

# Strategic and Economics Interest of China in Balochistan: The Role of Natural Resources and Geopolitical Implication of Gwadar Port in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Muhammad Sajid Khan<sup>1</sup>

<https://doi.org/10.62345/jads.2024.13.3.101>

## Abstract

*This research paper aims to assess China's Strategic and economic interests in Balochistan: The role of natural resources and geopolitical implication of Gwadar Port in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The paper seeks to determine whether Balochistan's resource endowment in copper, gold, and natural gas is central to Chinese investments or if there are other factors, such as the location of the Gwadar port. The study explores China's geopolitical and economic structures and unpicks the impact of Chinese infrastructure investments on local and global systems. The positive results imply that although natural resources are essential, the location as a strategic trade and energy corridor of Gwadar Port is the primary pull factor for China to the region.*

**Keywords:** Economic Interest of China, Natural Resource, Gwadar Port, Belt and Road Initiative.

## Introduction

Balochistan, Pakistan's largest province, has many hydrocarbon reserves, natural gas, copper, gold, and other minerals. These resources have elicited the attention of local and foreign entities and, therefore, have become strategic areas of economic and political rivalry. There are many such actors, including China, which has recently extended considerable interest in Balochistan in the general framework of BRI. The province is endowed with proteintic mineral and fossil fuel resources deposited in some of Pakistan's largest and untouched quantities, such as the Saindak copper-gold deposit and sugars field. Such resources can support Pakistan's economy and offer inputs in international markets. However, that makes Balochistan more important for at least two reasons: its geopolitical situation, especially concerning China's BRI project. The BRI, also known as the Silk Road initiative, is a developmental cum infrastructural project conceived by China in the year 2013 to resurrect the traditional trade highways that join Asia, Europe, and Africa. The BRI has been mainly implemented to boost China's international economic power and gain better strategic access to essential commodities and markets. Integral to this effort is a project in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), an initiative under BRI that envisions developing Gwadar Port in Balochistan. Gwadar is located in the southern part of Iran at the entrance to the Persian Gulf, converting it into an important nodal point for maritime connectivity and security aspects of China's global position (Ejaz & Jamil, 2021).

Chinese stakes, especially in Balochistan province and Gwadar Port, can be understood in the context of China's overall global and regional strategies. The port provides China with straight-

---

<sup>1</sup>Instructor/Teacher, Lahore Grammar School. Email: [sajidkhan017@gmail.com](mailto:sajidkhan017@gmail.com)



line access to the Arabian Sea and will cut the time for Sino-marine shipping to the Middle East and Africa. It is especially crucial for China since the country aims to diversify its supply transport routes away from the more extended and, thus, more potentially vulnerable sea lanes in the SCS and the Strait of Malacca (Malik, 2012). Also, it plays a crucial role in the transit of China's energy, both oil and gas and is also a haven for Middle Eastern oil. Given this backdrop, this research paper seeks to explore a critical question: Will Balochistan's natural resources be seen as of interest to China, including the BRI project for Baluchistan? Although it is apparent that location is one of the critical factors that has propelled Gwadar to the center stage of China's strategic vision, this paper will ask the following research question: Is the abundant resource base in Balochistan another reason that has shaped China's rarity and investment scope in the region? Structurally, the paper will have an economic and geopolitical section to reveal the rationale for China's regional participation. The study shall also incorporate a quantitative approach involving document analysis focusing on government and academic journals and policy papers on China's investment and resource-seeking diplomacy. Some quantitative approaches will be used in the study to determine the economic effects of Chinese investments in Balochistan, with a special focus on resource exploitation and infrastructural development (Farooqui & Aftab, 2018). When combined, these approaches shall aid in portraying a vivid picture of Chinese interests in Balochistan, particularly in regards to Gwadar Port, as well as with the utilization of the tremendous natural resource endowment located in the region via the Chinese strategic perspective.

This paper aims to contribute to understanding the complexity of China's role in Balochistan and identify whether Natural Resources act as the main driving force behind China's imperialism via the BRI.

## Literature Review

This section will discuss the historical background of Chinese investment in Balochistan and Gwadar Port, the Chinese political economy and the BRI, the strategic importance of Gwadar Port, and the theoretical literature on resource-seeking FDI and the underlying economic essentialism. Familiarizing with these areas is the prerequisite to answering whether The Natural Resources of Baluchistan Drive the Chinese Interest in the Region.

## Historical Context of Chinese Investments in Balochistan and Gwadar Port

The location for Gwadar was chosen because Pakistan, with the help of Chinese investment of \$248 million in the first stage of construction, decided to build the Gwadar Deep Sea Port in 2002 (Khetran, 2014). Chinese investment in Gwadar reached more than \$ 1.62 billion in 2017 for further extension of the Port of Gwadar and construction of other facilities (Government of Pakistan Report, 2017). Gwadar is on the southwestern coast of Pakistan, and this was the best opportunity for the Chinese to secure a place in a strategic region crucial for trade and energy needs. The initial investment in the port was initiated as a part of China's long-term plan to gain better access control over the Arabian Sea to boost energy imports from the Middle East countries. The first phase of Gwadar Port was developed by China in 2007 and was financed by China's state-owned enterprises. What began with mechanization eventually progressed to improvements in port infrastructure and eventually included other domains of the infrastructure industry throughout China and Pakistan, including transportation, energy, and extraction of natural resources. Pakistan's largest province, rich in natural resources, became the darling of Chinese investments. Some bigger schemes were the Saindak Copper Gold Project and the Duddar lead-zinc project. This is evident in China's increasing footprint in Balochistan, also manifested in the China-

Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that is part of the BRI with roads, rail, and energy infrastructure from Gwadar to Xinjiang in West China. These investments confirmed the value of the province's resources and its strategic placement within the larger framework of the Chinese agenda (Khetran, 2014).

### **Review of Existing Literature on China's Expansionism and Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**

China's Belt and Road Initiative is seen as a blatant imperialism move by the Chinese on the global stage. Since the inception of the BRI in 2013, there has been a question of whether it is an economic or strategic project or a trade project. The present literature on China's imperialism studies must then admit that BRI, on the one hand, is an investment for economic development. However, China, on the other hand, aims to dominate Asian, African, and European regions. Lampton Aiza agrees with Sidney Theater that the BRI is an all-encompassing, grand strategy aimed at reshaping the geography of economic connectivity. Lampton still points out that such an initiative enables China to build and own strategic infrastructure assets like ports, railways, or energy pipelines necessary for securing China's impact in various regions. Nadège Rolland makes her observation along the same line, as she points out that BRI is also an avenue through which China will maintain its market and resource access in the global periphery in the future.

Another major group of studies focuses on resource security in China's foreign policy. While focusing on the analysis of China's FDI, Andrews-Speed explained that China tends to invest in the countries of the post-industrialized world, Africa, and Central Asian states where there is a huge demand for Chinese goods and severs a requirement for raw materials for China's rapidly growing economy. In this respect, the BRI can be viewed as an offspring of China's resource diplomacy in its effort to secure assurances of long-term sources of natural resources. The paper by Garlick and Havice, which focuses on the case of Pakistan, shows that China's investments are the next step in the so-called String of Pearls, which aims to build infrastructure independent of the Strait of Malacca. This is consistent with the function of Gwadar Port aimed at China's "String of Pearls," which called for developing more strategic points within the Indian Ocean. Given Gwadar's position astride the Strait of Hormuz, through which around one-third of the world's sea-borne oil supplies pass, China stands to gain assured control over its energy needs, implying a clear link between Balochistan and China's economic vision (Zhang, 2018).

### **Geopolitical Significance of Gwadar Port**

Gwadar Port, located in the corner of the Persian Gulf, provides its geopolitical advantage and makes it a valuable asset in regional and global markets. Gwadar is central to the future geopolitical struggle between world and regional powers such as China, the United States of America, India, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. The author further notes that constructing the Gwadar port under CPEC has captured significant attention from global analyses where it betters China's Western shift strategy. The Chinese are also interested in Gwadar from the economic and military points of view. Economically, Gwadar gives China strategic access to the Arabian Sea without depending on the sea routes controlled by the US and India. This helps China to achieve a faster and more secure route for its imported energy from the Middle East, which is essential for achieving its economic stability. In terms of military use, the port may act as a base for the Chinese Navy, expanding the possibility of China dominating the Indian Ocean and improving China's capability to safeguard its sealine of communication. It is considered that Gwadar is the real third Great Game in South Asia that joined powers such as China, India, and the United States for influence on the sea routes. Therefore, if seen in this light, the Chinese investment in Gwadar is not just for economic purposes

but to show supremacy. Gwadar is a good example of an infrastructure project within the BRI framework that has dual benefits as it fosters connectivity while establishing political dominance.

### **Theoretical Perspectives on Resource-Driven Foreign Policies and Economic Interests**

Many theories support understanding why China is interested in Balochistan and the larger BRI scope. One such framework is resource-driven foreign policies whereby the countries seek to access resources to further their economic growth. China's foreign policy, especially in the oil-endowed countries, falls within the analysis of this concept since China has been intensifying its resource diplomacy in the global regions, including Africa, Latin America, and the Caspian region. The "Resource Curse hypothesis is defined by theorists such as Richard Auty, stating that countries possessing abundant natural resources give less priority to economic reforms and development institutions because of the concentration of rent from these resources in an extractive sector. Balochistan is hardly developed from the resource endowment in the province because the locals do not benefit from these resources. However, international countries, especially China, benefit from these resources in terms of economic benefits. The other theoretical concept is realism in international relations theory, which focuses on the state's struggle for power. From a realist perspective, China was, thus, utilizing its investments in Balochistan and the BRI to precisely undermine the current world order, predominate by the US, and aim to emerge as a super world power. According to John Mearsheimer, the realist, China is increasingly becoming aggressive in establishing dominance in regional territories such as Balochistan in a bid to capture a strategic corridor in the Indian Ocean as well as the Arabian Sea (Wadhwa & Reddy, 2011).

Therefore, the term 'geo-economics' gives meaning to understanding how China, for instance, has been using economic instruments, including infrastructure financing and trade, to achieve geostrategic gains. In this context, Gwadar Port and Balochistan resources act as a source for providing returns to the Chinese strategic planning. The prospects of converting Gwadar into a transshipment hub for China's trade and energy more equally explain the rationale of geo-economics in China's foreign policy of the region. The literature reviewed helps into the geopolitical, economic, and strategic imperatives of Chinese investments in Balochistan and the BRI. In this plan's center, Gwadar Port is a focal area with easy access to Natural resources. The theoretical framework of resource-driven foreign policies and geo-economics supports the latter by emphasizing both the economic and strategic factors motivating investments and the relationship between natural resources and foreign policy in the context of the BRI. Understanding these dynamics is particularly important for determining whether Balochistan's nonrenewable resources are a basis for Chinese investment in the province.

### **Research Methodology**

As a theoretical framework, this research adopts a qualitative analysis technique to examine Chinese strategic interests in Balochistan and their influence through the BRI along with natural resource factors. As a result of the study's qualitative approach, the author can capture the logic behind the motives, actions, and geopolitical implications of China engaging in what it is doing in Balochistan, especially in developing the Gwadar Port and other resource exploitation ventures.

### **Explanation of Qualitative Research Approach**

As a result, this study incorporates the qualitative research method because its primary concern is establishing the characteristics and environment of Chinese foreign policies and the effects on today's economy and geopolitics. Secondary research is used in this work to identify the documents

to review, and the documents reviewed include government diversity documents, journal articles, policy papers, and statements. The chosen qualitative research methodology is well-suited to this study for several reasons.

*Exploration of Complex Interactions:* This study intends to investigate the complexity of interaction between China's economic power, political and geopolitical motivations, and Balochistan's resource availabilities. These interactions require qualitative analysis because they offer the opportunity to examine the reasons and game plans behind China, which quantitative analysis cannot offer.

*In-Depth Analysis of Literature:* The use of qualitative research enables the assessment of the existing literature and other research and documents, such as academic and government policies and reports, as well as media articles. This is especially important in analyzing the position that the Chinese BRI takes in Balochistan regarding its geopolitics and resource development, which is why the research method of choice for this study is the qualitative method.

*Focus on Perspectives and Interpretations:* This study aims to identify local stakeholders' perceptions of Chinese investments. Whereas a quantitative approach helps the quantitative findings to give a statistical and concrete vision to the investment being made in a country in terms of its social, economic, and environmental returns, a qualitative approach helps in the actual capturing of the above perspectives in as much as it gives a qualitative flavor to the returns on the investments a country.

*Limitations of Quantitative Data:* Although the information regarding Chinese investments in Balochistan is politically sensitive and needs more openness, particularly in some sectors, authentic quantitative data regarding the extent and outcome of Chinese projects in Balochistan might be inaccessible. Therefore, the qualitative approach is used to analyze the previous stories and papers to interpret existing narratives and documents since the quantitative approach cannot tackle other issues it cannot solve. Thus, this approach will allow for a better understanding of the features of the increase in China's investments, as well as how these investments affect the geopolitical and economic trends in the region, taking into account basic strategic and economic factors (Blanchard, 2021).

### **Sources of Data**

The research draws on a variety of credible sources to ensure a comprehensive analysis:

- *Government reports:* Pakistani government reports, especially those related to Gwadar Port and Chinese mining and extraction operations, offer a wealth of understanding on Chinese investments through academic research based on Chinese documentation on the CPEC
- *Academic articles:* This paper relies on theoretical frameworks of the BRI, Chinese foreign policy, and resource-dependent economy, as evidenced by peer-reviewed literature. The readings, therefore, include articles from International Relations, geopolitics, and economics specializing in the supply of commodities.
- *Policy analyses:* Current studies and briefs by think tanks and research centers such as the China Institute for International Studies, the Brookings Institution, and the International Crisis Group provide insight into the Chinese strategic imperatives in Balochistan.
- *Media reports:* Some of the current information on the development of Gwadar Port and Chinese activities in the Balochistan province is found in reputable media houses like The Economist, Foreign Policy, and regional newspapers. These sources assist in interpreting the collected data regarding recent trends experienced in a given subject area.

### Criteria for Selecting and Analyzing Data

Data selection for this study follows a few key criteria:

- *Relevance:* Based on the sources of information, only the data associated with China's investments in Balochistan, Gwadar Port, and hydrocarbon industries are collected.
- *Credibility:* First preference is always given to accounts garnered from scholarly journals, government records, and credible think tanks
- *Time frame:* More emphasis has been placed on the events since the 2000s when China started investing in Gwadar. Backward and forward analyses are done to understand the situation better.
- *Analytical depth:* Entries that evaluate how Chinese foreign policy and economic interests are described in the sources rather than simply reporting them are preferred. Such patterns, which align with the analytical framework, are extracted using thematic coding patterns that include resource-orientated investments, geopolitics, and the economic drivers of the BRI. This is because there is a well-structured and sequenced approach to exploring the research question.

## Findings and Analysis

### Analysis of China's Strategic Interests in Gwadar Port and Its Relevance to the BRI

Gwadar Port is pivotal for China's BRI because it is located at the entrance of the Persian Gulf, giving China direct sea access to the Arabian Sea. For that reason, the goal of this location consists of avoiding conventional maritime narrow corridors like the Strait of Malacca, through which 80 percent of China's imported energy is conveyed. It makes the Chinese dice on these Two risky routes insignificant & At the same time, China is getting a command of Gwadar to enhance its strategic presence in the Indian Ocean. This step aligns with Beijing's enduring policy of securing energy access and sea lanes in a strategically sensitive and competitive region vis-a-vis the US and Indian naval power. This port is one of the CPECs and an important BRI pillar that connects western China with the Arabian Sea through Pakistan. For China, Gwadar plays several roles: it offers access to an alternative, more secure trade route, the dependence on which on the Malacca straits is questionable, and it is outside the spheres of influence of the US and Indian navies. Gwadar also provides China access to ensure the country's energy resources supply line that passes through the Middle East.

Developing a viable maritime supply line is probably The third and most important motivation that prompted China to invest heavily in Gwadar. This port will assist China in achieving its objective of constructing a "maritime silk road" within the framework of BRI. Logistically, Gwadar makes the maritime angles shorter for China, especially for the oil and natural gas imports, since it provides a straight-through way to the Middle East and back. This is particularly important for China, which depends on the sea line of communications passing through the Strait of Malacca, where about 80% of its imported oil is transported. This position gives Gwadar an advantage by allowing the Chinese to avoid threats or hoopla to the Malacca route.

Furthermore, it is not only an economic project; Gwadar is a geopolitical asset that increases China's power in the region. Chinese investment in infrastructure in Pakistan makes it difficult for the South Asian nation to let go of Beijing lest it lose access to these crucial physical assets. This deepens China's South Asian presence, thus checking American and Indian outreach in the Indian Ocean. Moreover, Gwadar port development is also likely to have implications for China's military since the latter could become a future naval base for China's navy and improve powers projection in the Indian Ocean.

### **Role of Balochistan's Natural Resources in Shaping China's Investment Strategy**

Saindak Copper Gold Project of Balochistan has been accomplished by a Chinese state-owned organization that has produced 1500 tons of copper and 1.47 tons of gold since 2003 as per Pakistan Minerals Report, 2019. Furthermore, the Duddar lead zinc containing 5 million tons of lead and zinc reserves in Pakistan permanently ensured the Chinese strategic and long-term demand for resource-rich Balochistan's minerals and metals. The security of resources is a very important aspect of China's foreign policy. Balochistan allows China to secure large amounts of untapped reserves for a long-term supply of metallic and energy resources. One of the Chinese investment ventures in Balochistan's exploration and exploitation of natural resources is the Saindak Copper-Gold Project. A Chinese state-owned firm owns this mine, which has enabled China to access one of Pakistan's biggest deposits of copper and gold. Second, the Duddar lead-zinc mine is another large Chinese project invested in the province's mining industry. These projects are examples of China's overall policy of purchasing strategic minerals globally to feed the new and aggressive stratigraphic consumption and obtain a favorable bargaining position in dealing with other nations endowed with such resources. China is another country that surprisingly is interested in Balochistan's natural gas reserves. Sui Field is Pakistan's largest natural gas field, and the province is the main domestic energy supplier. Due to the desire to liberalize its energy mix and phasing out coal, the mineral-rich Balochistan province opens up natural gas for China. Furthermore, China raised its stakes in the extraction infrastructure necessary for those resources, which helped the country remain an important market player in developing and exporting resources to Pakistan's energy front.

### **Discussion of Economic, Geopolitical, and Strategic Factors Influencing China's Presence in Balochistan**

The economic gains are significant, as China has benefited greatly from Balochistan. By establishing infrastructure focusing on Gwadar Port, China will seek to open up a new trade Corridor to enhance the economic relations between Pakistan and its neighbors. CPEC is the BRI, which entails the construction of highways, railways, and pipelines that link Gwadar with China's Xinjiang for trade and energy transportation. Such infrastructure projects contribute towards improving market access not only for China but for Pakistan as well, and the projects create employment and bring about accessibility. Strategically, the Chinese investments in Balochistan and Gwadar will offset the Competing powers' influence, especially India and the United States in the geographical Indian Ocean. India perceives China's involvement in Gwadar as a part of the pearl-hunting strategy, in which China is hunting for strategic port and infrastructure development all across the Indian Ocean to surround India. Through the development of Gwadar, China has created a confrontation point near the critical strategic sea points to overshadow India. From a strategic view, Gwadar is as important for the Chinese economic and trade goal as for the military goal. As it is realized now, the port serves a primarily mercantile purpose; however, it can also be transformed into a military-commercial functional type. The deep water house could harbor Chinese navy ships, thus giving the Chinese a vantage in the Indian Ocean. This would allow China to oversee the movement of the US and Indian Navy as well as guard its sea lanes, especially for petroleum imports from the Persian Gulf (Cooper, 2018).

The Chinese investments also fit the overall Chinese strategy of stabilizing the western provinces of Pakistan. Because of tension between the Uyghur and other ethnic groups in the area and rebels' demands to establish an independent republic, Xinjiang is quite volatile in China. Through CPEC, China aims to connect Xinjiang to the Arabian Sea to enhance its economic growth and discourage

the possibility of revolt in this region. Therefore, Balochistan is important for China in the internal sphere and for the stability and security of the country.

### **Perspectives from Local Stakeholders Regarding the Impact of Chinese Investment**

The scarcity of development in the province has made the Chinese investment in Balochistan controversial among the locals. On one hand, Chinese projects, especially CPEC, are dubbed as development opportunities for one of the impoverished regions in Pakistan. When infrastructures are developed, there is hope of attaining full employment, market access, and boosting the local economy. Chinese investment experts believe that sites such as Gwadar Port can turn Balochistan into a regional transit hub which is advantageous for both Pakistan and China. Although Chinese investments have been described in the discourse as personalities of development DC, especially through the CPEC, there is more than merely an economic conflict here: Baloch nationalist groups do not welcome the presence of Chinese interests in Balochistan. These groups of people claim that the gains from the development of infrastructure are not felt in the areas where the deprived communities live and exist as if they are substandard beings whose land and resources are exploited. Local grievances are further fueled by the displacement of people in the area for these projects and issues to do with environmental degradation. This opposition is, therefore, not against foreign involvement per se but against long-standing questions of resource ownership, poverty, and governance in Balochistan. Several Baloch activist organizations have claimed that multiple infrastructure projects leave them and their communities marginalized economically. The militants' spearhead accuses the government of exploiting Balochistan's resources and selling them by providing little or nothing back to the people of that province. The people of Balochistan feel left out and complain that only the Pakistani government and its security forces have strong fancies for Chinese projects, which do not at all translate into benefits for the people of Balochistan. Also, only some people have complained about the effects of harvesting resources and other infrastructure on the environment. The two, mining and port construction, are seen to cause environmental degradation that may affect the sensitivity of the province. Another concern has been the eviction of residents whenever such infrastructure developments occur. However, the government of Pakistan continues to be friendly to Chinese investments attracted due to Pakistan's need for investments to boost its economy. However, the sustainability of those projects will depend on how many of those concerns and needs are considered in Balochistan.

China's interests in Balochistan, especially in the development of Gwadar Port, are complex and encompass economic and strategic interests. Regarding Balochistan, you must mention that the region's resources are critical for systematic investments because China aims to access valuable resources for a long period. However, the role of Chinese investment has been perceived positively and negatively, along with some concerns such as the distribution of economic effects and the degradation of the environment. Lastly, China's penetration in Balochistan probably indicates a larger approach to leveraging available resources, markets, and influence to further its stake.

## **Discussion**

### **How China's Interests Align with or Diverge from Balochistan's Resource Wealth**

Overall, China's interest in Balochistan is correlated to the richness of resources in this area, but they are not motivated by this factor alone. The Saindak Project provides Chinese industries with a good amount of copper and gold, produced through the Saindak Project, and the Gwadar Port location adds more value by helping China's Belt and Road Initiative. According to the data, 80 % of China's trade and 60% of its energy needs will transship through Gwadar once the Deep Sea



Port operates. To attract Chinese investment, Balochistan possesses vast fields of natural gas and considerable reserves of copper, gold, and other minerals to serve the country's industrial and energy-growing demands. Under resource acquisition projects such as the Saindak Copper-Gold Mine and the Duddar lead-zinc mine, China has access to vital resources supporting its sustainable and strategic undertakings. However, the Chinese are not entirely dissimilar from the rest of the global extraction-focused economies. However, apart from extracting these resources, China has various interests in the Balochistan province, including using the region's geographical position to increase its power worldwide. Such a divergence proves that China's interest in Balochistan is not only economic and strategic but also a mix of both.

### **Analysis of Whether Natural Resources are the Primary Driver or if Other Factors (e.g., Strategic Location, Trade Routes) are More Influential**

It can thus be deduced that though resources in Balochistan are important, there are other reasons for China's interest in the region than they are. Superficial factors, especially the strategic position of Gwadar Port— at the junction of two vital world sea lanes – have a much stronger impact. Gwadar Port allows China to ensure its energy source supply routes and avoid an unsafe sea line passing through the Strait of Malacca. Such a position enables China to avoid choke points, which can be controlled or ðim by other countries such as the USA or India. Also, its capability to become the future home of a Chinese navy is another clear indication of the geopolitical consideration as the driving force for investment. It supports the Chinese military in projecting power in the Indian Ocean region, which is in sync with China's 'String of Pearls, ' which refers to the planned series of Chinese-friendly ports across the region. While commercial and financial stakes may well be in China's interest, what remains indisputable is that geopolitical interest, particularly through Gwadar port for trade, energy, and militarily related reasons, probably holds China much more captivated to Balochistan in the long run.

### **Comparison with Other Regions Involved in the BRI to Contextualize China's Approach to Balochistan**

Compared with other regions supposedly part of the BRI, China's approach to Balochistan combines resource-seeking investments and state-driven infrastructural upgrading, comparable to its African and many Central Asian strategies. For instance, the African continent has seen China's huge investment in Angola and Zambia to gain control of their oil and copper, respectively, and constructing roads, railways, and ports to increase their trade connection. For instance, in Central Asia, China has constructed pipelines and transportation networks from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, ensuring the supply of energy and establishing control mechanisms over the region's markets. Nevertheless, Balochistan is unique due to the twin features that make it a strategic province for resource supply and geopolitical centrality. Unlike some African or Central Asian nations with which China has signed deals for resources, Baluchistan borders the Arabian Sea, making it strategically more valuable as it offers China direct sea access. China's approach to Balochistan widens as economic cooperation is further supported with resource and strategic agendas. However, the share of natural resources in Balochistan in the Chinese investment plan is less potent than the geostrategic importance of the area, together with the provision of secured trade and energy corridors through the Gwadar port. A comparative analysis of China's tactics in Balochistan and other areas in the BRI will show that China's actions are not simply motivated by resource nationalism but also geopolitics. The convergence of these factors put Balochistan in the focal area of China's BRI plan, mainly for accruable resource endowment and strategic positioning.

## Conclusion

This research study reveals that China's investments in Balochistan through BRI, especially Gwadar Port, are occasioned by strategic geopolitical considerations and resource availability. In Balochistan, for instance, the mineral resources, which include copper, gold, and natural gas, as well as the strategic location of Gwadar port, which would help China provide a sea link that bypasses choke points such as the Strait of Malacca, seem to be the main concerns on the Chinese side. Furthermore, China's comprehensive interests go beyond the issue of securing these resources; it is also interested in achieving domination over this region by increasing its naval power in the Indian Ocean. The emergence of Gwadar Port puts China in a strategic position regarding a sea link that preserves energy security and state power. However, the protest against the Chinese projects in Baluchistan underlines some major problems. An inability to deliver any form of appreciable economic value addition targeting locals, high stakes on environmental degradation, and political exclusion from strategically timed development projects pose a major risk threshold to Chinese investments. Such concerns raise calls for a better development paradigm that does not only reflect the public's interest but that of the local people. Hence, in using natural resources as the primary reason for China's involvement in Balochistan, this research finds that the strategic importance of Gwadar Port under BRI is the main reason for the region's investment strategy. It would help if you considered geopolitical considerations as dominant over economic rationalism before you can discuss the causes of China's regional investment.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings, several recommendations can be made to ensure that China's investments in Balochistan are sustainable and mutually beneficial for both China and local stakeholders: *Promote Inclusive Economic Development:* While investing in Balochistan, the Chinese authorities, as well as the Pakistani departments and heads, should provide the population of this area with the facilities necessary for a good living. It can be attained by local employment, enhancement of local infrastructure, and ensuring that reasonable proportions of resources produced are returned to the region. Due to continued agitation, the projects will likely endanger long-term stability without local inclusion.

*Implement Environmental Safeguards:* The negative environmental effects on big-scale projects like Gwadar Port and Saindak Copper-Gold Project should be well controlled. Producers should engage in environmental standards to mitigate the criticisms, including observing resource extraction activities and formulating ways to best counter environmentalists' worries about the environment.

*Strengthen Local Governance and Political Representation:* The current political organization of Baloch has let loose nationalist groups complaining about political repression and economic negligence. Thus, increased local government institutions should incorporate all the local people in decision-making processes, such as funding programs and developing infrastructure. This would guarantee that bottom interests were incorporated and that benefits accrued from long-term planning, where they would fare much better.

*Increase Transparency in Investment Projects:* More information on Chinese investment projects is necessary to limit the impact of such arguments and improve cooperation. This may require some disclosure of project effects and financial terms and conditions on a relatively frequent basis, as well as communication to the population as to how resources are being used and how the local population can benefit.

*Foster Collaboration with International Organizations:* To ensure that Chinese investment corresponds to the global best practices in human rights, environmental, and corporate social responsibility, the Chinese should engage International development partners. Such partnerships can provide ideas for getting it right and assist in changing negative perceptions worldwide, including sensitive areas such as Balochistan, where Chinese investment is. About the above-mentioned recommendations, positive and beneficial investments for all the stakeholder's wants and needs of both China and Pakistan, besides the strategic interests of both countries, as well as economic development and growth, in Balochistan can be made and achieved.

## References

- Blanchard, J. M. F. (2021). Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) blues: Powering BRI research back on track to avoid choppy seas. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, pp. 235–255. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11366-020-09717-0>
- Cooper, Z. (2018). Security Implications of China's Military Presence in the Indian Ocean. *Center for Strategic and International Studies*. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep22443.9.pdf?ab\\_segments=0%252Fbasic\\_search\\_SYC-5455%252Fcontrol&refreqid=excelsior%3A93803a4be0103ac94072bff37e18da8b](https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/resrep22443.9.pdf?ab_segments=0%252Fbasic_search_SYC-5455%252Fcontrol&refreqid=excelsior%3A93803a4be0103ac94072bff37e18da8b)
- Ejaz, K., & Jamil, F. (2021). Belt and Road Initiative of China: Implications for South Asian states. *South Asian Studies*, pp. 351–366. <https://sasj.pu.edu.pk/9/article/view/1266>
- Farooqui, M. A., & Aftab, S. M. (2018). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor; Prospects and Challenges for Balochistan, Pakistan. *Materials Science and Engineering*. <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1757-899X/414/1/012046/meta>
- Khetran, M. S. (2014). The potential and prospects of Gwadar Port. *Strategic Studies*, pp. 70–89. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48527476>
- Malik, H. Y. (2012). The strategic importance of Gwadar port. *J. Pol. Stud.* <https://heinonline.org/HOL/LandingPage?handle=hein.journals/jlo19&div=17&id=&page=>
- Wadhwa, K., & Reddy, S. R. (2011). Foreign direct investment into developing Asian countries: The role of market seeking, resource seeking and efficiency seeking factors. *International Journal of Business and Management*. [https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/51675457/12866-38956-1-SM-libre.pdf?1486468264=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DForeign\\_Direct\\_Investment\\_into\\_Developin.pdf&Expires=1729419931&Signature=a4veenQcRPR~attCBmeZ6wO6sXAV0GBYEMgTtSM5FxD BCXQs94UWnS09CiuNkS2cC8oZFPSG-8VX8oigfLj8xmELPbT-](https://d1wqtxts1xzle7.cloudfront.net/51675457/12866-38956-1-SM-libre.pdf?1486468264=&response-content-disposition=inline%3B+filename%3DForeign_Direct_Investment_into_Developin.pdf&Expires=1729419931&Signature=a4veenQcRPR~attCBmeZ6wO6sXAV0GBYEMgTtSM5FxD BCXQs94UWnS09CiuNkS2cC8oZFPSG-8VX8oigfLj8xmELPbT-)
- Zhang, Z. (2018). The belt and road initiative: China's new geopolitical strategy? *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, pp. 327–343. <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/abs/10.1142/S2377740018500240>