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Pakistan's Maritime Security And China Pakistan Economic Corridor

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Abstract:

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the nodal link in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a signature foreign policy project of President Xi Jinping. BRI aims at connecting China, Southeast Asia, South Asia, Middle East, Africa and Europe. The successful execution of this project carries huge significance for Pakistan and in the words of Robert D. Kaplan, marks a beginning of new era for Pakistan. This paper explores the impacts of great power rivalry in Indian Ocean on the maritime security of Pakistan and the CPEC through broader framework of realism. This qualitative study explores the research questions using documentary analysis. Historically, India considers itself the net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), but now China has launched the BRI for regional connectivity and to ensure its energy security. The US under its 'Indo-Pacific Policy' considers India as its key ally to contain China and maintains an active presence in the region. It has also gathered great regional powers under 'Quad' and launched B3W to counter BRI at the G7 forum. The US and India have officially opposed CPEC multiple times, hence a direct threat emanates for the CPEC whereby Pakistan Navy (PN) has a major role in dispelling these conventional threats. Furthermore, PN has a role in countering unconventional threats like maritime terrorism, separatism, drug and human trafficking, illegal fishing and protecting the marine resources of Pakistan. It has a great role towards developing 'blue economy' and contribute for the greater socio-economic development of Pakistan. Finally, the naval diplomacy is another potential area where PN has a role in the resolving conflicts and promoting regional development.

Keywords: Indian Ocean Region, Belt and Road Initiative, Indo-Pacific Policy, B3W, Pakistan, Security

Introduction

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the nodal point in the chain of projects conceived under China's multi-trillion Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) connecting the land-based economic belt to the sea-based 21st century Maritime Silk Road (MSR). The investments under CPEC are a much-needed booster for the economy of Pakistan to develop its road and railway infrastructure, modernize its communication network, meet up with its energy demand in addition to create job opportunities for its huge young population. It is China's attempt to 'bail out' its 'all-weather friend' and to ensure its energy security (Ritzinger, 2015). Furthermore, it promises to develop the left-behind area of Pakistan particularly Baluchistan, making Gwadar, famously known as the jugular vein of the CPEC, a modern-planned city having state of the art port, stadiums, airport, hotels and related infrastructure (Rafiq, 2017). This strategic port city has assumed the centrality in the CPEC and is termed as 'jewel in the crown of CPEC' with generous Chinese investments aiming at making it an economic hub (Manuel, 2017). Both Pakistan and China aim at making this port a hub of commercial activity not only for Pakistan but also for the neighboring countries and the landlocked states in the region. It supplements the newly assigned policy of Pakistani policymakers to prioritize geoeconomics over geopolitics and geo-security (Dawn, 2021).

With regards to CPEC and particularly with the development of Gwadar port, Pakistan has entered into a new phase of history (Kaplan, 2018). Hence, its smooth execution and security is of immense significance not only for Pakistan and China but also for the region. There are host of traditional and non-traditional threats capable of destabilizing the security situation in the Indian ocean and disrupting the CPEC having adverse local, regional and global impacts owing to the Indian ocean being energy lifeline of more than half of the world and its proximity to Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz. This complex scenario has enhanced the role of military and other allied security agencies. With the logistical, communication and security support, Pakistan can successfully build the projected infrastructure, meet the objective of the CPEC and explore its full geographic potential. Since Pakistan is an important Indian Ocean littoral state, it has wide resources at its disposal owing to its vast coast and fertile naval territory. To fully exploit the blue-economy potential and in the development of Gwadar, Pakistan navy has a crucial role. In addition, it has a responsibility to counter the conventional and non-conventional threats at the same time to make BRI, the connectivity giant, a success story.

The Chinese President Xi Jinping in his keynote address in Belt and Road Forum called for new international relations and global order based upon 'win-win cooperation' while discussing the BRI which is his signature foreign policy project (PRC, 2017). It promises more than \$1 trillion in 10-years, embracing over half of the global population, 30 percent of world economy and a long-term commitment of \$5 trillion in terms of infrastructure investment (Leer & Yau, 2016). As this ambitious project was launched, almost all the South Asian states except India welcomed it owing to their war-torn, poverty-ridden and western-influenced economies, hence it was popularly termed as "Chinese version of Marshall plan" (Iqbal, 2018). With almost 139 member states, it has become truly global and has forged a not-so-easily reversible link between China, Europe, Africa with rest of Asia (Schuman, 2019).

Being a flagship project of the BRI, the CPEC has got significant attention in world politics keeping in view the geostrategic location and geo-economic potential of the corridor. It became a hot topic for discussion in both eastern and western academia, media and official circles. States took positions on the perceived project as it was welcomed by the most of regional states and at the same time opposed by India and the United States (Tribune, 2015). India, a major power in the region, is a significant missing link in the Belt and Road Initiative. It boycotted the Belt and Road Forum, 2017, Indian foreign ministry issued a detailed statement criticizing and questioning the key contours of the BRI and objected certain perceived projects. India entered into an agreement with Pakistan's neighbor Iran for the development of its South-eastern Chabahar port a few miles away from Pakistan's Gwadar port giving it an important leverage in Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs) (Mehdi, 2020). India considers itself the sole guarantor of security in the Indian ocean and it has converged its interests with the US which has a significant presence in the Indian ocean particularly in the Strait of Hormuz and Diego Garcia. In order to secure its maritime interests and investments, China has also intensified its naval presence in the Indian ocean (White, 2020) and focused to become a blue water navy (USIP, 2020). As both China and India are expanding their presence and influence in the Indian ocean, their interests are increasingly colliding between both the states and it has given rise to great power competition between China and India in the Indian ocean rim in which the latter has been allied with the United States under its 'Indo-Pacific policy' which evolved into the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy (FOIPS)' lately (Chatzky & McBride, 2020).

In addition to great power politics, there are certain local, non-state irritants posing serious challenges to China-Pakistan relations and the execution of the CPEC projects (Zafar, 2017). Consequently, the Pakistan Navy (PN) and the Maritime Coastguard has a major traditional and non-traditional role to play in the region for ensuring maritime security, maintaining stability for the smooth flow of sea routes and exploitation of the 'blue economy' potential in the Ocean to the fullest (Khan, 2021). Since the announcement of the CPEC, PN is joining hands with the Peoples' Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in the Indian Ocean to protect its maritime interests and to consolidate its power in the Ocean and to safeguard the CPEC-related infrastructure and sea routes (Elmer, 2020).

Research Questions

- i) How does the power (im)balance in the IOR impact the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)?
- ii) How can the Pakistan navy play its role in the successful execution of the CPEC in the region keeping in view the traditional and non-traditional challenges at local, regional and global level?

Theoretical framework

According to the nature of current study, to understand the behaviors of the littoral states in the Indian ocean, the broader theoretical framework of realism will be employed as the topic under discussion is purely based upon the "hard politics". According to neorealist claims, states tend to maximize their power in order to ensure their survival. According to defensive realist perspective, ultimate goal of states is to protect its interests in which 'survival' is the key ambition by equalizing its power with its rival states. States tend to maintain appropriate balance with the potential contenders. On the other hand, offensive realists contend that states' goal is to ensure their survival by 'domination' in which regional domination is the first step. The growing competition of China and India in the Indian ocean and the impacts that it could have on the CPEC is a fit case of offensive realist framework. Similarly, it also qualifies the growing tension between China and the US. Furthermore, the historical animosity of India and Pakistan and its impact on the CPEC can best be analyzed on the assumptions of realism. Under these assumptions, the extended role of Pakistan navy will be analyzed. It will look at the challenges to the CPEC and also explore the new roles and the areas created for the PN in the perspective of the successful execution of the CPEC.

Research Methodology

Furthermore, documentary analysis has been utilized in this qualitative research. To be precise, it does not relate to whole scope of the rivalries between the concerned parties and the overall dynamics of relations between China and Pakistan. Furthermore, since the CPEC was officially announced in 2015, so it limits the time frame of the study underway. Finally, in order to understand the challenges to the CPEC and enhanced role of Pakistan navy, thematic analysis has been employed for the reduction and organization of the qualitative data. There are three approaches to the content analysis i.e., conventional, directed and summative. All available primary and secondary sources have been exploited during this course of research to collect qualitative data. The primary sources consist of official statements, foreign affairs briefings, official reports, naval doctrines, security policies, official papers, government publications, official websites, United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and naval archives. On the other hand, secondary sources consist of Chinese, Indian, Pakistani and the United States' think tanks, books, journal articles and reports.

Discussion

This article consists of three parts: first part briefly discusses the geostrategic and geopolitical significance of the Indian Ocean and the evolving power dynamics in the region. Second part highlights the CPEC as an important link in the China's BRI project. It explores the challenges that the CPEC is facing in the given geostrategic environment in the Indian Ocean Rim. Third and the final part sheds light on the traditional and non-traditional role of the Pakistan navy with regards to the CPEC. It discusses the role of PN in the light of the opportunities offered by the CPEC in the overall socio-political development of Pakistan.

Geostrategic Environment in the Indian Ocean

The 19th century strategist Alfred Mahan stated that controlling sea by naval supremacy and maritime commerce entails much sustainable dominance in the world, in comparison to land resources as "nothing facilitates the necessary exchanges as does the sea" (Kynge et al., 2017). The recent shift of conflicts from land to sea can be attributed to the historical significance of waterways in the global politics. Progress of humanity has long been associated with waterbodies, as new civilizations emerge from them. With the rise of nation-states and owing to the fact that there are limited resources on earth, the exploitation of water resources has become institutionalized. In spite of modern means of communication, transportation, and technological innovations, sea remains the most cost-effective medium of trade. It provides the essential trade routes particularly that fulfil today's growing energy needs. 80 percent of global trade passes through the sea and the total volume of world ocean economy is around US\$1.5 trillion per annum (Commonwealth, 2021). Furthermore, the water offers plenty of natural resources that contribute to the socio-economic development such as there are over 350 million jobs that are related to fisheries globally. According to an estimate 34 percent of world crude oil will be exploited from offshore fields by 2025.

Spykman in his 'Rimland' thesis asserted that the powers controlling the rimland dominate the world and domination in Asia starts with the domination in Indian Ocean Rim owing to various critical access points in it like the Suez Canal, Bab el-Mandeb, Strait of Hormuz, and Strait of Malacca and waterbodies like Arabian sea, Bay of Bengal, Red Sea, Mozambique Channel, Gulf of Oman and is passage to 80 percent of the global trade (IEA, 2017) and is home to 2.49 billion population (Michel and Russel, 2012). It provides a medium of transportation of two-third world shipments, in particular from Persian Gulf oilfields which contains approximately 40% of the Global oil making it an important SLOCs.

Mahan while elaborating the significance of navy stated that when a state gets its land borders fully secured and it no more needs to defend them, at that moment that state has the maximum potential for strengthening its naval muscles. China does not have any significant naval or maritime tradition owing to its land-based insecurities. However, in the past few decades, it is increasingly strengthening its footprints in the waters as its land borders have been secured. China is on the way to become world's largest navy in 2030s (Kaplan, 2018). China has made the Indian Ocean an important feature of its foreign and defense policy, and has strengthen its commercial and naval footprints in in IOR owing to its immense geo-strategic and geo-economic significance (Kynge et al., 2017).

The manufacturing-based China's economy depends on the uninterrupted flow of their trade particularly oil in the Indian Ocean. It relies heavily upon the oil imported from Middle East for its sustainable growth. China was a net exporter of oil in 1990s, now it is the world's largest importer of oil and petroleum products. Almost 84 percent of the China's imports of oil pass through Strait of Malacca (Albert, 2016). It is a narrow strip of nearly 22-mile width, and at its narrowest point it is 2.5km. All the oil (Freier & Fursenko, 2018) and gas from the Iranian plateau and Arabian Peninsula have to go across the Indian ocean through the strait of Malacca and to the East Asia (Kaplan, 2010). This chokepoint is bounded by the states that are either ally of the United States or share links to it in anyway. It has long concerned China for the safety of its sea routes and smooth oil supply which is exacerbated due the lack of direct access of China to the Indian Ocean.

To consolidate its position in the Indian ocean, China is building a series of ports in the ocean under BRI, a signature foreign policy project of president Xi Jinping aimed at connecting China with Southeast Asia, South Asia, Middle East, Africa and the Europe, and in this strategic overture, Pakistan is a 'zipper' connecting these regions with the Russia-led EUU (Jiao, 2013). China's public and private companies and bank will fund and build extensive road, railways, pipelines, optic fibre network and develop ports throughout the region. In addition to secure its position in the Indian ocean for the security of its energy supply, another key aim of this project is the development of the western part of China and control the ethno-nationalist movements there. This part of China is resided by Uighur Muslims having Turk ethnicity. Under BRI, China aims at deepening the link with its western part and developing this region to emancipate the marginalized communities (Kaplan, 2018).

There are currently almost 139 Sub-Saharan African, North African, European, East Asian, South Asian, Latin American and Caribbean countries that have recognized and joined this project making it a truly global initiative having 40 percent of the world GDP and 73 percent global population. Though the BRI does not pass through all these 139 countries, however, these countries recognize this project and have shown their willingness to coordinate with China in this endeavor (Sacks, 2021). The 1st BRI summit was attended by representatives from more than hundred countries to which the UN Secretary General also attended and termed the BRI project similar in its aim of 'connectivity' to the 2030 agenda and called China "central pillar of multilateralism" (UN, 2017). The BRI projects have attracted the US allies such as Greece, South Korea, New Zealand, KSA, Italy and UAE.

A parameter for the importance that China attaches to this ambitious project is that China has incorporated it in Communist Party's constitution (Ying, 2017). The BRI project is primarily explained by China as having economic and commercial contours. It aims at infrastructural, financial, trade and people-to-people connectivity linking East Asian states with the Central Asian Republics (CARs) and to the Africa and Europe reviving the Old Silk Road. It will help China diversify its energy imports, helping it to escape its Malacca dilemma and ensure its energy security (Storey, 2006). In addition, it would shorten the distance for China in its route to Arabian Gulf, as the distance between Gwadar and Xinjiang is 3000km while if Chinese import go from Sea lanes via Strait of Malacca, it is 12000 kilometers (Manuel, 2017).

Though connectivity is a positive term marked by free market, trade and cultural exchanges. However, when it comes to geopolitics,

connectivity has its own distinct tensions and troubles (Kaplan, 2018). The prevailing situation in the Indian ocean There is a complex interplay among China and the United States going on in the Indian ocean. This situation has created a 'security dilemma' in Indian Ocean resulting in arms race between the states and the pursuit of allies in the region in order to expand their influence. Traditionally, India has maintained dominant position in the Indian Ocean. It has carried out various operations and exercises in the Ocean and considers itself the net security guarantor to the small island states bordering the Indian Ocean. To further consolidate its power, India forwarded its 'Look East and think West policy' in the post-Cold War. Furthermore, to institutionalize its superiority in the Indian ocean, it spearheaded the foundation of 23-membered Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) in 1997 which aimed at boosting cooperation among regional powers and sustainable development in the IOR.

Similarly, India is modernizing its navy and reaching out to the neighboring Indian ocean states. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India was the largest importer of the weapons in 2015. India has made attempts to modernize its navy in order to create a balance with the China. India outlined "Security and Growth for all in the Region" (SAGAR) as part of Indian Vision (2015). It established an Indo-Pacific Division which deals with the provision of policy guideline on the major issues and India's programs in the region and intensified its bilateral and multilateral engagement with the West African countries. India has set up naval facilities at Mauritius and the Seychelles island (Marshall, 2015).

Similarly, China has also bolstered its naval presence in the Indian Ocean and enhanced its military capabilities in order to protect its interests (Smith, 2018). In addition to offshore water defense under China's Military Strategy, 2015 the PLAN assumed a greater role of 'open water protection' at the oceans (PRC, 2015). To project its naval prowess, as the neo-realist perspective suggest, China has deployed nuclear submarines in the Indian ocean (Sakhuja, 2014). Furthermore, it has opened its 1st overseas naval base in Djibouti, a key project of the BRI where its military and commercial interests merge (CFR, 2018).

This evolving situation in the Indian Ocean particularly the scenario created after the BRI has posed a serious challenge to the United States (Hillman & Sacks, 2021) which has resulted in the prevalent situation in the great power competition between China and the United States in the Indian ocean (Hillman & Sacks, 2021). The United States is critical of China's growing footprints in the Indian ocean under the former's BRI project (Nolan & Leutert, 2020). The US boycotted the second Belt and Road Forum as it termed the BRI a threat to its national security (Business Standard, 2019). It perceives China's actions as a challenge to its dominance, particularly China's influence exceeding its region as the BRI has extended to its backyard i.e., Latin America in addition to many allies of the US (Yi, 2017). This project is seriously undermining the US led world order, depicting China's grand strategy and beginning of rewriting the global order by filling the space left by the US (Hillman & Sacks, 2021). The situation has become further serious as the key allies of the US are also joining the project, and the US has sent strong signals to these states (BBC, 2019).

The US has put forward its 'Indo-Pacific strategy' in order to rebalance its power against rising China (Chatzky & McBride, 2020), and discarded its old Cold war policy that focuses on Atlantic and Pacific Ocean. The US navy in its strategy document in October, 2007 wrote that in the future the US navy will continue to be a two-ocean navy, but it will not be Atlantic and Pacific anymore, "it will be the Indian ocean and Pacific". Similarly, in the '2008 Marine Core Vision Strategy', it was affirmed that the marine core will be occupied in the two oceans as usual but the Indian ocean and Pacific Ocean rather than the Atlantic and Pacific. In its 'National Security Strategy, 2017', while referring to China stated that the most formidable challenge to the United States and its partners emanate from "repressive visions of the future international order" which is pursued by "authoritarian revisionist powers".

In this backdrop, The US showed its commitment to partner with India in Indian ocean and supporting its leadership role (White House, 2017). In 2019, the United States put forward its 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy' underlined that the United States was always an Indo-Pacific nation and would continue to be so and it embraced more than 35 states, and it aims at enhancing the US role and protecting its interests in the region. It also extended its full support for this multilateral arrangement (State Department, 2019). The LEMOA and BECA agreement opened new ways of defense particularly naval cooperation between India and the United States giving each other access to military assets, naval bases and strategic intelligence (Hali, 2020).

Similarly, the United States, India, Japan and Australia formed "Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad)", an alliance that primarily aims at countering the growing Chinese influence. The United States has resorted to the Cold War policy of making alliances as it is aligning countries of the Quad on 'anti-China' rhetoric. In a show of power in the Indian ocean, these states have held their biggest combined military exercise that included a range of weaponry and warship (Rasheed, 2020). Finally, the US under the umbrella of G7 has pledged to launch its own version of infrastructure investment project, B3W for the lower-and-middle income countries (BBC, 2021) which is expected to create a new power game in the region. These steps and assertions complement to a key neo-realist feature whereby the hegemon asserts itself against the prospective competitors.

CPEC connecting Land to Sea and accompanied challenges

China's approach towards South Asia is tilted greatly to favor of Pakistan as it gives China an upperhand in Asia against India (USIP, 2020) as Pakistan is an important Indian ocean littoral state, located in close proximity to Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. China launched its multi-billion-dollar flagship project, the CPEC, in 2015 with the signing 51 MoUs (Haider, 2015), having network of highways, motorways, railways, dry ports and pipelines complemented by the infrastructure projects like special economic zones, energy projects, that finally intersect at the sea (Siddiqui, 2017). It is the chief spot in China's Belt and Road Initiative linking Kashgar in western China to the Gwadar in the Indian ocean giving China a direct access to the Persian Gulf and up to the Mediterranean. This project connects both components i.e., the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, a sea-based part and the Silk Road Economic Belt, a land-based, and Gwadar is the central point where both the components intersect give great geostrategic leverage to China in the Indian ocean (Ishaque, 2018). Owing to China's investments, lease and building in Gwadar, it is often referred as 'China's Asian Djibouti' as it performs the function in Persian Gulf that Djibouti does in the Red Sea. The successful execution of this link has the ability to make China a world power. Gwadar is one of the world's most strategically significant ports located at the jugular of the global energy supply in the heart of Arabian sea in the south-west of Pakistan, having potential to serve as political economic, diplomatic, and military hub for China in the IOR (Kardon et al, 2020). China is employing

its maritime experience and financial muscle in Gwadar as it is also set to establish a \$2 billion oil refinery at the coast of Gwadar, series of hotels, and long superhighway viz- a-viz a high-speed railway is envisaged to link it to western provinces of China paving a way to make it modern city housing 2 million population (Manuel, 2017).

Apart from geoeconomics, the CPEC has huge geopolitical and geostrategic underpinnings as well. China and Pakistan have for long denied the military aspect and strategic dimension of Gwadar port, and termed this project for commercial gains. CPEC is likely to fulfil the China's desire for an open access to China in the South Asia and the Indian ocean thus addressing China's desire of becoming a two-ocean navy i.e., Pacific and Indian ocean. It provides China with an alternate safe route in case of any crisis in Indian dominated Nicobar and Andaman Islands, piracy-rife Straits of Malacca or in the contentious South China Sea.

Pakistan is concerned about its survival in the environment of growing militarization of Indian ocean as it has become the most nuclearized ocean and has partnered with China to counterbalance the threats emanating from India. It considers the traditional challenge to the CPEC emanating from India which has openly opposed this project. Just after the announcement of CPEC, Indian foreign minister travelled to China and showed its strong displeasure over the multi-billion-dollar project. India based its opposition on the basis of part of the project passing through the disputed territory between India and Pakistan. Indian policymakers consider China-Pakistan dynamic strategic and military alliance directed against India as it is the military, strategic and political dimension of the CPEC that dominates this whopping investment (Small, 2015). For a long time, India considers itself the sole guarantor of security and protection to the small island-based Indian ocean littoral states. In Indian perspective, the CPEC challenges that role as it will give China leverage in the Indian Ocean (Iqbal, 2018).

India points out that China is building a naval base in Gwadar, which Pakistan and China deny (Xuanzun & Yuandan, 2021). India objects against the presence of Chinese in Gwadar and attributes it to the China's 'string of the pearl' strategy which relates to strategic encirclement of India through naval bases and Chinese controlled ports (Ashraf, 2017). Recently the terms 'neo-String of Pearls' has become popular in academia. This phenomenon refers to the connection of three huge oceans that is Pacific, Indian and the Atlantic under the umbrella of the BRI that encompasses host of strategic chokepoints and the multiple ports in starting from East Asia to the South Asia, Middle East, Africa, and up till the Europe (Iqbal, 2018). To this encirclement particularly the Gwadar build-up, India is also looking for new platforms. Currently, India is the fifth largest navy and it is on its way to become the third largest in the world in near future (Kaplan, 2010). It has constructed a major naval base at Karwar located in south of Goa in the Indian Ocean (Kaplan, 2010). Months after the announcement of CPEC, Indian Prime Minister signed an agreement with Iran over the build-up of Chabahar port located in southeast Iran just 107 miles away from Gwadar. India aimed to bypass Pakistan and get an access to Afghanistan and further. A key foreign policy objective of India is to neutralize Pakistan's influence in Afghanistan for which it has executed various projects there (Chatzky & McBride, 2020).

Though Pakistan's economy is far behind China and India, its conventional and non-conventional military capabilities are considerably strong and promising and is a major naval power in the Indian Ocean Rim. It is 8th largest military spender in Asia and Oceania with \$10.4 billion in 2020 in addition to be among the top ten weapon importers in the world (SIPRI, 2021). Pakistan has also undergone various military and naval exercises in order to effectively project its offensive and defensive capabilities. It conducts Multinational Maritime Exercise named as Aman held biennially 7th of which was held in 2021. Militaries of multiple regional and extra-regional states participate in these exercises in a show of power which is also witnessed by ambassadors, high commissioners, envoys, defense and military attaches of various states. In Aman-21 militaries of almost 45 countries took part and showed their commitment (Siddiqui, 2021). Parallel to these exercises, an International Maritime Conference (IMC) on the theme "Development of Blue Economy under a Secure and Sustainable Environment: A Shared Future for Western Indian Ocean Region" was also held. PN and PLAN have conducted extensive bilateral naval exercises known as "Sea guardians-2020" (Elmer, 2020). The alliance of China-Pakistan—of which construction of Gwadar port near Strait of Hormuz is one manifestation— and correspondingly the naval build-up of India at Nicobar and Andaman Islands near Malacca Strait signal a Sino-Indian maritime Great Game (Kaplan, 2010).

Furthermore, the CPEC and the BRI projects have come at a time when there is growing animosity between China and the United States almost on every issue that is now often referred as 'new cold war'. The United States has resorted to the Cold War policy of making alliances as it is aligning countries of the Quad on 'anti-China' rhetoric (Dawn, 2021). This policy of the US has also created such a situation that the major powers are supposed to take positions on the initiatives taken by China of which CPEC is the one such project. In this backdrop, the United States is closely monitoring the developments under corridor project. India and the US are major strategic partners particularly after the US Asia pivot policy that was propounded by President Barack Obama and officially owned in 2011. They enjoy partnership in range of areas particularly economic and military spheres which is of particular relevance viz-a-viz threat to CPEC and interest of Pakistan and China. Both India and the United States share converging interests in the Indian ocean (IOR) and focal point of their strategy is to counter the expansion of China. A Maritime Information Sharing Technical Arrangement (MISTA) was signed between the US and India under the auspicious of 2+2 dialogue in 2020 aimed at boosting coordination between the two navies (Khalid, 2021). The US increasingly looks Pakistan from 'Afghan-lens' and it did not consider Pakistan in its Indo-Pacific strategy and has not placed it in Pacific Command, rather it has included it in Central Command along with Afghanistan (CENTCOM, 2021).

Finally, Israel is another stakeholder in the Indian Ocean after the signing of Abraham Accord and former's partnership with India. The normalization of the relations between Israel and some Arab states has affected the marine environment in the Indian Ocean which has implications for the region particularly for Pakistan and China. In this evolving scenario, the BRI in general and CPEC in particular has gained immense significance owing to it being the smoothest and most economical route in the Indian Ocean. Thus, Pakistan's role as regional player is pertinent in this regard. In this regard, the importance of Pakistan for Russia is pertinent for whom Pakistan is a 'Zipper state' as it opens new prospects for Russia (Korybko, 2017). Owing to this fact, there are corresponding threats as well which would be multiplied if Israel involves in the Indian Ocean at the behest of UAE.

Maritime Security and China Pakistan Economic Corridor

CPEC has entered into its second phase and it is immensely important for Pakistan as it has given a structural boost to Pakistan's economy in addition to meeting the energy needs and transportation infrastructure (Gul, 2019). Keeping in view the associated geopolitics, Pakistan navy has a major role towards security and maintaining stability at the ocean. There is an indispensable link between the CPEC and the Pakistan Navy (PN) as the role of PN has enhanced exponentially ever since the envision of the CPEC and Gwadar being its important component. Maritime security is a relatively new term and it has three core domains: national security; marine environment and economic development (Bueger & Edmunds, 2017).

National security, CPEC and the enhanced role of Pakistan navy

National security domain of maritime security comprises of naval strategies, overall sea power against traditional and non-traditional security threats in a long period of time. It also includes application of this power by projecting it and the defense of sea borders, the trade and energy routes by effective deterrence, surveillance and interception (Bueger & Edmunds, 2017). Such threats and concerns are of great significance particularly in the context of Indian ocean which is marred by the current geopolitical great power rivalry.

In terms of traditional threats to maritime security, the challenges to the CPEC are posed by various regional and extra-regional entities. Pakistan is a net importer of energy, so the smooth flow of energy is a must for Pakistan's already fragile economy. It also depends heavily upon the Indian Ocean as more than 95 percent of its trade through sea (Xuanzun & Yuandan, 2021). Similarly, the primary China's interest behind such a large investment is its energy security. Pakistan and India have a history of rivalry and any armed conflict between them has the potential to seriously disrupt maritime traffic in the ocean hampering the smooth flowing of energy to China (Tata, 2017).

The operationalization of CPEC has increased vulnerabilities and risks, as India has repeatedly criticized the CPEC on various forums (Ayres, 2017). Pakistan accuses Indian intelligence agency RAW for fomenting terrorist attacks against Pakistan and it arrested a serving Indian naval commander in Baluchistan who confessed of plotting to sabotage the CPEC-related projects particularly the Gwadar port. Given the India's strong opposition to the CPEC, there are possibilities of escalation of tension between the two neighbors (Kugelman, 2017). India launched an ICBM in January 2017 which heightened threat perception in Pakistan owing to the historical animosity of both neighbors (Qadir & Rehman, 2017). Pakistan claimed that it averted an Indian submarine attack in its waters asserting its strong anti-submarine defense. Within a month of launch of Indian nuclear submarine Pakistan successfully tested its first nuclear submarine-launched cruise missile (NTI, 2021).

Maritime security for the safeguard of country's maritime interests is the primary responsibility of navy. In the light of the national, regional and global significance of the CPEC, both the navies of China and Pakistan have given a new impetus to their naval cooperation and modernize their naval capabilities to maintain a balance against common threats. To ensure maritime security along the sea routes of the CPEC, China handed over two ships having state-of-the-art guns to Pakistan navy (Baloch, 2017). There is approximate nuclear parity between India and Pakistan, and in terms of conventional capabilities, Pakistan has procured armament from China and other arm exporting countries. Pakistan navy possesses a strong submarine force (NTI, 2021) as it purchased eight submarines from China (NTI, 2021) and a range of strike-capable drones (Gady, 2015). Pakistan also signed production agreement with Turkey for four corvettes, keeling of the two was held in 2020 (The News, 2020).

Secondly, Pakistan navy has a major role in the safeguarding the infrastructure of the CPEC as it is of great national security interest for Pakistan. Karachi was the principal naval base for Pakistan which was subjected to blockade by India in 1971 war. Gwadar which is located 645 kilometres away from the coast offers a strategically beneficial position for naval build-up. Being a deep-water port, it has immense security-related prospects as it can accommodate submarines and surface combatants. Additionally, it provides a logistical support point to PLAN ships close to Middle East and Africa. Though China and Pakistan deny this aspect, but it is often contented that it offers just a naval facility.

Finally, the PN has played a huge role in the 'maritime diplomacy'. In the pursuance of foreign policy objectives, Pakistan navy has patrolled to various regional and extra-regional ports in 2020 that include Kenya, Oman, Seychelles, Tanzania, Turkey, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) and Jordan. Furthermore, there is a lot that Pakistan can learn from the role played by the PLAN is an important component of military diplomacy as it has increased its presence in the Indian ocean manifolds (Albert, 2016). It is a part of anti-piracy deployments in the Gulf of Aden and has successfully conducted operation in Libya in 2011 for evacuation of its stranded 35,000 workers. As part of Pakistan's 'Engage Africa policy' the PN was deployed in Africa in 2019 (Khan, 2021). The Aman exercises have provided a valuable apolitical forum for the engagement of navies and officers of NATO, US, China, Russia and Iran which had the major presence in the exercises (Khalid, 2021).

Marine environment and the CPEC

Marine environment is the second major domain of the marine security. It is diverse category that includes host of marine components ranging from pollution at the seas, vessel safety, regulation of marine boundary, search and rescue, maritime health, and the climate change and its impact on waterbodies. This maritime component has a long history of shared concerns and corresponding international efforts in the form of international and regional organizations such as International Maritime Organization (IMO) and similar coordination bodies like UN Oceans. This domain also includes threats to commercial shipping such as terrorism, piracy, human trafficking, and illicit goods drugs and weapons. In addition, illegal and unauthorized fishery and resultant environmental degradation has also potential to destabilize marine environment threatening the overall marine security (Bueger & Edmunds, 2017).

Firstly, terrorism, and militancy is the most significant arena where there is an extensive role of Pakistan navy. The extremist elements in Pakistan and allied regions have the potential to converge their interests with India and attempt to sabotage the CPEC projects with the latter's patronage. China's primary concern with regards to Sino-Pakistan relations in general and the CPEC in particular is terrorism, militancy and separatist elements in Pakistan (Basit, 2018). As the CPEC projects began to be executed in

2016, the attacks on Chinese workers and the CPEC related infrastructure increased (Arduino, 2018). Pakistan has assured the security of CPEC at the highest level (Dawn, 2018). In the light of this Special Security Division (SSD) consisting of 15,000 military and paramilitary troops was erected for the protection of the CPEC-related projects (Khan, 2016). Pakistan navy has remained an important member of the international efforts. It is the member of Combined Task Force (CTF)-150 since 2004 for curbing the menace of terrorism and control the illicit activities in its area of control. A special body named Task Force-88 (TF-88) was erected in this regard by Pakistan Navy in 2016. It is particularly directed at security of the Gwadar port and associated sea lanes and routes. This strong and effective body consists of 400 marines aimed at defending maritime on-shore and seaward assets. TF-88 is a multidimensional force that counters any threat whether it be surface, sub-surface or aerial as it is equipped with gunboats, Fast Attack Craft (FAC), aircraft, frigates, and drones in addition to electronic surveillance system. It aims at deployment of marines at sea and around Gwadar for security operations (Dawn, 2016). Pakistani military is also engaging with regional powers under Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism in order to broaden its counterterrorism efforts (Iqbal, 2020).

Secondly, piracy is a major challenge with regards to the CPEC and the related sea routes. The Indian Ocean has remained a hotbed for piracy for a long-time. In the 21st century, the piracy incidents in Indian ocean and the choke points adjacent to Pakistan have seen the multiple piracy incidents (WSC, 2021). Such activities are a direct threat to the CPEC and the related men and material. Pakistan navy in this regard has a pertinent role in curbing out such hindrances. Pakistan navy has in the past played a very significant role in its anti-piracy missions. Pakistan has commanded Multinational Combined Task Force 151 (CTF-151) for various times aimed at suppressing piracy in the Gulf of Aden, the Horn of Africa, and the adjoining space under in the ocean. Similarly, Pakistan is an active member of UN Contact Group on Piracy. To enhance the operational capability, Pakistan has institutionalized the Joint Maritime Information Coordination Centre (JMICC) located in Karachi and it is responsible for sharing maritime information. It coordinates, harmonizes, interacts and shares optimum information with national and regional stakeholders to ensure security and of the maritime activity in its area of influence.

Thirdly, Pakistan navy has enhanced role towards Prevent drug trafficking as the Indian ocean has always remained a hub of drug trafficking as it finds its route from Afghanistan to the Europe via Red Sea, Suez Canal and Arabian Sea. The success of the CPEC greatly depends upon keeping the marine environment safe. Pakistan Navy has a great role to play in controlling drug trafficking in the corridor as it connects various states and continents with each other, so there are vulnerabilities in this domain. At the international forums particularly UNODC, Pakistan has made commitments to make the CPEC “drug free corridor” (The News, 2020). Pakistan Navy in various joint intelligence-based operations with Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA), Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) and Pakistan Customs has confiscated huge amount and worth billions of dollars narcotics. PN is an important participant in Combined Maritime Forces playing an important role in countering narcotics (Khalid, 2021).

Fourthly, the Illegal immigration and human trafficking is another major arena where Pakistan navy finds its enhanced role. There is a high risk of human trafficking and illegal immigration with regards to the CPEC as the Indian ocean has remained a hotspot of this illegal activity. It has two major routes for this illegal activity first of which from Horn of Africa to the Southern Arabian Sea and the second one is from sub-continent of Asia to the Arabian Peninsula.

Fifthly, Hijacking is another potential area where the PN finds its role. In the backdrop of the CPEC, this area has gained immense significance. The 2014 Dockyards attack illustrates this vulnerability with respect to Chinese frigate (Syed, 2014).

Sixthly, climate change has drastically increased the role of navies and maritime powers around the world. The Oceans are the key determinants of the climate change as the rise of sea level, increase in temperatures, increased frequency of climate related disasters and extreme weather condition adversely impact the states bordering oceans and the communities residing near the coastal areas and their livelihood is attached to the ocean. The Indian Ocean rim states are particularly vulnerable to such eventualities. According to a report of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the South Asian rivers including Indus are particularly the hotspot of climate disasters. The coastal areas of Pakistan particularly that of Baluchistan are particularly vulnerable in this regard. Pakistan navy finds a lead role as far as the CPEC-related vulnerabilities are concerned. The primary role it can play in creating awareness and anticipatory response to the perceived threats and protecting the ‘Coastal and Marine Ecosystem’ from environmental hazards.

The continued growth of the population and unplanned industrialization has adversely impacted the coastal environment in Karachi. According to an estimate, 80 percent of the untreated municipal and industrial waste is discharged into the sea. The PN has a role in preventing the recap of this situation at Gwadar. As under the CPEC, Gwadar is envisioned as a mega-port city and an industrial hub, in this regard, the planning department and the PN has responsibility towards planned growth and prevention of the pollution of the EEZ.

China has devised a detailed framework for ensuring environmental protection and climatic sustainability with regards to the BRI projects (PRC, 2013). However, there has been criticism on China’s investments under BRI over their negative environmental impacts. In 2014 to 2017, 91 percent of the energy-related projects under were based on fossil fuels that have adverse calamitic outcomes (Zhou et al, 2018). However, in a positive trajectory, China has refused to accept any coal or fossil fuel-based project in Bangladesh showing a renewed commitment to the environmentally clean, green and sustainable BRI investment (Shepherd, 2021).

Finally, Pakistan navy has a major Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) role with respect to the CPEC. As the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerabilities of the global order, it has also raised questions on the future pace of the BRI posing a serious challenge to the smooth execution of this project and the commitment of China and the participating countries in this regard. China has also admitted its adverse impacts on some of the BRI as it has “seriously affected” 20 percent of the ongoing projects (Aljazeera, 2020). The Pakistan Navy has a huge potential for humanitarian assistance at the time of natural or man-made catastrophes. This role of PN was particularly prominent at the time of outbreak of the COVID-19 Pandemic. It established medical centers, hospitals and distributed food and Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) in far flung areas of Sindh and Baluchistan. In the aftermath of urban flooding in Sindh particularly Karachi, an emergency was officially declared. Pakistan Navy

established emergency response teams that carried out wide relief and rescue operations (Hali, 2021). Similarly, Pakistan navy has performed many HADR operation in many African countries in the recent years (Khan, 2021).

Economic development and the CPEC

The final domain of maritime security is the economic development. Firstly, Navies have a major role in social and economic development of any state. By averting the threats to national security and marine environment, states have the potential to get economic gains from the sea in terms of 'blue economy' (Bueger & Edmunds, 2017). The concept of 'Blue economy' encompasses exploitation of maritime resources such as shipping, fishing, and support for the oil, gas mining and mineral industries has gained immense significance in today's world. It also underpins the sustainability and maintaining the health of these resources for future generations. Pakistan shares over 1000-kilometer maritime coast in Indian Ocean Rim (IOR), covering an Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of about 240,000 Sq. km which was further extended in 2015 after the ruling of the UNCLCS (Xuanzun & Yuadan, 2021). Owing to these geographical features, Pakistan has a huge maritime potential and prospects for blue economy, the exploration of which requires more stability in the region for large-scale investments. Pakistan is underperforming in terms of its maritime sector because it is financially and technologically scarce of resources. Current projection of maritime revenue of Pakistan is \$183 million which is far below its potential and many a times less than its neighboring countries like India and Bangladesh. However, the China-Pakistan cooperation promises the development of maritime sector and blue economy of Pakistan (Askari et al., 2020). Pakistan navy has an important role in securing and stabilizing the Indian ocean to safeguard the investment made under the CPEC to boost the blue economy sector for the socio-economic development of the country. Similarly, the role of Pakistan Maritime Security Agency (PMSA) is prime in the development of blue economy in Pakistan. Being the only law enforcing agency in its maritime borders, it has a major role in protecting the maritime interests of Pakistan (Daily Times, 2021).

Secondly, though Pakistan navy is a formidable naval power, it has yet to achieve the status of a maritime power as committed in its first comprehensive Maritime Doctrine in 2018. 'Maritime power' is a much broader term which includes both military and non-military potential. In terms of military component, PN has extensive naval, maritime security and law enforcement capability. With regards tonon-military capabilities, there is a broad domain of merchant shipping, coastal communication infrastructure, shipbuilding and repair, fishing, ports and harbors. In latter area, PN has an extensive opportunity to explore. Though Pakistan has 95 percent of its trade via sea routes yet it has very lowpotential of ship building. Only 16 percent of Pakistan's trade is carried out by its flag carrier ships. The key model before Pakistan in this regard is that of rapid modernization of Chinese navy (PLAN) and aspiration of becoming a blue-water navy which has played the role of frontrunner in the Chinese socio-economic development. In addition to an indigenous shipbuilding industry, the PLAN has acquired a range of new weapon technologies including submarines, anti-ship cruise missiles (ASCMs), anti-shipballistic missiles (ASBMs) and aircrafts and for support of this artillery, it has developed C4ISR (command and control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance) systems. To complement all this modernization, China has made efforts towards maintenance of its logistics, naval doctrines, education, quality and training of its personnel in addition to various naval exercises.

Thirdly, Gwadar has a huge potential and the Pakistan navy has a role in broadening its scope. It is often referred as 'jewel in the crown of CPEC' as it has great economic and strategic value. There is a huge prospect of this port as being a transit for the cargo shipment from China to Africa and Europe. Gwadar was bought by Pakistan from Oman in 1958 and since then there is a longstanding desire in Pakistan leadership to construct a deep-water port there. Now, under the CPEC, this dream is seeing light of theday. It has the potential of creation of 2 million jobs and can give a much-needed impetus to the economy of Pakistan.

Fourthly, the Pakistan navy can provide a boost to socio-economic development of Pakistan by promoting safe, authorized and legal fishing in its area of responsibility. Illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing poses a major threat to Pakistan's interests. Pakistan's coasts are a huge source of biological productivity thus providing livelihood to a considerable portion of the population. According to a report, 71 percent of the marine resources are extracted from Sindh. There are more than 20,000 fishing boats operating in the EEZ of Pakistan along its coast in Sindh and Baluchistan (PMSA, 2020). Pakistan is underperforming with regards to its potential for fishing, as this sector had only 0.4 percent share in country's overall GDP in FY2019 contrary to the vast available potential (Basit, 2020). With regards to the CPEC and the development of Gwadar, Pakistan has a huge potential of fisheries and readily export it as China is a major importer of fish and can boost its current meagre share in the GDP of Pakistan. Key hurdles that fishermen face are bad weather and natural hazards. In addition, often the fishermen are also harassed and arrested by the neighboring states. Pakistan navy in collaboration with Pakistan Maritime Security Agency has a key role to promote only legal licensed fishing, and protect its fishermen from environmental hazard and harassment of other states in addition to providing them with personal protective equipment in such dangers. The Pakistan navy has important role in relief and rescue operations after the environmental catastrophizes (PMSA, 2020). Finally, the PN has an educational role towards introducing the fishermen to scientific knowledge and modern techniques of fishing which are being employed by the neighboring states.

Fifthly, Indian ocean contains huge reserves of hydrocarbons and according to an estimate, it has 40%share of the world's offshore oil production. Pakistan navy has a role in provision of safe environment for the exploration of these vast resources.

Sixthly, PN has a role in the broader regional connectivity and the consequent socio-economic development. Connectivity entails prosperity, not of a single state but for all the region and the BRI envisages regional development and prosperity. Pakistan has invited certain regional states to join the CPEC and reap the benefits from Gwadar port together (MOFA, 2021). There are broad prospects of the region's economic development and progress and all these prospects indicate "strategic role" of PN to provide essential elements of "security" and "sustainability" and "survival" against all possible "maritime threats". The Pakistan navy can play the role of a catalyst in extending securing and facilitating commercial ties of Pakistan and China with Afghanistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and all the GCC member states via Gwadar port as it is a gateway to the CARs and Middle Easternstates. Pakistan took the initiative of establishing Regional Maritime Security Patrols (RMSP) in 2018for the security in the Indian Ocean and maintain the order by integrating the regional states, which have conducted nearly eleven exercises till then

(Ahmad, 2019).

Finally, Pakistan navy has a major educational role in Pakistan. Recently, it has inaugurated the Pakistan Maritime Science and Technology Park (PMSTP). The core objective of this institute is to promote the blue economy supplemented with the promotion of maritime education particularly science, technology and business activity. Furthermore, the PN has established various medical institutes and training centers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

To concluded, BRI is an unprecedented connectivity project which has immense dividends for China and the participant states. Pakistan is an important nodal state in this link hosting a string of projects under the CPEC. It promises to connect Pakistan with Eurasia and much-needed investment in its energy, transportation and related sectors. However, the most significant part of the CPEC is Gwadar port which has prospect to become the commercial hub for the region owing to its lucrative geostrategic and geoeconomic situation. Though connectivity is a positive phenomenon, yet it has its own political and strategic ramifications as well. The CPEC in general and the BRI in particular have a host of traditional and non-traditional challenges in this regard. The US considers India counterweight to China in the region and it has placed India at a central position in its 'Indo-Pacific Strategy'. India considers itself the sole security provider in the India Ocean and dominates the IORA. It also shares the 'Quad' forum with the US, Australia and Japan which aims at containing China and has also conducted naval exercises in the South China Sea. The US announced its own version of investment plan, B3W, for the poor and middle-income countries at the G7 summit. Furthermore, the CPEC has huge non-traditional security challenges in the form of terrorism, separatism, drug and human trafficking, and illegal fishery. These eventualities and future prospects of the CPEC have enhanced the role of Pakistan navy manifolds.

In perspective, there are following suggestions to further enhance the role of Pakistan navy towards the socio-economic development of Pakistan and the security of the region:

- Pakistan should put forward a comprehensive maritime commercial policy highlighting its Continental Shelf in the Indian Ocean as its core interest and should give PN a leading role in it.
- Pakistan navy has to aim at becoming a major maritime power in the Indian Ocean. Maritime power comprises of much more than naval power as the maritime consists of a large and influential coastguard, merchant marines and fishing fleet, a world-class shipbuilding industry and capability of exploiting marine resources such as fishing, oil, gas etc. For instance, the PLAN has since assuming the role of great maritime power in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean has contributed to a great degree in China's socio-economic development and becoming great power.
- In order to promote Pakistan's soft power abroad under Maritime diplomacy, Pakistan has to build upon the soft issues like cultural tourism and climate change and enhance its outreach abroad and converge other regional states under this initiative. It will improve Pakistan's soft image as well as give it some relief as it is the 5th most climate-vulnerable country in the world.
- Pakistan should lobby to get the membership of the IORA
- In order to achieve greater regional connectivity and security of Pakistan's maritime boundaries and particularly CPEC, Pakistan has to build naval alliances in region. It should boost its diplomatic relations and naval exercises with the Indian Ocean littoral states in order to counter or negotiate with the IORA which is dominated by Indian influence.
- Pakistan should refocus its 'Vision East Asia Policy' as CPEC necessitates an attention towards relations with the East Asian states for the greater regional connectivity and security of the CPEC. The CPEC provides access and corresponding opportunities for Pakistan to these eastern states.
- Pakistan should negotiate with China for access to its ports as there is a precedent whereby China has provided access to Nepal to four Chinese-controlled ports. It can provide Pakistan access to the 'Asian Tigers', and can boost the economic and military relations between them.

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