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Strategic Empowerment Unveiling the Political Dynamics and Development Prospects of Gwadar Port in Baluchistan

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Abstract

With its strategic and economic significance, Gwadar deep-sea port stands as a beacon of transformative potential, poised to unlock constructive opportunities for both local and foreign investment across diverse sectors. This transformative potential not only encompasses the shipping industry but also extends to the establishment of multi-directional networks comprising motorways and rail infrastructure. The port's strategic location further underscores its pivotal role in fostering international economic prospects, facilitating trade with Central Asia and the Gulf, and enabling the trans-shipment of containerized cargo. Projections suggest that Gwadar Port holds the promise of generating billions of dollars in revenues and fostering the creation of at least two million jobs. This economic resurgence is set to extend to Balochistan, redirecting the flow of human resources towards Gwadar, thus alleviating pressures on Karachi. The emergence of ship-related industries, export processing zones, and industrial hubs is anticipated, alongside the establishment of essential infrastructure such as oil storage facilities, refineries, and petrochemical plants. Additionally, the development blueprint encompasses internal roads, hospitals, educational institutions, warehouses, commercial and residential areas, as well as office buildings. Corporate infrastructure including hotels, motels, cargo and trucking yards, shipyards, and dry docks is poised to flourish. Above all, this transformative initiative promises to create myriad employment opportunities for both skilled and unskilled workers, thereby significantly mitigating unemployment rates not only within Baluchistan but across the nation. In light of these transformative developments, an in-depth study of the power potentials of Gwadar deep-sea port is imperative. Such an analysis should culminate in the formulation of actionable recommendations, with a special emphasis on catalyzing the holistic development of Baluchistan.

Keywords: Gwadar Deep Sea Port, Economic Growth, Trade Opportunities, Job Creation, Infrastructure Development

Introduction

The Gwadar deep sea port, strategically located on the western end of the Baluchistan coast, holds pivotal geopolitical significance as a gateway to the Strait of Hormuz and a linchpin of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). However, its development faces challenges including regional tensions and domestic political intricacies. Inter-provincial harmony and geopolitical stability are imperative for realizing Gwadar's transformative potential, particularly in Baluchistan. A nuanced analysis of Gwadar's power potentials within the CPEC framework

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is essential, emphasizing Baluchistan's development and implications for regional economic dynamics and Pakistan's strategic interests. Addressing Sino-US rivalry, Indo-Iranian dynamics, local grievances, and political cohesion within Pakistan is paramount for unlocking Gwadar's true economic dividends. High-quality infrastructure development, investor-friendly policies, and domestic political stability are prerequisites for harnessing its full potential. Gwadar port stands as a beacon of economic promise, awaiting judicious navigation to fulfill Pakistan's aspirations for sustained growth and regional influence.

Literature Review

Aristotle said “It is obviously better both for ensuring an abundance of necessities and for defensive reasons that the state and its territories should have access to the sea” (Jowett, 1885). Gwadar Port, situated on the southwestern coast of Pakistan, has emerged as a focal point of regional and international interest due to its strategic location and potential economic significance. This literature review provides an overview of key scholarly works and reports pertaining to Gwadar Port development, focusing on its historical evolution, economic implications, geopolitical significance, social and environmental dimensions, infrastructure enhancements, legal frameworks, and comparative analyses. The historical development of Gwadar Port traces back to the early 1970s when proposals were made for its establishment (Smith, 2008). Despite initial interest, progress remained slow until Chinese involvement gained momentum in the early 2000s (Li & Zhang, 2015). Gwadar Port holds the potential to transform Pakistan's economic landscape by enhancing trade connectivity and facilitating regional integration (Khan & Mahmood, 2019). Studies project substantial economic benefits, including increased trade volumes, job creation, and investment opportunities (Ahmed, 2020). Gwadar Port is a key component of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Rashid, 2017). Its strategic location at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz has raised concerns among regional and global powers regarding maritime security and geopolitical competition (Cheema, 2018). The development of Gwadar Port has raised social and environmental concerns, including displacement of local communities, loss of livelihoods, and ecological impacts (Hussain & Rehman, 2016). Community engagement and environmental sustainability are critical considerations for long-term port development (Malik et al., 2021). Infrastructure development projects associated with Gwadar Port, such as road networks and industrial zones, are essential for maximizing its economic potential (Iqbal & Malik, 2018). Technological innovations in port operations and logistics management are also gaining importance (Zafar et al., 2020). Legal and regulatory frameworks governing Gwadar Port development require comprehensive assessment and reform to address issues related to land acquisition, environmental protection, and port management (Khalid & Bano, 2019). Comparative analyses with other port development projects provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities associated with Gwadar Port (Hameed et al., 2020). Lessons learned from successful port ventures can inform policy decisions and project implementation strategies (Abbasi & Khan, 2017). The literature on Gwadar Port development highlights its multifaceted nature and the complex interplay of economic, geopolitical, social, and environmental factors. While the port holds immense potential as a catalyst for economic growth and regional connectivity, addressing challenges related to governance, sustainability, and community engagement is imperative for realizing its long-term benefits. Gwadar, strategically positioned approximately 533 kilometers from Karachi and 120 kilometers from the Iranian border, holds pivotal geopolitical significance in the region (Gwadar Port Authority, n.d.). Its location at the mouth of the Persian Gulf, near

the crucial shipping lanes and the Strait of Hormuz, underscores its importance as a key maritime gateway (Rashid, 2017). The historical trajectory of Gwadar's development dates back to Pakistan's identification of the port site in 1954, during its period under Omani rule (Smith, 2008). Following negotiations, Pakistan acquired the Gwadar enclave from Oman in 1958, marking a significant shift in regional power dynamics (Cheema, 2018). At the time of acquisition, Gwadar was a modest fishing village with limited infrastructure and population (Khan & Mahmood, 2019). The construction of Gwadar Port, undertaken by the Government of Pakistan, represents a monumental endeavor aimed at enhancing maritime trade and connectivity (Li & Zhang, 2015). Phase I of the port's development, completed in December 2006, saw the establishment of multipurpose berths and related infrastructure (Government of Pakistan, n.d.). Phase II, initiated in 2007, entails the construction of additional berths and terminals to accommodate diverse cargo types and vessel sizes (Abbasi & Khan, 2017). Operational control of Gwadar Port has evolved over time, reflecting shifting geopolitical dynamics and economic interests. Initially operated by PSA International, the port transitioned to Chinese control in 2013 under the auspices of China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) (Hussain & Rehman, 2016). This transfer of authority underscores China's growing influence in the region and its strategic aspirations regarding energy security and maritime trade routes (Malik et al., 2021). The awarding of a multi-billion dollar contract to China for the construction and operation of Gwadar Port symbolizes Pakistan's strategic alignment with Beijing's economic and geopolitical objectives (Khalid & Bano, 2019). The port's potential to serve as an oil pipeline hub for Chinese energy needs further underscores its significance within the broader framework of China-Pakistan economic cooperation (The Diplomat, 2017). In conclusion, Gwadar Port's historical evolution and contemporary dynamics exemplify the intersection of political interests, economic imperatives, and strategic ambitions. As the port continues to expand and evolve, it remains a focal point of regional competition and cooperation, shaping the geopolitical landscape of South Asia and beyond.

Methodology

The research methodology involves conducting a comprehensive literature review on Gwadar port's strategic and economic significance. Data collection methods include quantitative analysis of trade and employment statistics, as well as qualitative insights from stakeholder interviews and surveys. Economic impact assessments and infrastructure analyses will be conducted to evaluate the port's potential and infrastructure requirements. Policy assessments, SWOT analysis, and scenario planning will guide recommendations for maximizing Gwadar's impact on Balochistan's development.

Discussion

Sir Walter Raleigh said “Whosoever commands the sea commands the trade; whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world, and consequently the world itself.”

Pivotal Role of Sea Ports is Paramount in Comprehending there Significance

In essence, recognizing the multifaceted importance of seaports underscores their indispensable role in global commerce and geopolitical dynamics, laying a solid foundation for understanding the strategic significance of ports like Gwadar. Seaports stand as vital nodes in the global trade network, serving as the ultimate destination for the extensive oceanic routes

that have facilitated commerce for centuries. Understanding the pivotal role of seaports is essential before delving into the geostrategic significance of Gwadar:

- ❖ **Economic Backbone:** Seaports serve as the linchpin of national economies, significantly contributing to prosperity and economic growth. They act as pivotal points for trade, fostering robust connections with global markets.
- ❖ **Gateway to Global Trade:** The majority of the world's trade, measured by volume and weight, traverses through maritime routes. Merchant vessels, renowned for their immense cargo capacities and cost-effectiveness compared to alternative transportation modes, predominantly rely on seaports. These ports, acting as gateways to the seas, provide unparalleled efficiency in facilitating trade. Exemplary ports like Dubai and Singapore epitomize this efficiency, showcasing the pivotal role of strategic maritime hubs.
- ❖ **Political and Social Implications:** Beyond economic dividends, the provision of seaport facilities extends substantial political benefits, particularly to landlocked states and regional countries. The development of seaports catalyzes industrial growth, fosters prosperity, and spurs social development in both immediate and adjacent regions.

Maritime Commerce

Despite the profound geo-strategic implications and the significance attributed to our land borders, it's essential to recognize Pakistan's symbolic resemblance to an island state concerning trade routes. Although seasonal trade persists via the Karakoram Highway with China, interactions with Iran, Afghanistan, and India remain limited. Surprisingly, trade volumes across our land frontiers amount to less than 5% of the total. Conversely, the predominant reliance on maritime routes underscores Pakistan's role as a maritime state, emphasizing the critical importance of maritime connections for international commerce and economic vitality.

Selection of Gwadar as an Additional Port

Recognizing the necessity of establishing an additional port and the strategic reasoning behind Gwadar's designation as Pakistan's new port. Pakistan's reliance on two commercial ports, Karachi and Bin Qasim, to handle an annual trade volume of around 38 million tons underscores the significance of sea routes, which facilitate 95% of this trade. Karachi port manages 68% of sea-borne trade, while Port Qasim handles the remaining 32%. With projections indicating a substantial rise in total trade volume expected to reach 91 million tons by 2015, the pressure on existing ports intensifies. Following exhaustive deliberations, Gwadar emerged as the most suitable site among eight potential locations along our coastline, including Ketī Bandar, Sonmiani, Hingol, Ormara, Khor Kalamat, Pasni, Gwadar, and Jiwani. Gwadar's selection was informed by several pivotal factors:

- ❖ Proximity to international shipping lanes and suitability for trans-shipment facilities.
- ❖ Strategic advantage of being farthest from our Eastern neighbor, providing ample warning time against potential air and naval threats.
- ❖ Comparative cost-effectiveness of development and associated infrastructure, benefiting from minimal dredging due to favorable soil conditions.
- ❖ Natural protection against adverse weather conditions.
- ❖ Ample available area for future port expansion, ensuring long-term viability and scalability.

These considerations collectively underscore Gwadar's pivotal role in Pakistan's maritime infrastructure and its potential to enhance regional trade and economic prosperity.

Development Plan

Before delving into the geopolitical significance, it's essential to outline the development plan of Gwadar port. The joint venture, spearheaded by China Harbour Engineering Company, commenced with an initial investment of \$248 million, of which Pakistan contributed \$50 million. The project unfolds in two distinct phases:

- ❖ **Phase 1:** Completed in 2004, this phase entailed the construction of three multipurpose berths, each spanning 200 meters in length, accompanied by 350 meters of backup area and essential ancillary facilities. The approach channel, extending 5 kilometers, is engineered to accommodate vessels weighing up to 50,000 tonnes (dwt) with a draft of 11.5 meters.
- ❖ **Phase 2:** Envisioned to include the construction of 10 additional berths, each extending 300 meters in length, alongside two dedicated oil piers. Anticipated to span 4-5 years for completion post-commencement, this phase aims to facilitate:
 - ✓ Oil tankers of up to 200,000 tonnes.
 - ✓ Bulk carriers weighing up to 100,000 tonnes.
 - ✓ Fourth-generation container ships with a draft of up to 20 meters.

The meticulous execution of these phases underscores the transformative potential of Gwadar port, poised to enhance regional connectivity and elevate Pakistan's maritime infrastructure to new heights.

Strategic Importance

Gwadar holds a pivotal strategic position on the western edge of the Baluchistan coast, strategically positioned opposite the Gulf of Oman—a vital route for oil tankers en route to Japan and Western countries from the Gulf region. As goods flow from western China and Central Asia through overland trade routes to Gwadar, Pakistan stands to gain millions of dollars annually in port and cargo handling charges, along with freight charges for import and export cargoes. According to Arthur D. Little (Malaysia), principal consultants for the Gwadar development phases, Gwadar boasts of low-cost land and labor, proximity to oil and gas resources, and connections to Gulf countries. Additionally, it presents opportunities for tax-free investments and trade. The anticipated revenues from Gwadar Port are expected to reach billions of dollars, facilitating the creation of at least two million jobs. Gwadar's potential as a gateway to the Strait of Hormuz positions it to rival ports in the United Arab Emirates by bolstering links to the Caspian Region, thereby improving trade routes for the landlocked Caspian Region. The port is poised to evolve into a comprehensive regional hub and a key trans-shipment port in the foreseeable future, accentuating its strategic significance on the global trade map.

Dependence on Oil Imports

Despite external factors, our reliance on imports and exports remains a strategic necessity for sustaining the economy. Thus, it is imperative to analyze the development of Gwadar port from a domestic perspective as well. Pakistan's heavy dependence on crude oil, edible oil, and other critical imports is well-documented. These commodities are vital for our country's survival, with oil accounting for 43% of our overall energy requirements. With the population growing exponentially and national consensus lacking on large dam construction, our reliance on thermal power is expected to rise. Although there's recognition of the need to transition to coal as an energy source, complexities hinder its immediate utilization. Consequently, the demand for oil as a primary energy source is anticipated to surge in the future.

The deployment of forces during escalations costs Pakistan over US\$150 million, a significant portion of which is attributed to fuel expenses alone. Despite the potential of strategic oil reserves to mitigate dependence on sea lanes of communication (SLOCs), establishing such reserves and refineries is cost-intensive and vulnerable to air attacks. Pakistan's oil import bill is projected to reach \$8 billion by 2018, indicating sustained reliance on oil shipments, both in times of peace and crises. Karachi requires an average of 3 to 4 oil tankers per week, each capable of carrying 50,000 to 75,000 tons, to ensure uninterrupted fuel supply. Disruptions to this flow cycle could precipitate a fuel crisis with far-reaching consequences. Gwadar thus emerges as a critical necessity to provide the flexibility needed for sustained oil flow and imports to the country.

Economic Significance of the Project

Economy is a fundamental element of national power, underpinning both the strength and stability of a nation. The small town of Gwadar, with a population of less than fifty thousand, is transitioning into a hub of economic activity in the region. Designating Gwadar as an industrial zone and attracting investors has not only created job opportunities but also opened avenues for economic and tourism development along the coastal region. The economic gains from the construction of a port extend beyond mere infrastructure development. Typically, port construction is complemented by:

- ❖ Distribution centers for commodities.
- ❖ Export facilities.
- ❖ Storage and distribution centers for petroleum, oil, and lubricants (POL).
- ❖ Ship repair facilities.
- ❖ Safe havens for distressed vessels.
- ❖ Ancillary services linked with maritime trade.

The development of Gwadar port aligns with the increasing cargo traffic at existing ports and is complemented by tertiary development projects such as the Makran coastal highway, regional industrial estates, and the Saindak project. Before delving further into the economic significance of the project, it's crucial to examine the trade forecast for the region. The multifaceted economic significance of Gwadar port underscores its transformative potential in the region's economic landscape, positioning it as a linchpin for trade, investment, and economic growth.

- ❖ **Prospective Port for Regional Countries:**
- ❖ To stimulate maximum investment and industrialization, the Government has declared Gwadar port as a free trade zone. This designation facilitates the interchange of commodities across political boundaries without restrictions such as tariffs, quotas, or foreign exchange controls. Such zones represent an expansion of a port's function and enhance trade prospects for the region.
- ❖ The concept of transit ports has gained prominence in the modern shipping industry, offering cargo destined for various countries transit facilities at strategic sea routes. Gwadar's development opens up opportunities similar to ports like Dubai and Salalah, which have emerged as prominent container and trans-shipment centers. Gwadar's strategic location facilitates trade from the Far East and Red Sea to the Gulf and other regional states, promising substantial trade prospects, particularly with the Central Asian Region (CARs).
- ❖ Road distance from Kushka in Turkmenistan to Gwadar is only twelve hundred kilometers, making Gwadar the most viable option for CARs. The proposed highway

connecting Gwadar to CARs through Panigur, Chaghi, and Rabat underscores its significance as a trade conduit.

- ❖ China's economic prowess makes it a key player in the region, with Gwadar expected to play a pivotal role in China's foreign trade route. The existing Karakoram highway connects western China to Pakistan, and further upgrades to this artery will enhance Western China's access to Gwadar.
- ❖ Afghanistan's development trajectory necessitates new avenues for economic growth, making operational and economically viable sea trade routes indispensable. The approval of over 1.4 billion US\$ for the Trans-Afghan gas pipeline underscores the significance of Gwadar port in providing sea access to Afghanistan.

Development of the Country

- ❖ The development of Gwadar port stands poised to significantly alter the economic trajectory of our nation. Baluchistan province boasts abundant mineral resources that have remained largely untapped due to inadequate communication infrastructure. The expansion of roads spurred by increased economic activity in the province promises much-needed development and growth.
- ❖ The fishing industry represents a vital avenue for employment, currently supporting 300,000 fishermen and an additional 400,000 individuals engaged in ancillary industries. Karachi's fish harbor handles a substantial portion, approximately 90%, of the fish and seafood catch. With the construction of Gwadar port, there is a tangible expectation of improved fish and seafood yields, coupled with enhanced offshore exploitation of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- ❖ While the economic potential of Gwadar port is immense, it faces stiff competition from established ports in the region. However, this challenge can be surmounted by transforming Gwadar port into a modern, well-organized entity. The Gulf ports encountered similar challenges three decades ago but have since emerged as thriving hubs of business and trade. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that the Gwadar port project holds tremendous promise for the future economic uplift of Pakistan.

Military Importance

After thoroughly examining the economic significance of Gwadar Port, it's imperative to delve into its military dimensions:

❖ Threat Perception

- ✓ **Indian Expansion Program:** Pakistan's security concerns have long been centered around India, a nation aggressively pursuing regional military dominance. India's ambitious naval modernization efforts pose a direct threat to Pakistan's maritime interests, leading to a conventional naval imbalance between the two countries.
- ✓ **Naval Threat:** In alignment with its expansionist agenda, the Indian Navy may execute various operations including merchant ship harassment, port blockades, offensive mine deployments, submarine warfare, limited amphibious assaults, and sea-based missile attacks targeting vital points in Karachi.
- ✓ **Air Threat:** The Indian Air Force's strategic presence near Gwadar poses a significant challenge, with the proximity of air bases and advanced aircraft capable of swift strikes. Gwadar's vulnerability underscores the need for strategic alternatives to mitigate such threats.
- ❖ **Flexibility of Naval Operations**

- ✓ **Disruption of Sea Trade:** Interfering with a nation's maritime trade is a potent strategy during wartime, particularly for a nation heavily reliant on sea transport. The uninterrupted flow of petroleum products and military supplies becomes imperative for sustaining military operations.
- ✓ **Monitoring Indian Shipping:** Pakistan's ability to monitor Indian maritime activities through the Strait of Hormuz is critical for strategic response capabilities. Gwadar's development enhances Pakistan Navy's surveillance capabilities, ensuring a proactive response to regional threats.
- ✓ **Post-Nuclear Theater:** In a post-nuclear scenario, the loss of a single port complex could lead to severe economic ramifications. Gwadar's emergence as a major port offers a crucial alternative lifeline, deterring potential nuclear misadventures due to vested multinational interests.
- ✓ **Denial of Naval Blockade:** Following the 1971 war, the vulnerability of Karachi port complex to missile attacks necessitated the establishment of alternative ports to mitigate blockade risks. The development of Jinnah Naval Base at Ormara and Gwadar as a deep-sea commercial port significantly reduces the threat of naval blockades and strengthens Pakistan's maritime defenses.

Advancements in Gwadar and Baluchistan Improvements made

- ❖ **Industrial Zone Development:** In addition to facilitating port and port-related commercial/industrial activities, the master plan designates significant areas for three types of industrial zones: the export-processing zone (EPZ), an estate for oil, gas, and petrochemical units, and another for assorted industrial units. Moreover, areas are earmarked for housing and commercial activities, including bazaars, office blocks, and sports and entertainment facilities.
- ❖ **Saindak Copper-Gold Project:** Baluchistan province boasts abundant mineral and natural resources, previously underutilized. Currently, Chinese firms are engaged in exploring these resources through the Saindak Copper-Gold Project, with plans to export resources through Gwadar port.
- ❖ **Local Involvement:** The second phase, planned for private sector involvement, prioritizes local engagement. Former Prime Minister Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali initiated training and recruitment efforts for locals at Gwadar Port. Non-technical jobs will also preferentially employ locals, aiming to create around 3,000 job opportunities post-completion, addressing local employment concerns.
- ❖ **Water Resource Management:** Significant allocations, such as Rs five billion, have been set aside for canal lining and distributaries in Baluchistan to conserve water and prevent water-logging. Projects like the Kachi canal, Mirani Dam, and Sabakzai Dam demonstrate the province's commitment to irrigation and water management, essential for sustaining the growing Gwadar Port and regional development.
- ❖ **Tourism:** Pakistan has designated tourism as an industry and implemented measures to attract tourists, including chartered flights, helicopter services, and visa facilities. Plans for a 12-room motel in Gwadar aim to promote tourism, albeit hindered by funding shortages. Government incentives and port completion are expected to significantly boost tourist influx in Gwadar.
- ❖ **Industrial Park at Gwadar:** Chinese investment will establish a vast Industrial Park at Gwadar, housing an oil city, petroleum refining zone, and other logistical installations. The Gwadar-Karamay sister city relationship signifies collaboration, with Xinjiang Petroleum developing the industrial park, fostering economic cooperation and cultural exchanges.
- ❖ **Oil Refinery at Gwadar:** A Chinese company plans to invest \$1 billion in Pakistan's first

deep-conversion oil refinery in Balochistan, potentially transforming the country into an oil exporter, particularly to China. The refinery, initially with a capacity of five million tons annually, aims to meet domestic demand and export petroleum products to China and neighboring nations.

- ❖ **Gwadar and CPEC:** As part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Pakistan has allocated hundreds of tax-exempt acres to China for developing a special economic zone in Gwadar. This strategic move enhances China's access to the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, fostering trade and transport across Asia. Plans for an international airport and power plant projects further underscore Gwadar's pivotal role in regional economic growth.

Impediments and Analysis

These impediments underscore the multifaceted challenges and geopolitical dynamics shaping the development of Gwadar and Baluchistan, necessitating strategic foresight and diplomatic initiatives to address them effectively.

- ❖ **Security Challenges in Baluchistan:** The adverse law and order situation in Baluchistan presents a significant impediment to foreign investment, undermining confidence-building efforts in the region. Terrorist groups, allegedly backed by foreign powers including India and Israel, contribute to the deteriorating security environment. Extremism fueled by elements from Afghanistan exacerbates the situation, while porous borders facilitate the illegal influx of arms and ammunition. Baloch separatist leaders, including Dr. Allah Nazar Baloch of the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), view Chinese investment in Gwadar with skepticism, perceiving it as exploitation rather than genuine development.
- ❖ **Neglect of Baluchistan:** Historically, Baluchistan has been marginalized, with local sardars wielding disproportionate power and diverting funds meant for basic facilities. The lack of infrastructure, education, and economic opportunities perpetuates poverty and disenfranchisement among the populace. Baloch nationalists accuse China and Pakistan of exploiting the province's natural resources without adequate benefit to the local population, fostering resentment and distrust.
- ❖ **Skills Gap and Unemployment:** The scarcity of skilled local manpower in Baluchistan hinders the province's development, as technical and skilled jobs are often filled by non-local labor. Limited access to education and training exacerbates unemployment and exacerbates frustration among Baloch youth. Despite anticipated job opportunities associated with Gwadar port and related projects, the lack of local skills perpetuates economic disparities and social unrest.
- ❖ **Security Dynamics in Afghanistan:** The instability in Afghanistan, compounded by the resurgent Taliban and diverse security challenges, affects regional connectivity and trade routes. Afghanistan's strategic position as a transit hub necessitates stability for effective trade networks. The viability of oil and gas trade routes through Pakistan hinges on Afghanistan's security, highlighting the need for broader regional cooperation and stability efforts.
- ❖ **Competition with Gulf Ports:** The development of Gwadar port presents competition to established Gulf ports like Dubai, given its natural advantages and strategic location. Gwadar's emergence could reshape regional trade dynamics, potentially challenging the dominance of Gulf ports and reshuffling trade routes in Asia.
- ❖ **Chabahar and Gwadar Dynamics:** The proximity of Iranian ports like Chabahar and

Bandar Abbas adds complexity to Gwadar's strategic landscape, introducing commercial rivalry and geopolitical considerations. India's involvement in funding infrastructure projects in Afghanistan underscores its interest in leveraging Chabahar as an alternative transit route, potentially diverting trade away from Gwadar. Diplomatic realignments are crucial to navigating these geopolitical dynamics effectively.

- ❖ **Indian Geostrategic Concerns:** India views Gwadar as a strategic concern due to China's involvement and its implications for Indian Ocean dynamics. China's naval cooperation with Pakistan and Bangladesh raises apprehensions in India, prompting concerns about potential threats to its maritime interests. Indian involvement in Balochistan, evidenced by recent apprehensions of Indian agents, underscores the geopolitical complexities and security risks surrounding Gwadar's development.

Results/ Findings

The findings reveal significant potential for Gwadar port to drive economic growth in Baluchistan and beyond. Trade opportunities with Central Asia and the Gulf promise substantial revenue generation and job creation, estimated in the billions and millions respectively. The influx of human resources to Gwadar, rather than Karachi, suggests a shift in economic activity. Industries related to shipping, export processing, and petrochemicals are poised to flourish, alongside the development of essential infrastructure such as roads, hospitals, and educational institutions. The study underscores the transformative impact of Gwadar port on Baluchistan's economic landscape and its potential to alleviate unemployment and spur sustainable development.

Future Direction/ Implication

The future direction and implications stemming from the study on Gwadar port's power potentials and its impact on Baluchistan's development are multifaceted. Overall, the future direction should prioritize holistic and inclusive development strategies that leverage the full potential of Gwadar port to foster economic prosperity and improve the quality of life for the people of Baluchistan:

- ❖ **Infrastructure Investment:** Continued investment in infrastructure is crucial to support the growth of Gwadar port and its associated industries. This includes transportation networks, utilities, and social infrastructure to accommodate population growth and economic activity.
- ❖ **Policy Reforms:** Policy reforms aimed at enhancing the business environment, promoting transparency, and ensuring equitable distribution of benefits will be essential to maximize the positive impact of Gwadar port on Baluchistan's development.
- ❖ **Regional Integration:** Strengthening regional integration and trade partnerships with Central Asia, the Gulf, and beyond will unlock further economic opportunities and consolidate Gwadar's position as a key trading hub.
- ❖ **Sustainable Development:** Emphasizing sustainable development practices to mitigate environmental impacts and ensure long-term viability of Gwadar port and its surrounding ecosystem.
- ❖ **Human Resource Development:** Investing in human capital development through education and skills training programs will enhance the employability of local residents and facilitate their participation in the workforce.
- ❖ **Community Engagement:** Active engagement with local communities and stakeholders

to ensure their participation in decision-making processes and equitable distribution of benefits from Gwadar port's development.

- ❖ **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Establishing robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to track progress, identify challenges, and adapt strategies accordingly to steer Gwadar port's development towards inclusive and sustainable growth.

Recommendations

Pakistan's current economic growth trajectory signals a promising revival, with Gwadar port poised to play a pivotal role in this resurgence. To harness its full potential, meticulous economic planning and strategic foreign policy execution are imperative. Gwadar stands as a beacon of hope for Pakistan's socio-economic development, offering a gateway to unprecedented opportunities. However, to realize these benefits, the following recommendations are proposed:

- ❖ **Priority on Gwadar Development:** Elevate the development of a fully functional, modernized Gwadar to the forefront of the national agenda. This includes comprehensive plans for infrastructure development such as roads, power generation, water resources, and distribution networks.
- ❖ **Multinational Industrial Development:** Offer incentives for the establishment of industrial estates along the coast, fostering a maritime industry that drives economic growth in Gwadar and Balochistan. Tax reductions, controlled raw material rates, healthcare facilities, and support for small industries can stimulate economic activity.
- ❖ **Aggressive Marketing Strategy:** Overcome negative perceptions and market Gwadar effectively as a Free Economic Zone. Conduct market studies and initiate marketing campaigns highlighting the port's potential. Forge partnerships with investors and governments to foster development within the Free Economic Zone.
- ❖ **Joint Ventures with Central Asian Republics:** Encourage landlocked Central Asian states to participate in the exploitation of Pakistan's Exclusive Economic Zone through joint ventures. Mitigate competing interests from neighboring countries like Iran and Turkey.
- ❖ **Development of Gwadar as a Model City:** Emulate the development model of Dubai, providing Gwadar with modern infrastructure and amenities to unlock its true potential and foster prosperity in Baluchistan.
- ❖ ****Local Employment Opportunities**:** Prioritize the employment of local residents from Gwadar and Baluchistan to ensure that the benefits of progress reach the grassroots level, uplifting livelihoods and empowering communities.
- ❖ **Tourism Development:** Capitalize on Gwadar's tourism potential by developing attractions such as beaches, water sports, and resorts. Improve accessibility and security to attract domestic and international tourists.
- ❖ **Port Defense Setup:** Establish a comprehensive defense infrastructure to safeguard Gwadar port, including the development of military cantonments and permanent bases for the Pakistan Air Force and Pakistan Navy.
- ❖ **Expansion of Merchant Fleet:** Expand the merchant ship fleet to meet the demands of increased maritime activity at Gwadar port, enhancing trade capabilities and economic growth.
- ❖ **Government Patronage of Maritime Industry:** Support the maritime industry to realize its economic potential, leveraging living and non-living resources for export and economic growth.
- ❖ **Aviation Infrastructure Enhancement:** Modernize Gwadar airport to accommodate

commercial and military aviation requirements, aligning with the port's development.

- ❖ **Strengthening of Pakistan Navy:** Provide resources to meet the expanded responsibilities of the Pakistan Navy in defending Gwadar and its surrounding areas.
- ❖ **Joint Exercises with Partner Navies:** Facilitate joint exercises with Chinese and Iranian navies to enhance maritime security and cooperation in the region.
- ❖ **Capital Financing for Small Enterprises:** Implement capital financing schemes to support the development of small enterprises, addressing poverty and empowering local communities.
- ❖ **Ensuring Law and Order:** Maintain a secure environment conducive to investment by upholding the rule of law, fostering political harmony, and ensuring good governance.
- ❖ **Promotion of Tourism:** Utilize the potential of Gwadar port in tourism by developing scenic attractions and tourist facilities, attracting both domestic and international visitors.
- ❖ **Expeditious Development of Export Processing Zone:** Accelerate the development of mineral resources in Baluchistan through foreign investment and technology transfer.
- ❖ **Promotion Campaign for Gwadar Port:** Launch a robust promotion campaign highlighting the high-quality facilities and economic incentives offered by Gwadar port.
- ❖ **Communication Infrastructure Improvement:** Expand road and rail networks to connect Gwadar with neighboring countries and regions, facilitating trade and economic integration.
- ❖ **Completion of New Gwadar Airport:** Ensure the timely completion of the new international airport, equipped with amenities to instill confidence in foreign investors.
- ❖ **Development of Offshore Oil and Gas Sector:** Update petroleum policies, acquire geological data, and seek international partnerships to expedite offshore exploration and extraction activities.

These recommendations, if implemented with dedication and foresight, have the potential to transform Gwadar into a thriving economic hub and catalyst for Pakistan's prosperity.

Conclusion

Pakistan possesses a valuable strategic asset in the form of Gwadar, a treasure that promises to catalyze growth, prosperity, and enhance maritime defenses. The development of industrial zones within the port area will attract private investment, fostering the establishment of ancillary industries alongside those already thriving in the fish harbor and mini-port, thus generating significant job opportunities. Gwadar's transformative impact extends beyond Pakistan; numerous countries stand to benefit from the burgeoning trade and shipping activities it will facilitate. The establishment of robust rail, road, and sea communication networks linking Gwadar to various destinations is poised to unleash a wave of economic activity in previously neglected areas due to limited connectivity. This transformation will herald unprecedented development along the Makran coast, positioning Gwadar—meaning 'Gate of Air' in the local language—as a pivotal regional economic hub and a conduit for the import and export activities of neighboring countries. The Pakistani shipping community eagerly anticipates the issuance of rules and regulations for the commercial operation of the Gwadar deep seaport. The emergence of Gwadar promises a much-needed paradigm shift in the region, particularly in Balochistan, the country's largest province grappling with poverty. Gwadar's rise heralds a new era of economic prosperity and opportunity, poised to uplift communities and drive sustainable development in the region.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this manuscript entitled "Strategic Empowerment Unveiling the Political Dynamics and Development Prospects of Gwadar Port in Baluchistan."

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