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Economic Prospects of Gwadar Port for Pakistan: Opportunities Amidst Regional Competition

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Abstract

The Gwadar port is a significant turning point in the Pakistani economy because of its advantageous strategic position and attributes that allow it to actively participate in the area that connects the Chinese economy and Central Asia, particularly the countries of Central and South Asia, by the sea. The aim of this study is to explore the economic prospects of Gwadar Port by examining its role in enhancing trade connectivity, attracting foreign investment, and fostering regional integration through initiatives like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It highlights the port's capacity to stimulate industrial growth, generate employment, and boost Pakistan's maritime economy. However, Gwadar's development faces significant challenges, including regional competition from ports like Chabahar, geopolitical rivalries, internal security issues, and infrastructure bottlenecks. The study adopts a descriptive and analytical methodology to assess both the opportunities and constraints associated with Gwadar's economic trajectory. Ultimately, the paper argues that with strategic policy implementation, Gwadar can serve as a cornerstone of Pakistan's economic revival amid complex regional dynamics. This study recommends completing this project and giving strategies to tackle with the challenges to Gwadar port.

Keywords: Geo-Economics, Connectivity, Maritime Trade, Strategic Corridor, Regional Integration.

Introduction

Gwadar Port, situated on Pakistan's southwestern Arabian Sea coastline, has emerged as a focal point in the country's quest for economic transformation and regional connectivity. Its strategic location near the Strait of Hormuz and proximity to key maritime routes positions it as a gateway for trade between the Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia. As the flagship project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Gwadar is envisioned to become a hub for international trade, energy transit, and industrial development. The port holds promise for boosting Pakistan's economic growth through increased exports, job creation, and enhanced regional cooperation. However, Gwadar's rise is not without challenges; regional competition, particularly from Iran's Chabahar Port, coupled with domestic governance and security concerns, complicates its development trajectory. This study seeks to critically examine the economic potential of Gwadar Port, while assessing the opportunities and obstacles it faces in a competitive and geopolitically sensitive region. (Ghaffar & Hussain, 2021).

Pakistan boasts a highly advantageous combination of geography, demography, and strategic technology. In the area, there are currently two ports under development. There is a strategic alliance between China and Pakistan and between Iran and India at the ports of Gwadar in Pakistan and Chabahar in Iran. Analyzing the strategic importance that Gwadar port is positioned at the natural resources of the CARs and Middle East and it is also the quickest route of south province of China. The shores of oceans and seas are where civilizations always develop and emerge. Pakistan has a good geographical location with well-built ports and coastal area spread over thousands of miles. Pakistan can provide fastest route to all land lock countries in Central Asia. Pakistan is currently turning as a gateway for Central Asians (Hussain & Khan, 2016). In addition to improving trade of products, energy pipelines, trains, and transmission lines within the region, it will aid in raising foreign investment in the nation (Nasreen, 2016). Although all geostrategic experts view Central Asian states as significant, the new strategic development at Gwadar is a singular choice.

The aim of studying the opportunities and challenges of Gwadar Port lies in its potential to redefine Pakistan's economic landscape by reshaping regional trade routes, enhancing strategic partnerships, and strengthening Pakistan's geopolitical standing. With the emergence of regional competitors like Iran's Chabahar Port supported by India Gwadar's development under CPEC faces direct strategic and economic contestation. This research is justified as it offers critical insights into how Gwadar can contribute to Pakistan's long-term economic growth, withstand regional competition, and play a pivotal role in the evolving dynamics of the New Great Game. By examining these aspects, the study seeks to assist policymakers in formulating informed strategies to leverage Gwadar's full potential, respond effectively to regional challenges, and promote sustainable economic and regional cooperation.

Literature Review

Gwadar Port is widely regarded as a game-changer for Pakistan's economy due to its potential to become a major centre for trade, transit, and energy connectivity. Researchers and analysts agree that the port can significantly boost economic activity by increasing exports, attracting foreign investment, and creating employment opportunities, especially in the underdeveloped region of Baluchistan. The development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) around Gwadar is expected to promote industrialization and enhance Pakistan's manufacturing capacity (Kakar, 2018). In addition, the port's integration into regional trade networks through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) could help Pakistan diversify its trade routes and reduce dependency on traditional ports. Despite these promising prospects, the literature also emphasizes the need for efficient infrastructure, transparent governance, and inclusive development policies to ensure that the economic benefits of Gwadar are fully realized across the country (Takrim & Afeef, 2015).

The importance of seaports and marine routes to maritime trade and security has made sea power a major factor in international politics. Asiatic Gwadar Port is now more strategically significant because of its involvement in facilitating the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which links western China to the Middle East and Africa. In addition to changing the balance of power in Eurasia and the larger Asian region, this port will foster economic cooperation and development in the area. As the region is connected to other planned economic corridors of China's Belt and Road Initiative, it creates an economic Corridoristan that fosters trade and development both inside and between regions. The project, however, is confronted with geopolitical difficulties because of its advantageous location in terms of both China and Pakistan (Ghaffar & Hussain, 2021).

The importance of Gwadar Port, which links Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East, is highlighted in the article along with the growing complexity of maritime trade in world politics. It draws attention to the competing interests of regional countries such as the US and EU, as well as the importance of China and India in these maritime ports and the rivalry between Gwadar Port and Iran's Chabahar Port. Along with outlining the terrible consequences for Pakistan as a result of competing interests, the essay provides a long-term plan for Pakistan's development that will shield Gwadar Port from future regional hostilities (Faisal & Ahmed, 2016).

Examines the elites of India, Iran, Pakistan, and Russia, who are becoming more numerous in the area, view the Chabahar port. It outlines their goals for the port's development, shows how internal and external circumstances have altered their claims, and makes predictions about the port's potential. The writers evaluate the situation using a multidisciplinary approach that incorporates historical sociology, critical geopolitics, and the Braudel method. They contend that other variables, including Russia's Eastward turn or China's regional priorities, may lessen Indo-Pakistan rivalry and promote collaboration above zero-sum game theory (khan, 2024).

Pakistan's geographic location at the meeting point of China, the Indian Ocean, West Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia is vital to its economic success. The ocean, which makes up over three-quarters of the earth's surface, has influenced political shifts and Christopher Columbus' discovery of the United States. Pakistan's strategic location at the meeting point of these areas has resulted in the resurgence of the ancient silk route, potentially enhancing trade ties between China and Pakistan. South Asia and the surrounding area depend heavily on the little port of Gwadar in Pakistan. At the moment, Afghanistan and the Central Asian nations' transit commerce is not a crucial trade facilitator. Nonetheless, the economic corridor can demonstrate increasing import and export movements. With the potential to grow into a major industry, the Gwadar port might assist Pakistan's economy and give it an advantage over rivals in the region (Rauf, Ghani, & Shah, 2021).

This study finds out how important Gwadar Port is to Pakistan and what it means for Pakistan is the goal of this research. A key transportation hub supported by China, Gwadar Port, may have a big influence on Pakistan's strategic objectives. Pakistan's regional influence and foreign policy may be impacted by CPEC's expansion of its Gwadar Port operations. It also fills the previous literature gap by analyzing the role of Gwadar port in shaping the new great game in region. To assist those involved in policy-making in overcoming these obstacles, advancing Pakistan's strategic position, and exploring new avenues for regional cooperation in the economy, the study will look at Gwadar port problems and address information gaps. It additionally adds in addressing the economic prospects of escapism-oriented nations, which impact economic prospects for both neighbors. It describes the challenges for Pakistan due to the Gwadar port as an emerging hub for new great game.

Materials and Methods

This study is based on a qualitative research approach, focusing on the economic prospects of Gwadar Port and the regional competition it faces, particularly from Chabahar Port. The research begins with an exploration of Gwadar's economic significance and its structural development under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). A descriptive method is employed to present an in-depth understanding of the port's potential, using secondary sources such as research articles, journals, official reports, and policy papers. The analytical component of the study assesses the opportunities Gwadar offers for Pakistan's economy, while also examining the challenges posed by competing regional ports and geopolitical dynamics. Books and academic publications serve as key secondary resources to support the analysis and provide context to Gwadar's emerging role in the New Great Game.

Results and Discussions

Strategic and Economics Importance of Gwadar Port

Its significance can be understood through several key aspects

1. **Strategic Geopolitical Location:** Situated near the Strait of Hormuz, a vital chokepoint through which a substantial portion of the world's oil passes, Gwadar offers a strategic vantage point for monitoring and potentially influencing maritime traffic in the Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. This positioning enhances Pakistan's geopolitical leverage and provides strategic depth in regional affairs.

2. **Economic and Trade Hub Potential:** As a deep-sea port, Gwadar is poised to become a central node for trade, particularly under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) framework. It serves as the linchpin connecting China's western regions to the Arabian Sea, facilitating shorter and more secure routes for energy imports and exports. This connectivity is expected to attract traffic from Central Asian Republics, Afghanistan, and Western countries, thereby boosting regional trade and economic integration.

3. **Energy Transit Corridor:** For China, Gwadar provides an alternative route for energy imports from the Middle East, reducing reliance on the longer and potentially vulnerable Strait of Malacca route. This shorter land-sea route enhances energy security and reduces transportation costs and times for Chinese imports.

4. **Regional Development and Employment:** The development of Gwadar Port is anticipated to spur economic growth in Pakistan's underdeveloped Balochistan province. The port and its associated infrastructure projects are expected to create employment opportunities, improve local infrastructure, and contribute to the socio-economic upliftment of the region.

5. **Naval and Maritime Significance:** Gwadar's location offers strategic advantages for naval operations, providing Pakistan with a potential base to monitor sea lines of communication and enhance maritime security. This capability is particularly pertinent given the increasing naval presence of regional actors in the Indian Ocean.

6. **Competition with Regional Ports:** The development of Gwadar positions it as a competitor to regional ports such as Iran's Chabahar. While Chabahar, developed with Indian assistance, aims to provide India with access to Afghanistan and Central Asia bypassing Pakistan,

Gwadar offers China and Central Asian countries a direct route to the Arabian Sea, potentially shifting regional trade dynamics.

7. **Challenges and Security Concerns:** Despite its potential, Gwadar faces challenges, including security concerns due to regional insurgencies and geopolitical rivalries. Ensuring the safety of infrastructure and personnel remains a critical issue for the port's operational success.

Gwadar Port's significance is multifaceted, encompassing strategic, economic, and geopolitical dimensions. Its development is poised to alter regional trade routes, enhance economic connectivity, and shift geopolitical balances, making it a focal point in South Asian and Middle Eastern affairs.

Economic importance for Pakistan:

Economic consequences are frequently quantified by the number of employment, sales, and tax revenues linked to an activity; these figures are frequently used to demonstrate how a policy action would improve the welfare of a community. Economic impacts are commonly measured by tax collections, production or revenue, wages, and employment. I/O economics-derived input-output (I/O) models are frequently used in marine economic impact studies because they are best suited to providing local and regional assessments of port impacts.

A substantial port, the Port of Beirut (POB) handles up to 600,000 tons of cargo annually. The Lebanese population as well as the regional trade and economy may suffer greatly from a port event, whether it is man-made or natural. Using regression analysis, one may investigate how ports contribute to a country's growth in terms of transportation services. Nevertheless, it has been shown that there is no correlation between gross national income and port size, labor force, and stock capacity. According to the regression analysis, there is a significant correlation between cities' gross national revenues and total burden imports and exports as well as ship visits. In 2010, 133,000 jobs in the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, which made up 11.8% of the labor force, and 155,000 jobs in the entire metropolitan region were supported by the Port of Hamburg. The Port of Hamburg employed over 261,000 people and generated €12.6 billion in gross domestic product in 2010, or 14% of Germany's total gross value production.

Economic opportunities of Gwadar Port

An economy is a key component of national power that supports a country's stability and strength. Less than 50,000 people live in the little town of Gwadar, which is rapidly becoming the center of the local economy. Along with opening doors for commercial and tourism growth along the shore, Gwadar's designation as an industrial zone and the influx of investors have also produced job possibilities. Building a port offers more than just physical development in terms of economic benefits.

- Distribution hubs for commodities are usually built in conjunction with port building.
- Export facilities.
- Petrol, oil, and lubricants (POL) storage and delivery facilities.
- Repair facilities for ships.
- Refuges for ships in distress.
- Ancillary services associated with the marine industry.

In addition to tertiary development initiatives like the Makran coastal highway, regional industrial parks, and the Saindak project, the expansion of Gwadar port is in line with the growing cargo traffic at other ports. Analyzing the region's trade projection is essential before going any deeper into the project's economic relevance. Gwadar Port's diverse economic significance highlights its capacity to revolutionize the region's economic environment and establish it as a key hub for investment, commerce, and social progress.

Potential Port for Regional Nations

- The government has designated Gwadar Port as a free trade zone in order to encourage the greatest amount of investment and industrialization. With no limitations like tariffs, quotas, or foreign exchange controls, this classification makes it easier for goods to be traded across political borders.
- In the modern shipping industry, the idea of transit ports has gained popularity, providing transit facilities for cargo destined for different countries at strategic sea routes. Such zones represent an expansion of a port's function and improve trade prospects for the region. The expansion of Gwadar creates potential comparable to those of ports like Salalah and Dubai, which have become important hubs for transshipment and containers.
- Gwadar's advantageous position allows commerce from the Red Sea and Far East to the Gulf and other regional states, offering significant commercial opportunities, especially with the Central Asian Region (CARs). The planned roadway importance as a commerce route is highlighted by its connections to the CARs via Panjgur, Chaghi, and Rabat.
- China is a major factor in the area due to its economic might, and Gwadar is anticipated to be crucial to China's international commerce route. Additional improvements to the Karakoram highway, which currently links Pakistan and Western China, would improve access to Gwadar from Western China.
- Operational and financially feasible marine trade routes are essential to Afghanistan's development trajectory, which calls for new paths for economic expansion. The importance of Gwadar port in supplying sea access to Afghanistan is highlighted by the approval of more than 1.4 billion US dollars for the Trans-Afghan gas pipeline.

Economic Development in Gwadar and Baluchistan

- **Development of Industrial Zones:** The master plan allocates important areas for three different types of industrial zones: the export-processing zone (EPZ), an estate for oil, gas, and petrochemical units, and another for various industrial units. These zones also facilitate port and port-related commercial/industrial activities. In addition, spaces are set aside for residential and commercial uses, such as shopping malls, office buildings, and sports and entertainment venues.
- **The Copper-Gold Project of Saindak:** The province of Baluchistan has a wealth of natural resources, including minerals that were previously neglected. With the Saindak Copper-Gold Project, Chinese companies are now exploring these resources with the goal of exporting them via the port of Gwadar.
- **Local Involvement:** Local participation is given top priority in the second phase, which is intended for private sector involvement. Mir Zafarullah Khan Jamali, a former prime minister, started recruiting and training locals at Gwadar Port. In order to solve local employment

difficulties, non-technical positions will also give preference to locals, with the goal of creating about 3,000 job possibilities after completion.

- **Water Resource Management:** To save water and avoid water-logging, large sums of money, including Rs five billion, have been set aside for canal lining and distributaries in Baluchistan. The province's dedication to water management and irrigation is demonstrated by projects like the Kachi Canal, Mirani Dam, and Sabakzai Dam, which are crucial for maintaining the expanding Gwadar Port and regional growth.
- **Tourism:** Pakistan has recognized tourism as a sector and put policies in place to draw travelers, such as helicopter services, chartered flights, and visa assistance. Though hampered by a lack of money, plans for a 12-room guesthouse in Gwadar seek to boost tourism. The development of the port and government incentives should greatly increase the number of visitors to Gwadar.
- **Industrial Park at Gwadar:** Chinese investment will create a large industrial park in Gwadar that will include a petroleum refining zone, an oil city, and other logistical facilities. With Xinjiang Petroleum building the industrial park and promoting both cultural and economic interactions, the sister city connection between Gwadar and Karamay represents cooperation.
- **Gwadar oil Refinery:** A Chinese business intends to spend $1 billion in Pakistan's first oil refinery at Gwadar. Balochistan's deep-conversion oil refinery might turn the nation into an oil exporter, especially to China. With a five million tons a year starting capacity, the refinery's goals are to supply domestic demand and export petroleum products to China and its neighbors.
- **Gwadar with the CPEC:** In order to create a special economic zone in Gwadar, China has been granted hundreds of tax-exempt acres by Pakistan as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This calculated action promotes trade and transportation throughout Asia by expanding China's access to the Middle East, Africa, and Europe. Plans for a power plant and an international airport highlight Gwadar's critical role in the expansion of the regional economy.

Gwadar as a beneficiary for region

The building and development of Gwadar Port is a component of the Chinese "Go West" and Pakistani "Look East" agendas, which are combined to create a regional bloc. Central Asia's vast natural resources might potentially bethe best trade point for Pakistan and Gwadar Port. The region's anticipated trade volume is $20 billion, which includes $12 million in local exports. Turkmenistan can use the deep-sea port to access the US oil market and other nations in the region. Oil is now the primary source of both military and economic power. Gwadar is strategically significant because it is located across the SLOCs that emanate from the strategic choke point of Hormuz, from which 13 million barrels of oil are transported every day (Dawn, 2008). Globally, the waters of Gwadar can regulate the entire Indian Ocean with trade routes of far eastern countries, the Pacific Rim, and the Persian Gulf Region. By developing Gwadar, Pakistan will be able to prevent any "bottling" of its navy, as was observed during the Indo-Pakistan conflict in 1971 and the Kargil crisis. The port will provide strategic depth to Pakistan's marine assets, both commercial and military. Not only does Gwadar Sea Port give Pakistan strategic depth, but it will also undoubtedly boost regional development.

The potential for Gwadar, THE DOOR OF WIND, to grow as a gateway to Pakistan's economy is enormous. Its location where the three most economically significant parts of the world the Middle East, Central Asia, and the Oil Rich Region converge. Rich in natural resources and with room to grow, South Asia is well situated to become one of the major ports for the expansion of international commerce. The new CAR state that emerged following Russia's fall during the Cold War need energy supplies outside of Russia. The only way to realize this objective would be to link the CARs with Chabahar, Iran, or Gwadar, Pakistan. The Gwadar port would offer the CARs a practical and convenient way to get oil from the Persian Gulf. Gwadar was selected by China because 90% of global transportation travels by water. If China decides to buy oil from the Gulf States and take the maritime route, it will offer the quickest path to China. China must transit via the Indian Ocean and traverse 10,000 kilometers. Gwadar is the most convenient and quickest route for China.

Gwadar's GDP will increase due to its connection to Xinxiang. It will provide vacuum for half a million tons of grains, 300,000 tons of freight, and 100,000 containers. With the growth of Gwadar port, all traffic to and from the CARs will undoubtedly use the quickest route through Gwadar, and Pakistan's trade advantages should increase. Gwadar Port will be impacted in the following ways by the established reserves and production: Larger ships and deep-sea ports will be more advantageous since dry cargo output is predicted to be higher than liquid cargo; Though Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have more liquid cargo, they can export it via pipelines and have an alternative. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan will generate more dry cargo than other CARs. The roughly 1800-kilometer journey to the Mediterranean Sea via the Caspian Region will only be 1400 kilometres via Gwadar (Malik, 2012).

Russia stands in the way of the Mediterranean Sea, which worries Europe, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. European countries are working to get to this mineral-rich area via the Caspian Sea before other important players via Afghanistan and Gwadar. In March 2018, a team from Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan traveled to Pakistan in an attempt to strengthen commercial relations. The State Bank of Pakistan said that during the 2018 fiscal year, Pakistan's trade volume with the CARs was $58.4 million, while its import volume was $7.718 million. Pakistan and the CARs have great hopes for the CPEC. Kazakhstan is the most important partner among the Central Asian nations for Pakistan.

Investment Opportunities

- Trucking yards and private freight handling equipment
- Privately held warehouses and cold storage facilities
- The growth of industrial zones and industries schools, colleges, and hospitals.
- Tourism-related businesses.
- Shipyards, dry docks, and repair yards are examples of industries associated to the maritime sector.
- Mobile barges, big fuel storage, and bunkering of ships.

China Interest in Gwadar Port

After economic reforms were implemented in 1978, the People's Republic of China saw significant socioeconomic growth. China now has the second-largest economy in the world, behind the United States, with an average GDP growth rate of 10% each year.31. However, considering that it has the second-highest percentage of the poor after India, China is finding it difficult to raise the standard of life for its people. Therefore, China's "go west strategy" aims to improve its poor province of Xinxiang. In order to sustain or accelerate its rate of economic growth, it need conveniently accessible markets for its goods. In this regard, the centerpiece China-Pakistan

Economic Corridor and Gwadar Port are seen as the most crucial components of China's strategic outreach. To clearly grasp the new geostrategic context, several facets of Chinese interest in Gwadar Port are covered in the categories below.

- **Economic Interest**

As the world's most populous nation and second-largest economy, China has a sizable import and export market. It requires secure and easily accessible trade routes to maintain and enhance its economic circumstances. Therefore, a steady and seamless flow of foreign oil imports is essential for Chinese industries. The fact that over half of China's oil needs are imported from Middle Eastern nations shows how important safe and alternative energy and trade routes are to the country. These exports and imports must be transported via the South China Sea, which is infamous for piracy incidents, since there are no other options. Furthermore, China is extremely concerned about the problematic Strait of Malacca (Shehzad, 2019)**.** Given that it is only 2500 kilometers away from China's western Xinxiang region, Gwadar is an obvious alternative for China in this regard. Conversely, if you follow the South China Sea route, it is up to 10,000 kilometers. As a result, Gwadar greatly lessens the vulnerability and distance of crucial oil imports that are essential to China's economic growth. Furthermore, Gwadar is seen as a regional hub port and transportation terminal, potentially benefiting its customers.

Importance of CARs

The US is very interested in developing the Central Asian Republics (CARs), which have a large market potential. Since the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, the CARs have been able to expand their clientele and access international markets. By concentrating on the eradication of terrorism and keeping an eye on regional trends, the US hopes to establish a sustained presence in the area. For the CARs, natural resources like gas pipelines are essential, and the US wants to maintain control over their supply and development. In order to protect ports and supply lines, the US has positioned a military presence in the area. The Central Asia commercial Competitiveness project seeks to boost exports and commercial prospects. Additionally, in order to investigate the economic potential of the CARs, the US plans to establish agreements such as the Trade and Investment Agreement (TIFA) and build a transit route for convenient transportation links. Through bilateral agreements, the US also aims to balance off the expansionism of China and Russia by supporting Israel and India. Because of concerns about losing its hegemony in the area, the US is reluctant to remove its military personnel from Afghanistan. Although there are worries about controlling radicalism, the United States has set up two air bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to provide security.

US concerns over Gwadar port

The importance of the Eurasian landmass was emphasized by Henry Kissinger and Brzezinski, two prominent geopolitical thinkers of the early 19th century, who cautioned that any nation attempting to control either of the two spheres Europe or Asia would pose a major strategic threat to US interests in this significant landmass. Suggestions like these highlight how the US sees the entire area as a significant geopolitical asset, and how long it maintains its dominance in international affairs is largely dependent on this. The US would constantly attempt to oppose any nation that it views as a danger to its standing in order to preserve its hegemony and status as a "super power," according to the framework of geopolitical theories that we use to examine US policy. This idea is supported by the Indo-US strategic alliance, which is supposedly intended to limit China's growing influence. In fact, China and India, two powerful Rimland nations, are currently engaged in a strategic rivalry. Pakistan has often accused India's top-secret agency, the

Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), of supporting insurgency and causing instability in the region of Baluchistan. Similarly, this new great game does include discussions for an "independent" Baluchistan in the US Congress. The Indo-US relationship views a restive or independent Baluchistan as beneficial in curbing China's growth.

The United States and the Soviet Union led the capitalist and communist blocs in the bipolar world order that resulted from World War II. With the signing of CENTO and SEATO in the 1950s, Pakistan formed an alliance with the United States, although it was disappointed by the US's sway over regional and international affairs. Pakistan separated from the US alliance in the 1970s, but the US withdrew from Pakistan and imposed economic and military sanctions because of its nuclear program following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1988. The two nations' relations cooled down in the 1990s, but the 9/11 attacks forced the United States to reaffirm its embrace of Pakistan.

The United States has placed greater importance on India in an effort to undermine the growing military and economic ties between China and Pakistan and to prevent China from becoming a superpower in the future. Following the end of the Cold War, the future of the South Asian counterterrorism campaign is unknown, therefore China and Pakistan must continue to communicate, improve consultation, expand their collaboration, and help one another with the Afghan problem and terrorism. Africa is now China's second-largest oil supplier, and since 2009, China has overtaken the US as Africa's top commercial partner. Analysts contend that the US is the one behind the preparations for cantonments in Baluchistan in order to thwart Iran's nuclear aspirations. Gwadar Port, which could aid in US oil imports when Gulf resources are absorbed, is distrusted by the US.

The US has prevented the UN resolution on Kashmir from taking effect, but the song "Pak China Dosti Zinda Bad" continues to stand as a testament to the friendship between China and Pakistan. There are concerns regarding the two countries' relationship because of the US Navy's presence on Diego Garcia, a disputed area in the South China Sea. The South China Sea is claimed by China and other nations, and the largest sea requests US help to keep an eye on Chinese naval might. This is supported by the US under the Freedom of Navigation Operation and regional treaty alliance. America is concerned about China's expanding influence in the area, which includes its use of missiles and manmade islands. In order to offset China's surveillance capabilities, India is looking to the United States for assistance with unmanned aerial vehicles and space monitoring (Ali D. , 2021).

Model for Synthesis of Heartland and Rimland Theories on Gwadar Port

This model integrates the **Heartland Theory** and **Rimland Theory** into a cohesive framework to analyze the opportunities and challenges posed by Gwadar Port. It captures Gwadar's dual role as a connector of land-based and maritime geopolitics, emphasizing its significance in the "Regional Competition".

1. Conceptual Framework

Core Elements of the Model:

Heartland Connectivity (Land-based Influence):

- Focus on linking resource-rich, landlocked regions of Central Asia (Heartland) with global markets.

- Highlights infrastructure such as pipelines, railways, and roads connecting Gwadar to Heartland states.
- Key theory: "Who controls the Heartland commands the World-Island."

Rimland Influence (Maritime Dominance):

- Gwadar's role in controlling access to major sea routes, including the Arabian Sea and the Strait of Hormuz.
- Strengthens Pakistan's position within the Rimland maritime system.
- Key theory: "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia."

Convergence Zone (Gwadar as a Strategic Pivot):

- Gwadar serves as a geographic and functional bridge between Heartland land-based resources and Rimland maritime trade routes.
- Dual opportunities: Facilitating trade for Central Asia and serving as a regional shipping hub.
- Dual challenges: Vulnerability to Heartland instability (e.g., insurgencies) and Rimland conflicts (e.g., naval rivalries).

Visual Representation

A **Three-Tier Model** to explain Gwadar's strategic role:

Heartland Tier (Land Power):

- Central Asian resource flows.
- Infrastructure projects (CPEC, pipelines, railways).
- Connection to Chinese inland provinces (e.g., Xinjiang).

Rimland Tier (Maritime Power):

- Proximity to the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean.
- Control over chokepoints (Strait of Hormuz).
- Regional shipping and transshipment hub.

Convergence Zone (Gwadar as a Hub):

- Integration of land and sea networks.
- Balancing geopolitical influences (China, India, U.S., Gulf states).
- Role as a pivot for Heartland-Rimland trade.

3. Dynamics and Interactions

Economic Integration:

- Heartland: Gwadar as an export gateway for Central Asian oil, gas, and minerals.
- Rimland: Gwadar as a key maritime hub, facilitating trade among South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa.

Geopolitical Competition:

- Heartland Dynamics: Russia, China, and Central Asia vs. U.S. influence in the region.

- Rimland Dynamics: Pakistan-China collaboration vs. India-U.S. partnerships in maritime security.

Security Concerns:

- Heartland: Baluchistan insurgency, Afghanistan's instability.
- Rimland: Piracy, Indian naval presence, and potential blockades.

Sustainability Challenges:

- Environmental risks and local social dynamics affecting both Heartland infrastructure and Rimland maritime operations.

4. Policy Implications

- **Heartland:** Invest in regional connectivity with Central Asia while maintaining neutrality to balance relations with Russia, China, and other Heartland powers.
- **Rimland:** Enhance naval capacity, secure partnerships with Gulf states, and integrate with global shipping routes to solidify Gwadar's role in the Indian Ocean.
- **Convergence Zone:** Focus on sustainability and local engagement to ensure Gwadar becomes a stable, inclusive, and prosperous hub.

5. Regional Alliances and Soft Power Diplomacy

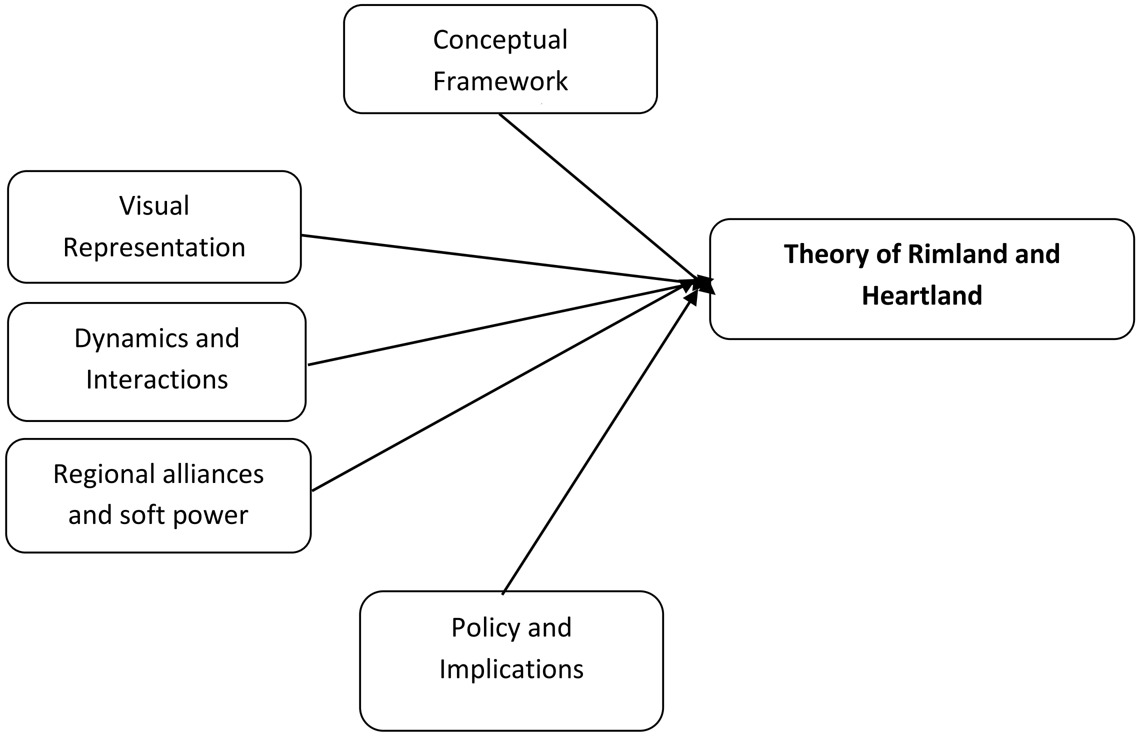
Heartland Diplomacy:

- Gwadar's success depends on Pakistan fostering strong diplomatic ties with Heartland countries like China, Central Asian republics, and Russia. These partnerships ensure mutual benefits from infrastructure projects such as pipelines, railways, and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).
- Soft power initiatives, such as cultural exchanges, trade agreements, and joint ventures, are essential to ensure goodwill and sustainable collaboration in the Heartland.

Rimland Collaboration:

- Gwadar offers opportunities to engage Rimland nations like Iran, Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, and East African countries.
- Diplomatic strategies should focus on balancing relations with key Rimland actors, such as managing competition with India (e.g., Chabahar Port rivalry) while maintaining cooperation with Middle Eastern nations for energy security and trade.

Model of Theory



By synthesizing **Heartland and Rimland Theories**, Gwadar's role in the "Regional competition" emerges as both an opportunity and a challenge. Its geographic position at the crossroads of the Heartland's resource wealth and the Rimland's maritime trade routes positions it as a critical node in global geopolitics. However, security risks, economic dependencies, and geopolitical rivalries must be carefully managed to maximize its potential. Pakistan's ability to harmonize these dynamics will determine whether Gwadar evolves into a global hub or succumbs to the pressures of its strategic location (Afridi, 2014).

Gwadar Port's development has elicited varied reactions from Iran and Afghanistan, each influenced by their geopolitical interests and regional strategies within the context of the regional competition.

Chahbahar vs Gwadar as regional competition

In the southeast of Iran, close to the Gulf of Oman, is the seaport of Chababhar. Gwadar, a deep seaport in Pakistan's Province of Baluchistan that was developed by Pakistan with Chinese assistance, located about 72 kilometers distant. It is the sole Iranian seaport that links Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia. It is able to accommodate ten berths simultaneously. India, on the other hand, had plans to develop the seaport of Chabahar in the previous several months. This action was performed in response to Indian Prime Minister Mr. Narendir Modi's historic 2016 visit to Iran. India wanted to avoid Pakistan and gain trade access to Afghanistan and Central Asian countries; therefore, it developed the Chabahar Seaport. India asserts that it has significant interests in Afghanistan. Without US approval, India entered into a contract with Iran, which resulted in a number of trade restrictions against Iran because of its nuclear program. Indian investments in Afghanistan are also seriously threatened by the possibility of increasing commerce and providing a readily accessible channel for commercial links among the areas. Furthermore, Gwadar's ability to develop into a regional marine center would also undermine India's ambitions to become the superpower of the area. India tended to negotiate with Iran in order to stop Gwadar from becoming as a regional naval center. Nonetheless, ties between India and Iran have remained positive since their separation.

India has already invested a substantial amount of political and diplomatic capital in the Chabahar project, which it believes would compete with China-backed Pakistan's Gwadar port. On the other hand, India, a crucial ally in the area, has made significant investments in the rehabilitation of Afghanistan. By crossing via Pakistan, the development of Chabahar port will help hasten the reconstruction efforts brought on by the conflicts that were started. By bridging the gap between India and Afghanistan, the United States may be able to reconsider the sanctions imposed on Iran. This is because the successful operation of Chabahar port could theoretically curtail China's one belt, one road initiative, which is also on Iran's watchdog list. Iran had to reconsider joining its CPEC partnership after Iranian Foreign Minister Mr. Javed Zarif's visit a few months ago.

Sistan and Baluchistan province in southern Iran is home to the port of Chabahar, which is situated on the Gulf of Oman. Pakistan's Gwadar is situated around 72 kilometres to the west along the shore. Observing China's naval presence at Gwadar and countering its "Strings of Pearl" campaign in the Indian Ocean, Chabahar offers India a fresh opportunity to rekindle trade ties with Afghanistan and Central Asia. Chabahar is viewed as an additional entry point for import and export by Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics. This regional prosperity also allowed Iran to emerge from its isolation within the international community. Cooperation and competition were also fostered for Gwadar port by this port.

A trilateral deal was reached in 2016 by Iran, India, and Afghanistan to develop the Chabahar Port in southeast Iran. For Iran and India, this project is of great economic and geopolitical significance since it links Iran to maritime trade routes and fosters trade with nearby nations. Chabahar is a crucial location for India as it is linked to both Central Asia and Europe through the 'International North-South Transport Corridor'. This trade partnership is thought to be a wise substitute for the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and the Belt and Road Initiative. (Omidi& Oak, 2021) Strategically and economically vital is the Port of Chabahar, which is situated off the coast of southeast Iran on the Makran Coast. Compared to other Iranian ports, it provides Iran with the quickest access to the Indian and Arabian Seas and is situated nearer Karachi and India. In addition to perhaps carrying Afghanistan, Iran, and the states of Central Asia, the expansion of Chabahar might lessen the Burdon force stationed at Bandar Abbas. India intends to construct a railway spanning 900 kilometers, connecting Afghanistan and Iran. (Ali, 2020)

India intends to expand the Chabahar Sea Port in order to directly access markets in Afghanistan and Central Asia, avoiding Pakistan's imbalanced land borders. It is anticipated that by taking this action, costs will be cut by almost a third and trade value between India, Afghanistan, and Central Asia will rise. The port also has strategic importance since it forces India to oppose China's sway over the area and sabotage Gwadar's production. Briefly said, India wants to establish Chabahar Port as a rival commercial hub to Sino-Pak's Gwadar port project. India hopes to reduce Pakistan's growing regional influence and reduce the amount of trade that passes via the Iranian port of Chabahar on its way to Gwadar. India has been actively attempting to limit Pakistan's influence in the Indian Ocean region (IOR), including constructing the Chabahar port near its southern border. This port could challenge Pakistan's maritime dominance and check Pakistani and Chinese maritime activities in the IOR and Gulf regions. India is also playing a proxy for the US to counter China in the region, and its hegemony in the IOR is a concern for Pakistan.

China US war as Challenge for Pakistan

The globe has been embroiled in international politics and warfare in a variety of ways ever since the nation-state system came into being. Between nations, economic interest has always been a bridge and conflict-instigating component. The tug of war between the United States and China in South Asia has caused significant worry because it is the main source of conflict in the region. China does not assert any authority or status quo; its missionary approach is restricted to global issues. In addition to offering technical help and guidance, its objective includes securing energy, metals, and critical minerals to raise the standard of living for underprivileged generations throughout the world. China now faces new difficulties as a result of the US's withdrawal from Afghanistan and transition to Indo-Pacific policy, such as its authority over the Malacca and Sunda Straits and its "Nine Dots Line" claim in the South China Sea. This is significant to China because these straits are the route of its massive trade (Kauser & Mustafa, 2016).

Because of the aggressive reactions from both Russia and China, President Trump declared revision powers in 2017. Japan's free and open Indo-Pacific policy, largely at the US's request, is giving it more influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region. The Asia-Africa Growth Corridor initiative, which is estimated to be worth $40 billion, is seeing an increase in Japan-India partnerships. As the United States attempts to expand India's role in the region, Afghanistan has maintained a condition of rail-road access to India through the Wahga border in order to join the Belt and Road Initiative (CPEC), and India is pursuing relations with the Gulf States, reviving the international North South Transit Corridor (INSTC) Project with Iran, and signing a civil nuclear deal with Japan in 2017.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

In an increasingly interconnected world, firms seek to use export strategies to grow internationally. Consequently, a nation's GDP is greatly impacted by businesses' capacity to export their products and services throughout the world. Economic success and expansion might be greatly enhanced by accessible, efficient transportation port. Intense rivalry in the port sector has led to considerable changes in the container shipping sector. Despite being faced with reduced profit margins, major maritime companies have tried to expand their services globally through joint ventures, mergers, etc. Larger boats have been deployed more frequently in tandem with this trend in an effort to improve cost effectiveness through economies of scale. The efficacy of ports may result in major economic successes or failures, and they continue to play a vital part in a nation's economic standing. Building big, effective ports for export is another difficulty for any nation looking to expand its economic influence internationally.

Gwadar port, which is situated at the mouth of the Gulf, Hormuz, and Persian regions, preserves the area's geographic significance. Gwadar, the world's second deepest port, has developed into a regional economic center. It will result in financial stability not just for China and Pakistan, but also for the entire region. It will improve Pakistan's economy, fix infrastructure, lessen the country's energy issue, and improve Pakistan's standing in international affairs. The New Gwadar International Airport, the Gwadar East-Bay Expressway, the construction of breakwaters, the dredging of berthing areas and channels, the creation of a free zone, and the essential infrastructure for fresh water treatment, water supply, and distribution are just a few of the projects that CPEC has suggested. Millions of non-natives as well as natives will find work thanks to the initiative. Even though there are certain concerns about the CPEC, particularly from America and India, as was covered in length in chapter three, this project will help India grow its regional commerce, and America will be able to use this port for the same reason. Saudi Prince Sulaiman requested a collaboration, and Pakistan kept the bilateral status of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC); Saudi Arabia will have the most potential to increase its oil trading through this port. This economic growth (CPEC) is unprecedented in Baluchistan's history; we are making it a landmark event for future generations. A major economic shift for East Asia (China) and Central and South Asia is represented by the Gwadar port, which aims to maintain its trade in the Malacca Strait unaffected by American domination. The port's strategic location, which includes a view of the Arabian Sea, a connection to the Strait of Hormuz, and its incorporation into the city of Gwadar, which is situated in the state of Baluchistan close to the Afghan border, means that it serves as a conduit for trade traffic between Central Asia and the oil-rich Persian Gulf. The interests of both regional and foreign nations are at risk because Gwadar Port would serve as a hub for drawing big ships with significant. When the nations eager to work together on the Pakistani/Chinese initiative show unity, the majority of the challenges may be successfully addressed.

Recommendations

"The Gwadar Port Project's viability and planning are in doubt. Development of local human resources for port operations is not included in the strategy. Additionally, it doesn't meet the demands of the growing industry around the port, which would turn it into a center of economic and industrial activity, boosting its viability and fostering the growth of its human capital. Instead, it will only serve as a transit trade port for products traveling via Afghanistan and the Kara Kurram Highway to and from China and Central Asian nations. Therefore, it is important to establish technical and vocational colleges in Baluchistan. By turning Pakistani raw materials into completed commodities, China will profit from Pakistan. Pakistan should thus establish its own industries to increase its economy and output.

- Pakistan will need to raise its exports to China instead of importing. For example, a hooded sweatshirt priced at $12 per piece in China is just $9 to $10 in Pakistan. Comparably, in China, a pair of jeans costs $10. Although it costs $8 to $8.519 in Pakistan since labor expenses there are lower than in China, India, and Vietnam.
- The quadrilateral trade pact with Afghanistan has been in effect since 2004 and may be used to advance regional economic growth and commerce.
- Pakistan and China must emphasize business and cooperation.
- In order to prevent the situation from becoming Hambantota, Pakistan and China have to agree to the Built Operate and Transfer deal in its truest sense.
- China is making every effort to include India in the OBOR, despite the foolish assumption that it will wage war against India in cooperation with Pakistan. In such case, Pakistan would not be able to get Chinese support and protection from India.
- To examine roadblocks and cut back on Coast Guard and Frontier Corps unneeded personnel.
- To expand royalties and settle debts for Baluchistan's gas producers.
- To enhance province representation in Sui Southern, OGDC (Oil and Gas Development Cooperation), and PPL (Pakistan Petroleum Limited).
- The GPA (Gwadar Port Authority) office would be relocated from Karachi to Gwadar, a chairman will be appointed from Baluchistan, and the province will get 7% of GPA profits.

- Other points focused on development, local job quotas, and parity between Baloch and Pashtun in all areas. In November 2009, Asif Ali Zardari's government took a similar step to address this through the Aghaz-e-Haqooq-i-Balochistan Package, but offers fell through.
- Government should make a committee to resolve the local concerns of the nation and provide them security and assurance.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

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