

Political Economy of CPEC: A way to National Integration

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Abstract

A plethora of studies have attempted to spell out the geopolitics and geo-economics of the CPEC; nevertheless, there is a scarcity of literature on the interaction of Pakistan's internal politics with the CPEC. Thus, the subject of this study is the political economy of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its influence on national integration in Pakistan. The progress of CPEC stirred some conflicts in Pakistan, on the top of which were the concerns raised from Baluchistan. The issues were later resolved after realizing that the project is a key to boost development and integration throughout the country. Due to changes in the original route, CPEC has also faced reservations in KPK. The lack of national consensus is a major hurdle for the smooth sailing of the project. Therefore, these allegations were rejected by both the Chinese and the Pakistani government. The government negotiated with dissenting parties and assured them that projects under CPEC will lead to development in the province. It will address issues like poverty and upgrade the socio-economic status of KPK. Keeping in view these developments, scholars think that CPEC is a step in the right direction and if the government brings all the stakeholders to the table and addresses their concerns wisely it will not only cause economic development but also fulfill the geopolitical objectives of the country.

Key Words: Economy, Integration, Harmony, Ethnicity, Corridor,

1. Introduction

Pakistan has faced serious issues of integration as a peaceful and united nation since its foundation on August 14, 1947. Even after 72 years of freedom, the discussion over the problems of national integration continues to reverberate in many arenas. The Founding father of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah expressed his concerns and stressed that “We are now all Pakistanis — not Balochis, Pathans, Sindhis, Bengalis, Punjabis and so on — and as Pakistanis, we must feel, behave and act, and we should be proud to be known as Pakistanis and nothing else” (Ahmer, 2019). National integration unites every sector of society for the common goal of serving and developing a nation-state (Shah & Ishaque,

2017). Thus, national integration brings harmony among the people (Shah & Ishaque 2017). However, according to Dr. Moonis “national integration in Pakistan only emerges in times of natural disasters, national dilemma or an external threat. Once the threat is dealt with, the internal contradictions re-appear” (Ahmer, 2019).

In addition, although diversity is regarded as strength by many, diversity was not fully utilized in Pakistan, causing discontent and marginalization. There is widespread agreement in public discourse that “the governance at national level should be able to provide a strong sense of national identity and national pride by equal development and ensure equal rights to all communities, regions and the federating units” (Shah

&Ishaque, 2017). When it comes to Pakistan's internal cohesiveness, it is noteworthy that despite economic hardships, poverty, governance challenges, and a lack of progressive orientation, the country exhibited a high level of integration through natural disasters like as earthquakes, floods, and droughts, as well as the current COVID 19. This reality is proven by the resilience shown during the coordinated reaction to terrorism despite significant casualties. Similarly, they are generous in charitable work and in assisting their fellow citizens during times of need. However, when such efforts were seen to be harmful to their perceived local interests, they expressed significant opposition. In this context, CPEC has broader geo-economic and geopolitical implications, for which a thorough investigation of internal and external variables has aided comprehensive assessments. The CPEC was inaugurated with much fanfare in 2015, and Nawaz Sharif (then-Prime Minister) referred to it as a "game-changer for Pakistan and fate changer for the entire region". (Sharif, 2016 as quoted in Hussain, 2017). Such investment by China alone, which accounts for 62 billion US\$(Zubair, 2017), is unparalleled in the history of Pakistan. As per Shah and Ishaque (2017), massive projects like the CPEC can help in strengthening national integration if they are handled correctly. However, as the CPEC took hold in Pakistan, political tensions in the nation began to increase, causing concerns, worry, and anxieties about the project's motive, governmental capacity to deliver, and other issues along with the national rivalry over the project (Gul, et al., 2021).

Every nation, as is widely believed, benefits from concrete and intangible aspects of peaceful coexistence and national integration. People, geography, and resources are concrete elements, whereas

ideology, ideas, and national feelings are intangible. At the same time, it is a well-known sociological reality that some aspects of the country are more susceptible at certain times. Since the state of Pakistan contains multiple fault lines that can be eroded, the strongest element of the country could become susceptible due to changes in the socio-political environment. Likewise, CPEC is a massive project intended at achieving shared progress, development, and regional integration, yet it is susceptible due to internal flaws, fault lines, and external factors (Gul, et al., 2021). Moreover, a poor picture of any one aspect of CPEC might pose a risk to the overall project. This implies that national integration bears the brunt of negative consequences. CPEC's socio-cultural components are "creating misperceptions" in some ways (Javed, 2020). Fears of instability and underdevelopment concerning ethnic identities, tribal culture and customs, and the potential impact of CPEC on their way of life are being resisted. The Saraiki belt in Southern Punjab, for example, is expressing dissatisfaction with Special Economic Zones (SEZs). Another source of concern is the route dispute, which is stifling CPEC's enthusiasm. Thus, internal obstacles have the potential to sabotage popular support for national integration (Gul, et al., 2021). The content that follows offers empirical research on the influence of CPEC on national integration in Pakistan.

2. Political Economy of CPEC

The interplay between powerful actors and markets is known as the political economy (Gilpin, 2001). It is defined as the study of the state's well-ordered production or consumption. The goal of political economy is to explain the law of wealth generation at the national level. A mega project's political economy is used to analyze production and commerce, as well as its connections to custom, law, government, wealth

distribution, and national revenue (Rehman et al., 2017).

CPEC is the cornerstone of Pakistan's political economy, which includes production and commerce, law, custom, and governance, and also government revenue and wealth distribution. It is a strategic scheme and development plan for the two countries. Even though Pakistan and China have had a strong connection for decades, the corridor represents a fundamental change in mutual engagement that has been broadened and deepened. The rise of China's geopolitical development is also beneficial to Pakistan's security and stability. The route is intended to increase the regional interconnectedness by utilizing railway lines, roadways, and oil pipelines that connect to industrial, trade, and other infrastructure developments to alleviate Pakistan's serious energy deficit. Furthermore, the project aspires to expand commercial opportunities between China and the Indian Ocean, linking the Chinese city of Kashgar with the Pakistani port of Gwadar. In April 2015, Beijing and Islamabad inked 51 contracts (Haider, 2015) and memorandums of understanding on Chinese investments worth \$46 billion over the next 10 to 15 years, laying the groundwork for the CPEC (Shannon, 2014).

CPEC appears to be a source of economic growth, communication, prosperity, and trade. According to the Pakistan Economic Survey for 2013-14, the overall amount of trade between China and Pakistan grew by 124 percent from 4.1 billion USD in 2013 to 9.2 billion USD in 2016-17. Similarly, China's exports rose by 1 percent, while Pakistan's exports spiked by 400 percent from 2.6 billion USD in 2013-14 to 600 million USD in 2006-07 (Pakistan Economic Survey, 2014 as cited in Rehman et al., 2017).

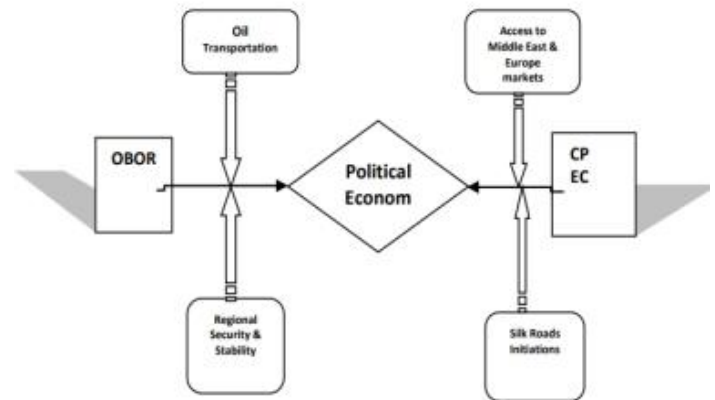


Figure 1: Political Economy of CPEC

Megaprojects like the CPEC not only help to expand the global economy but also have a wide range of long-term regional consequences. It is well accepted that, if managed and controlled properly, such ventures can completely transform the destiny of a country in a short period. However, the political economy of megaprojects casts a pall over the current state of affairs in nations like Pakistan (Rehman et al., 2017).

Currently, there are two camps in the CPEC debate: ones who are strong proponents of CPEC and others who are firmly anti-CPEC. The pro-CPEC camp is solely concerned with addressing the project's advantages for Pakistan and avoids mentioning its drawbacks (Hamid & Khan, 2020). This camp is damaging the fundamental spirit of CPEC, which was conceived as a dynamic, rather than a static initiative. It was also stated that CPEC will be receptive to any modifications that would benefit both parties. Thus, CPEC's long-term strategy considers the "need for continuous improvement." It is also consistent with China's core administration, reform, and growth ideology. China has always been open to development, innovation, and ingenuity, as well as creating the most effective means of achieving desired goals. The sessions of the Joint Coordination

Committee constitute confirmation of this policy (Hao, et al., 2020).

Critics of CPEC, on the other side, have a range of self-assumed views that they use to justify their objection to the project. This camp has been trying to find flaws in the project from its inception and has thus been opposed to it from the start. "Transparency concerns," "security," "China's expansion" and "the debt trap" are among their favorite topics (Ishaque&Ullah, 2018). Western countries are preoccupied with keeping China contained, and they want China to be a junior actor with a lot of do-not. They are implementing a confinement strategy under the pretext of various speculations and propaganda. There is plenty of information available that focuses only on CPEC and BRI in terms of security. The maritime route has been particularly criticized, and all attempts are being made to demonstrate that it is a security intervention (Zimmerman, 2015).

CPEC's political economy may be examined from a national, regional, and global viewpoint. On a national level, it centers on the distribution of finances, routes, the influence on employment and the environment, and global warming. On the regional level, there is hysteria on the part of India, which sees CPEC as a danger to its economic and defense practices and is working hard to derail the project. And in a global context, the West, led by the United States, sees China's emergence in the international arena as a nuisance. As a result, both regional and global parties have attempted to make CPEC contentious, particularly given the project's significance for the BRI. Before diving into a comprehensive examination of CPEC and national integration, it is important to have an understanding of these aspects of political economy (Hamid & Khan, 2020).

Due to the different objectives of inter-state conflict in Pakistan and various lobbyists,

CPEC is experiencing political challenges at the national level. The route dispute took a long time to resolve. Previous governments attempted but failed to completely bury the matter. They did, however, do an excellent job of containing it. The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) administration is now attempting to address this problem by giving additional resources to disadvantaged communities. Previous and present administrations' interventions are coming to fruition, and things are moving in the right direction (Khan & Liu, 2019).

Another tactic utilized by the US, western media, and India to demonize CPEC is the debt trap. They portray CPEC as a "trap" rather than a "development" opportunity (Weijia, 2018). In truth, China only accounts for a minor part of Pakistan's entire debt. Furthermore, when the energy projects grow, Pakistan will be required to begin paying the debt in the next decade (Weijia, 2018). The IMF, World Bank, and other development partners are responsible for the remaining loans. The irony is that the West pays little attention to IMF obligations and is always fixated on China. Even though there have been examples of Latin American countries collapsing under the debt of IFIs (International Financial Institutions) and other partners, these countries continue to cooperate with the same IFIs, but the media overlooks these cases when condemning Chinese investments (Shams, n.d.).

Climate change and environmental degradation have also acted as key weapons for criticizing CPEC in past years (Liu & Dunford, 2016). CPEC is being portrayed by certain foreign groups as wreaking devastation on the environment. Coal-fired power stations are frequently used to develop their critique approach. However, they casually overlook the fact that coal will account for less than 10 percent of Pakistan's entire energy mix. Furthermore, CPEC is emphasizing renewable resources such as

solar, wind, and hydro. Pakistan has already constructed wind and solar plants that are now operating. Both administrations have also agreed to enlarge them. Both the countries are now discussing greater investments in the hydro sector (Shams, n.d.).

3. CPEC and National Integration

3.1. CPEC and Baloch factor

Balochistan is one of Pakistan's most significant provinces, and it's a surprising location for what authorities believe under CPEC could become one of the world's major commerce routes, connecting Gwadar's deepwater port with Kashgar's metropolis (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). Initially, some Baloch militants and political parties opposed CPEC asserting that the province will receive the least gain from the project. States hostile to Pakistan, such as India, have played a key role in igniting this debate. The debate furthered when Baloch and KP politicians accused that Punjab is being favored. They based this argument on the notion of CPEC's priority route completion. Some were using the Eastern Route to foment animosity and promote provincialism, giving the idea that, on Pakistan's advice, both nations had decided to solely utilize the Eastern Route and that the Western Route would never be built. In reality, it was clear in the agreement that Pakistan will build the Western Route on its own, with no Chinese involvement. China is financing in any of the provinces' road projects. It was untrue that Islamabad has persuaded Beijing to build the Eastern Route through Punjab and Sindh. The conflict of the eastern and western route which was later resolved successfully (Noorani, 2016). To shield the project against nefarious actions, more than 160 ex-Army personnel were engaged, together with Sindh Police, to form a commando squad of 2 thousand men. The objective of recruiting ex-army personnel was to save time otherwise

invested in recruitment and training, as veteran army members do not require extensive training (Khan, 2016).

It is important to note that political parties have the freedom to express concerns about any subject. However, the challenge arises when such issues are not voiced on suitable forums, leading to negative perceptions, as evidenced by political parties' contentious public comments. This implies that one of the vulnerabilities plaguing Pakistan's national integration is inconsistency in political behavior and insensitive remarks about CPEC, which have made it unreasonably controversial for temporary political gain at the expense of the country's larger interests in economic reform and continuous development (Gul et al., 2021).

Numerous energy, infrastructural, and port-related initiatives have been launched under the CPEC's basic framework, particularly in Balochistan. In all four provinces, the government has planned 29 industrial parks and 21 mineral economic processing zones as part of the CPEC. Balochistan will be home to the majority of them. The Gwadar port, in particular, has emerged as the CPEC's signature project and a major milestone in Pak-China ties. Gwadar has been allocated 770 million USD under the CPEC agreement. Through the Gwadar-Kashghar corridor, a portion of China's transit commerce may produce significant economic activity for Balochistan, Pakistan, and the region as a whole. The income would be produced not just from transportation fares, but also through the creation of numerous jobs and commercial possibilities along the corridor. Once the necessary infrastructure, facilities, and services are in place at the Gwadar port, it will become a preferred port for cargo transshipment to and from a wide range of countries. The development of the Gwadar port, with its key geopolitical positioning and as the upper lip of the Dubai port, would

greatly improve the possibility of worldwide exposure. The Chinese drive for political stability in Pakistan's economic and development policies is projected to be the most significant change brought about by the CPEC. China's constant mantra is that domestic peace is the key to its growth. If Pakistan can establish a stable regime, it would result in changes in economic progress and international investment. It will also guarantee the country's strong writ (Khetran&Saeed, 2017) and pave way for national integration.

Balochistan has been plagued by violent uprisings as a result of its economic backwardness. Over the ages, it has been subject to insurgency. Any mega-economic involvement would aid in the restoration of the public's faith in the region's political structure and governmental entities. The CPEC can't be a big success unless Balochistan is peaceful and stable. Regardless of the negative aspects, increasing economic activity in Balochistan is expected to bring economic success to one of Pakistan's poorly developed economic areas. Perhaps such economic benefits have persuaded both Baloch separatist leaders and the government to reconsider their mutually hostile stance. While Baloch leadership sees the CPEC as an opportunity to address their economic and political issues, they understand that rebellion is not a viable solution to Balochistan's long-term issues, which are primarily the result of the province's traditionally overlooked economy. Dozens of insurgents have surrendered voluntarily as a result of the state's newly adopted reconciliation policy, which includes freedom from prosecution and other benefits. The Pakistani government's attitude toward Balochistan has already shifted. There have been discussions on channeling the benefits of Chinese investment into the region to improve people's lives. Considering the

prevailing security scenario, while maintaining stability and peace in Balochistan requires military involvement, permanent peace and stability can only be achieved via economic prosperity and growth, which the CPEC provides (Umair, 2017). Balochistan would be a key beneficiary of the multibillion-dollar economic development initiative that will put a stop to the province's misery and unemployment. It stands to benefit greatly from the CPEC projects in terms of commerce and job possibilities. Fishermen make up the majority of Gwadar's population. The fisheries processing center will increase the value of local fishery products and boost residents' living standards. Gwadar's infrastructure growth is immovable. All Chinese investment in Balochistan, including the construction of the Gwadar port, roads, and other infrastructure, will remain the province's property because these resources cannot be transferred ((Khetran&Saeed, 2017).

Balochistan's growth had previously received no attention, and historical data suggests that the region was entirely disregarded. After the CPEC completion especially Gwadar port, a new phase in economic and political growth will presumably begin. Several disadvantaged areas of the province will be linked to the rest of the country via this corridor. As a result, the CPEC may alleviate Baloch worries and provide them with an opportunity to participate in the mainstream development cycle hence strengthening national integration.

3.2. CPEC and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Factor

China Pakistan Economic Corridor has also been opposed by few political parties of KPK who have shown some reservations, this is a major hurdle in way of smooth proceeding of this mega project. As mentioned earlier the original plan of the

project was changed by the federal government, this was opposed by KPK on the ground that it will give a major share of economic gain to Punjab. As proposed originally, the Western route included road from Khunjerab to Gwadar via Dera Ismail Khan, Mianwali, Dera Ghazi Khan, Turbat, and Khuzdar. However, due to security reasons, China showed interest in working the Eastern route first. Changes in the original GwadarKashgar route were opposed by the politicians of KPK, they demanded that government must stick to the original as otherwise, it will be the source of dissent and clash among the provinces (Kasi, 2015). A resolution was tabled by SikanderSherpao, leader of the QaumiWateen Party, in the provincial assembly. This resolution was backed by all the parties and it stated that alterations in the original plan will be unfair towards the population of KPK as these people have already suffered because a lot because of terrorism (report., 2015) They were of the view that underdeveloped region of Fata and KPK will be connected to the corridor through original route, this will yield a lot of economic benefits for the region. On the other hand, if a new route is adopted, this region will remain neglected. The lack of national unity is a major challenge for the successful implementation of million-dollar projects in the country. Deep reservations have been put forth by sub nationalist political parties of provinces who believe that change in route will deprive western provinces and will only favor eastern ones. Under the 18th Amendment many powers have been delegated to the provinces which consolidated their position, but at proves detrimental at times due to dissent among provinces on important national issues like CPEC. Both Balochistan and KPK have opposed the new route of the project which can hurdle the implementation of the plan. Another major challenge is the security

situation in this region. Moreover, the instability of Pakistan's political framework is the major factor that can delay the completion of CPEC. Political harmony is a very important need of the hour as this project will not only improve the economy but also enhance the regional connectivity of the country.

For maintaining unity these allegations have been rejected by the Chinese and Pakistani governments who stated that there is no reality in such accusations and both governments have done efforts to allay such fears (Tadesse, Muhua, & Lei, 2020). The government stated that CPEC will boost economic growth and increase business confidence in KPK (Sultan, Ahmed, & Zafar, 2017). Moreover, it is also emphasized that CPEC will enhance the international and national economic competitiveness of the province and provide job opportunities (Li, Zhang, Ruan, Guerra, & Burnette, 2020). In addition, the project will have far-reaching socioeconomic impacts in the region and will improve education and health and upgrade transport infrastructure. Foreign investment in these sectors will lower the poverty index and increase material welfare. It is also argued that income inequality in the province will decrease will improvement in social infrastructure (E. Hussain, & Ali, G., 2015). Moreover, CPEC projects will positively influence public policy objectives which will be beneficial for the future generations of the country and there will be just allocation of resources for the provinces. These projects will also influence the approach of the government towards stability and progress in the province. By increasing the income of people and development concerns of the state CPEC will modernize the province. Thus, if the reservations of the province are addressed CPEC is significantly important for confidence-building and economic activity in KPK.

3.3. Analysis of CPEC as a Source of Cooperation or Conflict

Using the lens of nation-building CPEC related developments have been analyzed. Important questions regarding the potential of CPEC as an opportunity for cooperation or conflict have been raised. In 2015 when the CPEC agreement was finalized provincial governments and their political elites, except Punjab, criticized the government for not including all the provinces and diverting a major portion of foreign investment in Punjab (F. Hussain, Ahmad, Nawaz, Haider, & Atif, 2021). These allegations were rejected by the government. Ahsan Iqbal stated that "CPEC would benefit all the provinces of Pakistan including [GB]" (Nichols, 2017). The government significantly calmed the situation by engaging in dialogues with dissenting parties. According to scholars and policymakers, CPEC is a step in the right direction as it will significantly solve structural issues, like poverty, in underdeveloped provinces. Policymakers are of the view that stability and employment opportunities in Balochistan will result in the overall development and this will suppress the insurgency in the province (Khwaja, Saeed, & Urooj, 2018). Ex-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif endorsed that this project will reduce employment and poverty. Likewise, a Chinese diplomat stated, "poverty is the breeding ground of terrorism" therefore CPEC induced economic development will end terrorism (Ali, 2020). It shows that CPEC has intangible benefits and, in addition to benefits of foreign investment, affects nation-building in-country. Since the initiation of the project, Beijing has closely engaged with Islamabad regarding the absence of national consensus and urged Pakistan to settle internal discord. China appointed diplomats in Pakistan for dealing with CPEC related issues. Chinese

ambassadors held meeting with various high-ranked figures of Pakistan and CPEC was the major agenda of these meetings. China seriously considers different and fragile political framework of Pakistan and therefore expanded the scope of CPEC to include all political parties and regions, for instance, FATA (Gökten, 2019). As China faces problems similar to Pakistan in some of its regions, this might be the reason behind its understanding of Pakistan's issues. One of the reasons behind CPEC is to development of the Western region of China, which is behind the Eastern region in terms of development. It was affirmed by Hassan Askari Rizvi, a Pakistani scholar, who said, "The [CPEC] Project is going to be a positive turn-around both for Pakistan and the western region of China" (Mustafa & Zafar, 2017).

Transparency is important for nation-building and it must be ensured for the smooth sailing of projects of national interest. Provinces have been forcing the central government to ensure transparency and engage in dialogues with all the stakeholders. Though there are reservations regarding CPEC projects, dialogues have led to important agreements regarding the division of resources ensuring just treatment for marginalized provinces. Regarding allocation of CPEC funds, Balochistan has \$7.1 billion, Sindh; \$11.5 billion, Punjab; \$6.9 billion, and KPK; \$ 11.6 billion. Regarding CPEC projects, 12 projects are in Punjab, 16 in Balochistan, 8 in KPK, and 13 in Sindh (Ahmed, 2019). Initially, it was planned to set up 8 SEZs in KPK, 3 in Sindh, 7 in Balochistan and Punjab, and 1 each in Gilgit and Islamabad. However, this plan was altered after the Chief Ministers of four provinces visited China in 2016. It was obvious that Punjab and PML-N governments compromised for sake of national consensus and unity. It was certainly a step in the right

direction as the government tried to address the grievances of ethnically motivated groups. Concerning nation-building, political processes and state-society relationship is significantly focused (Ahmed, 2019). Regarding CPEC it is vital to understand how the central government negotiated with provincial representatives. Though the government is attempting to take all the stakeholders on board, yet there are people who couldn't see in a larger perspective beyond the ethical lens. Controversial issues like CPEC loans give rise to questions like a cost-benefit analysis done by the government before signing the agreement. Many quote the example of Sri Lanka whose loans increased from 10.6 billion dollars to 25.3 billion. Pakistan is already an indebted state and has taken loans from International Monetary Fund and World Bank. Chinese loans can add to the difficulties of Pakistan, if not negotiated wisely (Husain, (17 October 2016)). Pakistan already has a debt of 75 billion dollars and is warned by the International Monetary Fund regarding repayment obligations. However, the former governor of the State Bank of Pakistan assessed that Pakistan will not be directly burdened by CPEC repayment because the major portion of the debt is taken directly from Chinese firms and Pakistan's government is not obliged. Moreover, there is a concessional interest rate of two percent on infrastructural loans over 25 years period, and the burden of foreign loans can reach 3.5 billion dollars per year (I. Hussain, 2017). However, there are concerns regarding the benefit of energy and infrastructure project to the local economy. In the era of fake news, the government must share information about all projects of CPEC for avoiding misunderstanding between provinces and the central government. Building human resources should be the center of the government's approach for the long-term

stability of the project as inter-ethnic conflicts could rise due to the internal migration of skilled workforce. As equality is very significant for nation-building government must ensure that all citizens get equal opportunities irrespective of their ethnic background. The government along with the Pakistan army has been working on human resource development in Balochistan that will impact regional stability. For instance, there are several important developments like relaxing the rules for increasing the recruitment of Baloch in the armed forces. This is a major step that will resolve structural issues as the armed force is dominated by Punjabis, 71 percent of the armed personnel were Punjabis in 2007 (Khan, 2014). Along with recruitment in armed forces, it is important to prioritize human resource development in other fields as it will bring forth numerous opportunities for Baloch in the competitive job market. It is important to emphasize education in Balochistan and KPK. Balochistan has the highest illiteracy rate of 71 percent among all the provinces. A project called "Every Child in Balochistan Must Go to School" is initiated by the government with the collaboration of the army, it is hoped that it will yield a positive result in few years. Moreover, for benefitting from the jobs produced by CPEC projects it is important that youth of marginalized areas must be enrolled in elite institutions of the country so that skilled labor is produced. An example of this is the conduction of preparatory classes in Quetta in which teachers from NUST (National University of Science and Technology) are invited. The aim behind this is to increase enrollment of Baloch youth in NUST. Another initiative has also been taken under the domain CPEC projects in which a fully-funded three-year diploma in Associate Engineering is offered to Baloch students. Though this may give rise to questions about unnecessary involvement

of the military in civilian matters it must be understood that in Balochistan education sector is very ineffective and politicized because of the major influence of local political parties on the teachers' union.

Need of the hour is that government should make the CCI (Council of Common Interests) truly functional for resolving current conflicts on the CPEC. CCI came into being in 1975 under the constitution of 1973 and is under the domain of the Ministry of Inter Provincial Coordination. Unfortunately, it remained nonfunctional and only 33 meetings were held between 1975 to 2017. It is the responsibility of CCI to ensure equal division of resources among provinces. The constitution of 1973 has empowered it to make decisions regarding development planning and communication between the provincial and federal governments. In 2015, the CCI meeting was called by the federal government for discussing serious issues like provincial budgets and distribution of natural resources like water. It is believed that the constitutional body will be strengthened by the supervision and implementation of CPEC related projects by CCI (Faisal, 2018). CCI should be reconstituted to allow the equal representation of all the provinces and it should be given human and financial resources to make it functional. Such measures will lead to nation-building that emphasizes increasing the legitimacy and capacity of the state (Ahmed, 2019). Currently, the state lacks the institutional capacity to address provincial-federal issues effectively but such challenges could be addressed if CCI is made functional.

4. Conclusion

Since the creation of Pakistan in 1947, it has been facing the political and socioeconomic effects of the ethnic divide. This division is further deepened as almost half of the population of the country is Punjabi and two parties, PPP in Sindh and PML-N in Punjab,

dominate ethnic politics. CPEC has been affected by these dynamics as minority ethnic groups of other provinces have put forth their reservations regarding the domination of Punjab. However, the state has managed to address the concerns of key stakeholders through compromises, dialogue, and discussion. The concerns of Baloch need to be addressed seriously for the successful implementation of the project. Transparency, limiting foreign intervention, institution building, and creating a uniform national identity are key aspects of nation-building and integration. In context to CPEC, the state has tried to reflect all aspects in its approach towards the project. Trust deficit and ethnic divide between Punjab and other provinces exist but justice and transparency are a way to integrated national behavior. Equal sharing of CPEC funds and projects like SEZs is a major step in the right direction but the government should focus on equal participation of all provinces in decision making. The dominance of a single province would be detrimental to CPEC, a plan that is important for the development, geopolitical, and geo-economic interests of the country. The combined efforts of the Pakistani and Chinese governments have resulted in progressive dialogue on inter-provincial conflicts and relations in Pakistan. However, the state should do more and devise a long-sighted vision and policy for national integration and unity. As CPEC is a long-term project, the government must focus on long-term provincial-federal consensus and coordination, for which CCI has to play a central and functional role.

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