has been designed as a tool to serve China becoming a regional and a global power, beginning with Asia and as a symbol of China's determination to shape economic and geopolitical architecture of Eurasia (Calabrese 2014-2015). OBOR as westward facing China's project of expansion can be defined as a "Chinese Dream" (Ramay, 2016).

The CPEC, which will connect China and Pakistan is an integral part of OBOR and recognised as the flagship initiative of OBOR by Chinese and Pakistanis.

CPEC has four main pillars, which are Gwadar Port, communication infrastructure, energy infrastructure and an industrial zone. CPEC is expected to cost USD 46 billion and be completed in 2030.

China attaches the special importance to CPEC for mainly two reasons.

The first reason why CPEC is vital for China is about trade routes. Around 80 per cent of China's goods and energy imports pass through the Malacca Strait (Hussain and Hussain, 2017), which is patrolled by the US and Indian navies. CPEC is a substitute to the Malacca Strait for China and will also provide a secure way of oil transport from the Middle East, from which China imports 60 per cent of its oil (Hussain and Hussain, 2017). Beyond creating a secure way, as the CPEC will ease China's connection with the Gulf of Basra, it will lower China's transport costs. For this reason CPEC is described the jewel in the crown for China (Rakisits, 2015).

The second reason is directly related to Pakistan. China attaches special importance to CPEC also because of the importance of Pakistan continuing as a functioning state. As Chinese Ambassador Yao Jing points out, stability in Pakistan is integral to China's development (The Express Tribune, 2018). The Chinese government thinks that economic involvement in Pakistan is a necessity to prevent scenarios resulting from chaos in its nuclear armed neighbour with a population of 200 million (Rakisits, 2015). Therefore CPEC is designated by China as a kind of tool that will allow China to intervene in Pakistan and pull Pakistan into China's geostrategic orbit. In this regard CPEC must be seen is a part of China's global soft power campaign that is main pillar of Xi Jinping's foreign policy. China under Xi Jinping's rule offers "a new option for other

countries and nations who want to speed up their development while preserving their independence and it offers Chinese wisdom and a Chinese approach to solving the problems of mankind” (Biswas and Tortajada, 2018).

Pakistan has met China’s CPEC project with enthusiasm in terms of economic and political meaning. Pakistan sees CPEC as a solution to its present energy, trade, infrastructure, employment and development problems and as an opportunity that will to bring prosperity and make Pakistan the region’s key state in terms of geo-economics. And Pakistan perceives CPEC as a tool to offset rising tensions with the US over regional politics (International Crisis Group, 2018).

For this reason, Pakistani authorities have described CPEC as a game changer. As Deputy Project Director for CPEC Hassan Daud Butt put it:

Pakistan is the centre of three engines of growth and will benefit the maximum from CPEC the successful operationalization of CPEC as the trade through this corridor will surpass US \$3 trillion in coming days.... According to estimates in future, the total trade will exceed 3 trillion USD. The CPEC will prove a big game changer for Pakistan as Gwadar Port has the potential to surpass neighbouring ports in terms of trading activity (The Nation 2018b).

CPEC has become a manifestation of “all-weather friendship” between China and Pakistan. As Kanwal points (2018) this friendship has been described as “higher than the mountains, deeper than the oceans, stronger than the steel and sweeter than honey”.

### **CPEC: The Baloch Perspective**

While CPEC is hailed by Pakistan as a solution to its economic problems, as a gateway to welfare and an opportunity for the future, Baloch nationalists oppose CPEC.

The opposition manifests in demonstrations by Baloch nationalists and attacks on Chinese citizens working in Balochistan, security forces and infrastructure projects. Since 2014, 44 workers working in CPEC projects have been killed in attacks (Rafia, 2017). In 2016, the head of the Balochistan Liberation Army Nazar Baloch vowed to carry out more attacks on CPEC (K. Iqbal, 2017). Following this vow, before The Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held in Beijing in May 2017, two terrorist attacks took place in Balochistan. While ISIS claimed one of the attacks, the other was ascribed to Baloch nationalist militants (K. Iqbal, 2017). The most recent incident occurred on 23 November 2018 when the Chinese Consulate in Karachi was targeted, Notezai (2018) underline that this attack marked the first time that Baloch separatists attacked Chinese officials in Karachi outside of Balochistan. The reason why Baloch nationalists launch attacks against CPEC projects, their workers, security forces and Chinese officials is to create panic among Chinese and to frighten those working with the Pakistani government, as well as foreign investors and to drive them away from Balochistan. They foresee that this way, they will prevent the realisation of CPEC.

There are various reasons why Baloch nationalists are opposed to CPEC.

Baloch nationalists think that Balochistan’s natural resources belong to them, rather than Pakistan and that the Pakistani central government is using Baloch resources as though it owned them and indeed plundering them. “Islamabad is

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reaping all the benefits, depriving the locals from their legitimate share” (Wolf, 2017) is heard often in Balochistan. That Balochistan is the poorest region of Pakistan despite being rich in natural resources supports the argument of Baloch nationalists that resources are not used for the Baloch people. With the CPEC project, Baloch nationalists complain that Pakistan has opened up the resources of Balochistan for the use of China and argue that CPEC will exploit Balochistan and they will lose all rights over natural resources. Even, some experts (Outlook, 2017) argue that not only Balochistan but also other regions through which CPEC passes will not benefit CPEC as CPEC is designed to bring profit just to China.

The Baloch further claim that they were not consulted about CPEC, their views were not taken into consideration and their sensitivities were overlooked. The Baloch think that they have been completely excluded from decision making processes regarding CPEC. However, the complaint that decision making processes for CPEC are not transparent and that Pakistani citizens have been excluded from the process is heard throughout Pakistan and is not specific to Balochistan. It is also claimed that the Baloch are being excluded from new job opportunities created by CPEC. The feelings of being excluded from decision making processes as well as employment opportunities are factors leading to opposition to CPEC.

Another issue for Baloch nationalists is migration to the region and the presence of foreigners due to the CPEC project. Some Baloch became aware of the existence of CPEC through the number of Chinese citizens they began to see around. For example it is estimated that 71,000 Chinese citizens arrived in Pakistan in 2016 (Akins, 2017) It is expected that around one million people will arrive and settle in Balochistan in the next few years (Wolf 2017). With the rising number of foreigners in the region, the Baloch –not only Baloch nationalists- fear that the demographic structure of the region will change and they will become a minority in their own land. They may be justified in fearing this, for according to a report by the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry, the number of Chinese citizens in the region will be greater than the Baloch by 2048 (Akins, 2017). Baloch nationalists claim that the Pakistani government is trying to change the demographic structure in region and is making use of CPEC as an opportunity to this end.

Furthermore Baloch nationalists see CPEC as a “Chinese military project” and are of the view that China has contributed to the militarization in Balochistan (Akins 2017). Latest reports that China is trying to set up a military base near Gwadar create disturbances in the region. Pakistan and China dismissed these reports as “propaganda” being spread to sabotage CPEC. But these reports add weight to the preoccupation of Baloch nationalists.

While Baloch nationalism is opposed to CPEC, it is far from posing a serious threat to it. This is due to factors outside of Balochistan, as well as conditions unique to Balochistan.

The external factor is that China and Pakistan are determined to realise CPEC. China expresses the security concerns and certainly knows Pakistan's domestic problems, but never think to abandon CPEC. The determination of the two states poses formidable resistance to opponents of CPEC, including Baloch separatists.

The determination and resistance can be seen clearly in the measures taken by the Pakistani government to ensure the security of CPEC. For example, the Special Security Division (SSD) was founded to ensure the security of CPEC and Chinese citizens. Furthermore, the Pakistani navy has formed a Task Force to protect CPEC and Gwadar Port (Iqbal 2017). These measures are said to be taken under the strong pressure of Chinese government. Visiting SSD headquarters in February 2016, Chief of Army Staff General Rahell Sharif said (Iqbal 2017) “We are totally aware of all campaigns against the corridor and I vow that the security forces are ready to pay any price to turn this long cherished dream into reality.” This means as Ramay says (2016) CPEC is a Chinese dream to be realised through Pakistan’s great support.

As a result of the security measures taken for CPEC, Pakistan’s military presence in Balochistan has increased and the region has become something of a military zone. While Pakistan increases its military presence in the region to ensure the security of CPEC, China is engaging in dialogue with Baloch nationalists to ensure the safety of its investments and citizens (Idrees, 2018). And Chinese authorities try to appease the Baloch people by stating that China’s aim is not to militarize Pakistan (Ahmad, 2018) and Gwadar Port is for just commercial purposes. This shows that security measures are supported through dialogue with Baloch nationalists. Even if Chinese officials did not give comments on the dialogue, Chinese Ambassador to Islamabad said that thanks to the dialogue, Baloch nationalists will no longer pose a threat to CPEC (Dawn, 2018).

In this context, the measures taken by China and Pakistan in line with their determination to realise CPEC and ensure its security have significantly lowered the risk posed by Baloch nationalists to CPEC.

Furthermore, not everyone in Balochistan shares the views of Baloch nationalists, so desires of Baloch nationalists/separatists cannot represent the public choice in Balochistan (Rahman, 2017). Politics in Balochistan is polarised into pro and anti-Pakistan camps, or those for integration and those for separation. Even anti-Pakistani, separatist leaders have differences in opinion and approach one another suspiciously. Competition between the tribes naturally prevents them speaking with a unified voice. In addition, political parties in Balochistan are tribal parties that follow the interests of tribal leaders rather than long term strategies (Grare, 2006). As political parties do not have long term and common visions and do not direct the people towards specific objectives, the Baloch are not in a position to take up a shared, consistent and forceful stance against CPEC.

Pakistani scholars argue that Pakistani nationalism develops with each passing day and more people identify themselves with the state (Hussain and Khan, 2012). With regard to Balochistan, 2008 elections in Pakistan can be good example of this. Despite the boycott-call of elections by separatists, the Baloch took part in polls. Another indication is 2013 elections in which the Baloch nationalist political parties also contested (Basit, 2013). In fact, according to survey conducted in 2012, only 37 percent of the Baloch favors independence (Grare, 2013), that means the vast majority oppose the idea of independence.

More important for the Baloch are the economic benefits of CPEC. According to statistics from the Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform, Balochistan will attract initial investment worth USD 7.1 billion (Khetran and Saeed, 2017).



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With investment in Pakistan increasing due to CPEC and growth an employment on the rise, there is expectation of an “economic revolution”. Especially in Balochistan, which is home to the Gwadar Port that will become the engine of regional development, the view that the people will not be excluded from the economic revolution started to gain ground? Balochistan's Governor Muhammad Khan Achakzai has stated that the main beneficiaries of the CPEC project will be the Baloch people. In these circumstances Chinese Ambassador Yao Jing invites Baloch nationalists to “look after the interest of the country and work towards its progress if they are true Pakistanis” (Khan, 2018).

Economic activity has already picked up in Balochistan. Along with energy and infrastructure investment projects in Balochistan have begun as part of CPEC, local people have set up shops, hotels, houses in the completed portions of CPEC (Khetran, 2016). According to The International Labour Organization CPEC will support the creation of 400,000 jobs (ACCA 2017). The Applied Economics Research Centre estimated that CPEC could create over 700,000 direct jobs between 2015 and 2030 (ACCA 2017). Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said “We will ensure that these projects do not create distortions and will be inclusive and open to all” and emphasised that the Belt and Road Initiatives contribute to local community and assure job creation (The News, 2018). This means jobs for the Baloch and the increasing sentiment of “There is work for everyone” positively impacts the outlook of the Baloch on CPEC. As a resident in Balochistan said “CPEC is a great step towards progress and development. We have high hopes attached to it because the ultimate beneficiaries of the Project are going to be the local people of Balochistan” (Siddiqi and Sajid, 2015). In short CPEC seems to have become a source of hope for the Baloch. For this reason there is a expectation is that this will cause Baloch nationalists to review their attitude towards CPEC even though some insist on keeping their opposition. For example, Jeander Baloch, BLA spokesperson, said “This conspiratorial plan (CPEC) is not acceptable to the Baloch people under any circumstances” (Kanwal, 2018).

Under the circumstances, it may be foreseen that the socio-economic development to be realised through CPEC will lead to a fall in terrorist attacks and uprisings. According to the report by the Provincial Home Department, there was already 50 percent reduction in terrorist attacks and target killings (Saleem, 2017). Security environment in Balochistan has started to improve. Socio-economic development and secure environment lead to the Baloch becoming better integrated with Pakistani society. This will mean a mitigation of the conflict between the centre and the periphery, even if it will not totally go away. As the conflict between the centre and the periphery lessens, Baloch nationalism shaped by opposition to the centre may weaken. Therefore CPEC is not only an economic opportunity for Pakistan, but also a chance at political unity.

### **Conclusion**

OBOR is an initiative taken by China on its way to regional and global power and must be seen as a part of China's soft power campaign. CPEC which connects Kashgar with Pakistan's Gwadar Port is an integral part of OBOR.

The Pakistani centre has responded to CPEC with enthusiasm, as it sees it as a solution to the country's economic problems and as an opportunity that will make Pakistan one of the most strategically important countries in the region.

In spite of Pakistan's enthusiasm, Baloch nationalists in Pakistan oppose the project for various reasons. This opposition has manifested in protests and also in attacks on projects, Chinese workers, officials. China is concerned about the security of its investment and its citizens working in Pakistan. For this reason, Baloch nationalism is seen as one of the challenges faced by CPEC.

Indeed Baloch nationalism is far from being a roadblock to CPEC. Baloch nationalists are fragmented and cannot speak with a single voice. In their fragmented state, Baloch nationalists do not have the force to convince the Baloch people of their reasons for opposing CPEC.

Furthermore, the expectation that CPEC will realise an economic revolution in Pakistan and Balochistan, the home of Gwadar Port, and the expectation that employment, incomes and standards of living will raise results in the Baloch approaching CPEC positively. These expectations cannot be underestimated in poverty-stricken Balochistan. This may cause Baloch nationalists to review their attitude towards CPEC.

In summary it is possible to say that expectations and economic gains outweigh opposition in Balochistan while Baloch nationalists may nevertheless continue a low-profile insurgency against CPEC.

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