China–Pakistan Economic Corridor: Macro Environmental Factors and Security Challenges

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Abstract
Pakistan, excepting external issues, has been enduring from chronic problems, that is, political-military anarchy, bad-governance, interprovincial conflicts, social divisions, sectarian influence, and terrorism resulting negatively on inland politics, economics, socioculture, and techno-industry (PEST). This amplified domestic instability and governmental dependency toward external support. Appropriately, China’s recent FDI for CPEC is aimed to revive Pakistan’s energy, transport, infrastructure, industries and also procure China’s energy and trade transmission, and opportunities. So far, some studies separately have reported favorable and unfavorable effects emerged between projects and local PEST domains. Apart from numerous advantages, the drawbacks are also found many that are not limited to institutional concerns, project misappropriations, ethnic and provincial reservations, opposition, and targeted terrorism. Therefore, current study systematically revolves around exploring, comparing, and analyzing the cross-impact among CPEC, PEST, and Security concomitantly. Employing qualitative interviews, all-round literature, and statistical index datasets, study determines that the security risk is critical for Chinese manpower whereas the concerns of inter-government, projects, institutions, civil-military, and ethnicities are somehow manageable. Results show positive trend in Pakistan’s many PEST indicators except political violence, corruption, security costs and threats, electricity costs and supply, debts, imports, and forestry that are in continuous negative impact. Moreover, opposition, trust-deficit, and attacks against CPEC are yet unchanged factors. The study, therefore, argues that if negative impact factors are recognized for elimination, the CPEC as a result will improve the both host and investor environments with promised socioeconomic advantages, and minimize challenges including terrorism. In last, study also suggests various practical and policy implications.

Keywords
Chinese investments, politics economics socioculture technology (PEST), security threats, cross-impact, project, CPEC

Introduction
Pakistan, since its independence, has been maintaining a strong relationship with China which recently has led both governments toward a new development height using latest CPEC program. In this regard, China’s direct investments worth USD 62 billion on various CPEC projects are mostly believed to be a significant contribution to modernize Pakistan’s regressive infrastructure (Bahoo et al., 2018; Khetran & Saeed, 2017). As an important part of Belt and Road Initiative’s (BRI) six land-based corridors, CPEC is believed to be a distinct flagship project which is situated merely in one country (Menhas et al., 2019). In greater view, CPEC links China with the Middle East, Africa, and Europe through Gwadar Port whereas, corridor links Pakistan with the Central Asian states, Russia, and Europe through western China (Ali et al., 2019).

Since 2014, based on memorandums of understanding (MoU), the early harvest projects including energy and transport, Gwadar Port, Special Economic Zones (SEZs),

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and regional connectivity have been implemented on faster pace respectively (Nazneen et al., 2019). Among the prioritized projects, energy and transport infrastructure building have remained on top (Zhang et al., 2017) due to taking the host country out of chronic energy crisis (Sun et al., 2020) and obsolete transport and communication system by increasing the GDP ratio in return (Kanwal, Pitafi, et al., 2020). In accordance with the long-term plan of CPEC, the involved projects shown in Figure 1, are expected to be completed by 2030 under three development phases (Ministry of Planning Development & Reform-GoP, 2017).

After a couple of years CPEC, has been seen at struggling and encountering multifarious external and internal challenges in the host environment (Haiquan, 2017). External challenges, to name a few include Indian opposition, cross-border interference, and Afghanistan instability (Ahmad & Mi, 2017). Contrarily, internal challenges involve the objections by local political parties, provincial concerns, aggression of separatists, and terrorism (Ashraf et al., 2017). Moreover, political instability, weak governance, ethnopolitical issues, administrative and institutional concerns, and civil-military complexities became an added baggage in CPEC construction and execution (Hussain, 2016; Javed, 2018; Pan et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018).

But it is important to conceive that every international project, like BRI, inevitably develops an impact driven relationship with PEST domains in the host culture (Huang, 2019; Pan et al., 2020). Relatedly, CPEC and Pakistan’s PEST domains are not only deeply interconnected but also have potential influence of positive and negative nature to change the position of each other (Zhang et al., 2018). In that perspective, Pakistan is supposed to seek cooperation from various domestic stakeholders for establishing CPEC as a positive economic initiative that has stood out from the rest. In doing so, Pakistan, on the one hand, needs to stabilize its PEST areas through consistent, fair, and positive impact of CPEC projects. And, on the other hand, reduce negativities which are many but not limited to discrepancies among the ruling and societal stakeholders, social and environmental risks, and internal and external threats with the aim to ensure

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**Figure 1.** Projects under the umbrella of CPEC. 
Source. Mercator Institute of China Studies (https://www.merics.org/en/bri-tracker/the-bri-in-pakistan).
all-round support for CPEC continuity (Hussain, 2016; Qureshi, 2015; Zhang et al., 2017).

In fact, CPEC is not an ordinary project as it increasingly worth billions of dollars. The authorities of both partner countries declare it as a game changer. This has strong attachment with both countries’ micro and macro bases. Every prospect in the form of opportunities plays a crucial role to uplift the domains of local environment (Embassy of China in Pakistan, 2018). But vice versa, every problem with negative impact decreases the importance and value of this gigantic project (Shah, 2018). To understand the wholistic scenario, this paper aims to extensively and innovatively explore the process of CPEC implementation by describing its interaction with Pakistan’s PEST factors in an environment that is prone to insecurity. It aims to show how CPEC has been influencing country’s major dimensions and what complications the projects have been facing on ground in return. Given literature scarcity and limited evidence, this study will try to cover the gap by taking three interdependent and concomitant aspects simultaneously. Existing study will also present comparative analytical results of major indicators for which CPEC was supposed to contribute. Finally, investigation will provide knowledgeable and significant implications of policy and practical use.

Following this section, the structure of this paper is as follows. In the next section, we review related studies showing positive and negative impacts of CPEC over local PEST culture including security threats. Thereafter, we present materials and method part wherein we define the study approach and design, data types and sources, the variables involved, PEST conceptual framework, and qualitative pattern and data collection. Afterward, we analyze and discuss a rich set of results, that is, PEST statistical indexing indicators, primary insights, and secondary literature. Lastly, we describe implications and study conclusion.

Literature Review

Through current study, we describe scholarly academic articles in the literature review section which are authentic, entail quality and relevance, and support the research objectives. Thus, the literature section explores four dimensions: (1) CPEC and political dimension; (2) CPEC and economic dimension; (3) CPEC and social dimension; and (4) CPEC and technological dimension.

CPEC and Political Dimension

In the studies of (Ahmad & Mi, 2017; Huang, 2019; Shah, 2018; Zhang et al., 2017), the CPEC, being a pioneer construction part of BRI, is thought as a government-to-government cooperation based on historic friendship relation between China and Pakistan. With that, Pakistani civil leadership while looking at prolonged socio-economic issues, called the project as debottlenecking mechanism for resolving energy, transport, and industrial crisis with the hope to revive the positive image of domestic government among society (Ahmed, 2018; Shah, 2018). Concurrently, China declared that both countries and region will be linked and mutually benefited from CPEC’s encouraging features (Kanwal, Pitafi, et al., 2020; Masood et al., 2016). The authors (Ashraf et al., 2017; Hussain, 2016), defined that due to backward position of politically-led institutional output from basic sectors resulting public anger, government decided to provide the rapid relief through energy and transport projects with more emphasis. In fact, social and economic circles in Pakistan faced continuous decline and people protested many times. The society as a whole needed the immediate relief with a positive hope of CPEC (Kanwal, Pitafi, et al., 2020).

Conversely, some negative issues appeared during initial process after MoU agreements. For example, Qureshi (2015) and Hussain (2019) highlighted that some Pakistan’s political parties were not sufficiently consulted, concerns raised on security, safety, corruption, bad-governance, projects execution, and legalities. Besides (Ahmed, 2018; Hameed, 2018), unequal distribution of projects’ dividends, interference, civil-military cleavages, anti-democratic impression, and selecting eastern corridor-route instead of a pre-planned western corridor-route (Ashraf et al., 2017). Moreover, hasty process, lack of transparency, increasing current account deficits, discrediting media, trade securitization, undoing to the economic reforms, ethnic reservations, and neglecting national institutions such as the Senate Standing Committee for Planning and Development, political opposition parties, State Bank of Pakistan, and the media (Shah, 2018).

To respond these challenges through joint initiatives, Huang (2019) revealed that China not only aimed to minimize the political risk from BRI member countries but also took remedial steps. For example, Boni and Adeney (2020) stated that a body of CPEC Authority, based on civil-military officials, was launched in the government of PTI with the purpose to expedite the progress of projects. Yigit (2019) added that the special security division (SSD) of different national forces was raised to control over security risks along the corridor. Boni and Adeney (2020) and Qureshi (2015) additionally revealed that China started to arrange Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) meetings intermittently on a single platform to resolve various inter-governmental concerns not limited to transparency, decentralization, route, project proposals, security, institutional legalities, and much more through open discussion. Many of the authors including (Boni & Adeney, 2020; Lei et al., 2019; Shah, 2018; Yigit, 2019) in their studies concluded that the political instability and governing weaknesses are the major obstacles against the economic corridor and national domains in Pakistan that may limit economic output to both countries.

CPEC and Economic Dimension

The CPEC is basically an economic corridor being built to gain the wide range of financial means (Zhang et al., 2018).
Several authors similarly commented that the CPEC directly would be giving positive economic rewards to both Pakistan as host-beneficiary and China as investor-beneficiary. Some of the authors (Javaid, 2016; Nazir, 2016; Sun et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018) highlighted the potential economic advantages to Pakistan in the form of generating electricity from prioritized renewable and non-renewable power plants through which a big number of industrial machines will be operational and also households, small and medium firms will be functional. This will hopefully satiate their dire demands by provision of required energy. Other authors (Alam et al., 2019; Irshad et al., 2015; Kanwal, Rasheed, et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018) pointed out the positive influence through the projects of transportation, communication, and infrastructure in Pakistan. These include construction of highways, motorways, building ports (dry, sea, and air), developing economic-industrial zones, and much more. Such projects are anticipated to offer many fruitful outputs such as, domestic and international access and connectivity, manufacturing, production, trading, servicing, and recreational activities. Whilst, Mehar (2017) referred that the FDI on various infrastructure developments have direct relation to contribute in local economy. Based on the speculations, author further predicted that the GDP of Pakistan would be increased by 3.5% annually with the help of entire energy and infrastructure projects.

While reviewing the studies, about four major economic advantages for China from CPEC have been found yet. First is energy security which Khetran & Saeed (2017) considered on top of the list because Sarkar et al. (2018) expressed that the CPEC route seemed safer for China’s energy imports than its existing shipping route of Malacca Straits. Second is trade flow through exports and imports which Alam et al. (2019) thought as important objective because China, compared with its oceanic route, would save USD 1,450 through each container between Kashgar and Gwadar to the Middle East and USD 1,350 between Kashgar and Gwadar to Europe. In terms of travel time, traders and shipments would save 21 days from European destinations and approximately 21 to 24 days from the Middle East. Third is mobility of employment and resources which Rahman and Shurong (2017) and Hussain (2016) believed as crucial aim. And, fourth is expansion of China’s state owned organizations and socioeconomic influence which Rahman and Shurong (2017) regarded as similarly one the main objectives with which China will strengthen its economy. Further, Rahman and Shurong (2017) and Hussain (2016) enlightened that the Xinjiang province is the supreme geographic junction for China which allows many transition activities of BRI projects. However, the province is neither as much developed as the remaining parts nor peaceful due to militancy. Therefore, the CPEC, along with China’s BRI projects, will develop and modernize Xinjiang Province and transform locals into beneficiary with the hope to decrease militancy and increase economy. But there were few factors that scholars (Hussain, 2016; Rahman & Shurong, 2017) pointed out as negative economic side effects for Pakistan from CPEC projects such as, debts burden, recovery difficulties, big increase in imports, and currents account deficits.

**CPEC and Social Dimension**

Pakistan community has suffered from unemployment, insecurity, power shortage, and old infrastructure. The new CPEC projects have started to reduce these problems by developing residents’ quality of life and employment in Pakistani (Kanwal, Pitafi, Ahmad, et al., 2019). Likewise, Menhas et al. (2019) argued that the CPEC and its infrastructure projects help develop Pakistan’s social standard and economic conditions. They suggested that the establishment of new economic centers, improvement in facilitation, and development of energy and transport will likely bring sustainability in Pakistan’s socioeconomic conditions and anticipating support in return. Based on social exchange theoretical phenomenon, Kanwal, Chong, et al. (2019) and Nazneen et al. (2019) further investigated inhabitants’ attitude and support for the development of CPEC roads concerning tourism and entertainment. They similarly determined that the self-benefit factor encourages locals to support the road projects of CPEC for various self-purposes, including improving the tourism sector that provides entertainment to locals and foreigners. Menhas et al. (2019) also added that the development of rural infrastructure in connection with cities would be a vital aspect of sustainable development.

With regards to China, Zhang et al. (2018) determined that the both societies of China and Pakistan through impressive energy and infrastructure grand projects can get many increasing benefits by the time. But, in specific to entrepreneurship promotional benefit to both societies, Shafi et al. (2019) stated that the Chinese investors have started businesses in Pakistan and Pakistani business community is stagnant in many areas including handicraft industry due to the existence of many alternative Chinese imported handicrafts in the local market. Therefore, the establishment of mutual relationships with designers, suppliers, and buyers could strengthen young creative firms of both sides.

**CPEC and Technological Dimension**

In 2016, China’s State Council announced about the digitalizing of BRI member countries under the 13th 5-year scheme. This initiative would encourage information technology (IT) enterprises to join the global online community (Menhas et al., 2019). Subsequently, the China–Pakistan Fiber Optic Project (CPFOP) was operationalized with the positive impact on both countries. Ali et al. (2019) explained that the CPFOP with the cost of USD 44 million and encompassing 800km would link Pakistan optionally with the world via China. Through the CPFOP, Pakistan can utilize various advantages, including innovative technology to
control terrorism and crimes through surveillance cameras, drones, and quadcopters. Regarding skills development program under CPEC (Faroqui & Aftab, 2018), China will bring its mastery of technical skills, such as big data applications, robotics, online systems, and artificial intelligence, to Pakistan. In terms of innovative technology, China already shared its expertise within the energy, transport, and communication infrastructure. This situation will lead to the soft skill improvement of local workers. Additionally, Ullah (2018) further found that the recent Chinese technology has upgraded Pakistan in terms of civil engineering through highway technology, energy through renewable technology, smart industrial technology, and robust transport infrastructure. The other proposed projects, including 27 SEZs, 29 industrial parks, 21 mineral zones, and agricultural development, will further advance Pakistan techno-industrial sector.

Materials and Methods

The study is based on both, primary and secondary materials, employing exploratory and descriptive research designs, supported by customized PEST evaluation model. Exploratory research is an appropriate method when supporting studies that are limited to draw results or clarify situations. Additionally, descriptive research design has been employed to assess factors and establish norms for the purpose of prediction (Greener & Martelli, 2018, pp. 52–53). For review of various studies, academic literature only from the year 2014 onward has been consulted for the purpose of this paper. Articles were collected from Google Scholar, Science Direct, JSTOR, ResearchGate, and Refseek online sources following the criteria of availability, relevancy, validity, and quality. Additionally, only the academic articles reflecting upon the concerned theoretical and empirical evidences and literature gap have been used as part of this study.

PEST Method

PEST is a framework commonly used to assess an organization’s external environment. It functions as a “satellite view,” wherein specific indirect outer conditions related to a firm may influence its position to create value (Ward & Rivani, 2005). PEST is useful for strategic management purposes to scan external environmental positive and negative forces (Kim & Ho, 2014). However, this primary approach can only identify a country’s PEST effect on a particular industry. This paper suggests a customized and context-specific PEST method (see Figure 2) as an innovation in the branch of social sciences. The proposed PEST model tentatively demonstrates the effects of CPEC vis a vis both positive and negative contributive changes on the country’s PEST environment. Figure 3 further portrays how some possible positive and negative reactive changes in PEST environment redirect to CPEC and BRI. By referring the study of (Huang, 2019) that considered similar logic of cross-impact between host and investor, the aforesaid innovative model has been designed solely for the purpose of this paper and whilst keeping at hand the pursuit of attending to a specific scenario within a rather broad picture.

To analyze the PEST environment under the effects of CPEC and security domains, we followed three-fold strategy. First, we included statistical indicators and ranking figures related to Pakistan’s environmental variables with the aim to highlight change-oriented results through comparative analysis. Subject to availability, datasets were acquired from the online databases of Global Economy, and Trading Economics sources based on 2013 or 2014 as pre-CPEC and 2017 onward as post-CPEC periods. Entire data, formulated in Table 1, was statistically produced and issued by renowned institutions, such as World Bank, Freedom House, Heritage Foundation, Swiss Institute of Technology, KPMG, World Economic Forum, Food and Agriculture Organization, U.S. Energy Information Administration, Fund for Peace, U.N., SIPRI, Institute for Economics and Peace, and World Happiness Report. Second, for the purpose of building a better argument using critical views, we included secondary literature evidence from popular, scholarly, professional sources along with statistical index datasets subjected to availability, relevancy, and authenticity. Third, we also included primary qualitative data in the form of in-depth insights, experiences, and expert views to uncover the insecurity determinants specifically, and CPEC along with PEST factors generally. Due to critical and sensitive nature of information concerned with restricted areas, we could collect the data samples from 14 different Pakistani and Chinese professionals working in Pakistan whose details, excluding their names, are given in Appendix. We obtained the data through interviews based on a semi-structured questionnaire using face-to-face and telephonic modes between May and December 2018. The participants belonged to CPEC, Chinese company, government security institutions, security firm, high court, academies, and social sector. We used a participatory code for each respondent as P1 to P14 so as to refer the participants with their respective codes in this study.

Results and Discussion

The futuristic plans of BRI have taken Pakistan and China closer to avail new opportunities through CPEC in the host environment (Huang, 2019). Its energy and infrastructure projects significantly have kept affecting the potential dimensions, that is, PEST of both Pakistan and China (Zhang et al., 2018). But the executive process of multiple projects has not only emerged some legal, institutional (Qureshi, 2015), economic, socio-cultural, political risks but also, in return, faced domestic and regional security and stability problems (Shah, 2018; Zhang et al., 2017). Table 1 suggests the changes and trends within the PEST variables right before and after the CPEC establishment so that the difference could be realized as a partial and indirect input by CPEC projects. Whereas,
Table 2 reflects recent data as progress made within CPEC projects impacting directly over host and guest economies.

**CPEC and Political Factors**

From BRI to CPEC, the whole process is originally driven by Chinese government that allowed other states to participate under political channel. Similarly, the case of CPEC is also based on mutual needs in which both political governments of Pakistan and China need to uplift each other in the situation of deep interdependency (Afridi & Khalid, 2016). Therefore, it becomes important to not only explore the impact of China’s CPEC within Pakistan’s federal and provincial government setup (Boni & Adeney, 2020) but also within the interactive role of Chinese government (Hameed, 2018).

**CPEC and Pakistan’s Political Involvement**

Pakistan and China’s relationship has deepened over the years. The bilateral relationship has cemented further through various cooperative initiatives such as CPEC, security, socioeconomic activities, and trade (Cai, 2017). In the words of director, Pakistan Institute of Management, the project is perceived positively by both the countries as possessing tremendous potential to ensure a wide array of development projects (P2, interview, May 29, 2018). CPEC has broadened Pakistan’s scope by revitalizing its geopolitical and strategic
relations with China, Russia, Afghanistan, Iran, and Central Asian states through trade and diplomatic cooperation. Additionally, it has brought national and provincial parties on one page regarding their support for CPEC and China for national interests (Ahmed, 2018). However, some commentators accuse the project for adding to the external debt. A senior management member of the Edhi Foundation (P4, interview, June 2, 2018) expressed his concerns as; “I think it will be exaggeration if one assumes CPEC as overall and permanent socioeconomic solution and prosperity of Pakistan. Previously, there were many grants, loans, and foreign investments which limitedly supported Pakistan’s domains but made the governments dependent at foreign aids rather being independent.”

Prior to CPEC, political governments of Pakistan were inconsistent and military regimes exercised power for longer periods, resulting in markedly long periods of political turmoil (Boni, 2016). Consequently, a kind of unattractive and uncertain environment emerged that pushed back country’s development, opined a legal expert at High Court (P6, interview, June 19, 2018). However, this determinant of inconsistency has sharply declined following 2008 due to the successful completion of two democratic tenures in the country. The present political ruling party, that is, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) rose as third major party to govern through center. Despite facing continuous unrest by opposition parties manifest in the form of worst intermittent protests, marches, and disagreements, neither the previous, nor the current government was dissolved and nor the military institution had to bypass them (Hussain, 2019; Javed, 2020).

Relatedly, military’s reasons to intervene could be many, for example, the support to increasing interdependency of Pakistan and China on CPEC through strong political channels, facilitating Pakistan and China’s leadership in resolving discrepancies between Pakistan’s provincial and central government over CPEC distribution, assisting on strengthening the country’s national institutions in balance with democratic political mainstream, attending to war on terrorism and militancy through development and handling complicated conditions on borders especially of Pakistan and India, stated by a research associate of peace and international relations (P9, interview, June 23, 2018). Such reforms reflect upon slight changes in the government sector that are evident in world indicators (WIs) with comparative results. For instance, the factor of “political stability” has moved and continues to move in a positive direction without any decline. The factor

**Figure 3.** Effect of the BRI–CPEC on local PEST dimensions with possible reactive effect in reversal direction. *Source.* Designed by the authors.
“rule of law” shows improved quality of law enforcement on property rights, contract enforcement, and police and court services, to provide better socioeconomic environment.

It can also be observed that since CPEC has come into existence, the Pakistani governments have tried to improve the business environment so that the FDI can be amplified in order to overcome the socioeconomic crisis that has been affecting the country’s economy for decades. For that, government’s continuous struggle to optimize business services is positively seen through determinants such as “investment freedom” with recent of 114th rank from previous 137th rank prior to the initiation of CPEC. Similarly, “ease of doing business” rank improved to being 108th rank from previous 136th rank by limiting restrictions, reducing “number of taxes” over businesses from 47 to 34 in 2019, and decreasing “corporate-tax rate” up to 30% from previous 34%. Furthermore, the act of launching CPEC authority shows a sign of civil-military cooperation to expedite related projects.

Table 1. Status of PEST Related Factors Before and After CPEC initiative.

| Nature of indicator                  | Pre-CPEC country’s rank/ index/year | Post-CPEC country’s rank/ index/year | Comparative observations                        |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Political stability (GE)              | 189/195 (−2.40)/2014               | 189/195 (−2.25)/2019                | Slight positive improvement                     |
| Government effectiveness (GE)         | 148/193 (−0.76)/2014               | 142/193 (−0.68)/2019                | Increased quality in various services           |
| Regulatory quality (GE)               | 138/193 (−0.68)/2014               | 138/193 (−0.64)/2019                | No change in regulatory policies               |
| Rule of law (GE)                      | 144/193 (−0.76)/2014               | 141/193 (−0.67)/2019                | Raised confidence on law enforcement           |
| Military spending/million$ (TE)       | $9,217/2014                        | $12,686/2018                        | On-going increase in security costs             |
| Control of corruption (GE)            | 148/193 (−0.83)/2014               | 150/193 (−0.85)/2019                | Increase in corrupt practices                   |
| Investment freedom (GE)               | 137/175 (40)/2014                  | 114/177 (55)/2019                   | Reduced burden and restrictions                 |
| Political globalization (GE)          | 42/195 (84.50)/2014                | 44/195 (85.05)/2017                 | Slight improvement                             |
| Number of taxes (GE)                  | 24/183 (47)/2014                   | 49/184 (34)/2019                    | Reduced no. of taxes                           |
| Corporate tax rate (GE)               | 13/128 (34)/2014                   | 34/159 (30)/2019                    | Reduced % rate                                  |
| Ease of doing business (TE)           | 136/190/2014                       | 108/190/2019                        | Progressive change                             |
| Economic globalization (GE)           | 168/185 (36.43)/2014               | 172/186 (34.01)/2017                | No change in economic flow and restrictions in trade |
| Economic growth%/ (GE)                | 58/188 (4.67)/2014                 | 33/180 (5.43)/2018                  | Increase in GDP                                |
| GDP per capita PPP (GE)               | 136/184 ($4.34)/2014               | 124/172 ($4.927)/2018               | Constant increase in PPP per capita            |
| Capital investment/billion$ (GE)      | 56/168 (35.76)/2014                | 40/118 (51.34)/2018                 | Increase in domestic capital investment         |
| Total external debt/million$ (TE)     | 60,000/2014                        | 108,000/2019                        | Historic increase of external public debts     |
| Employed individuals (TE)             | 56,520/2014                        | 61,710/2018                         | Increased number of employments                |
| Trade balance/billion$ (GE)           | −20.54/2014                        | −36.79/2018                         | Higher deficits                               |
| Business environment competitiveness (GE) | 129/143 (3.42)/2014               | 109/140 (5.10)/2019                 | Improved quality of competitive factors        |
| Forest area (% of T. land) (GE)       | 171/193 (2)/2014                   | 172/193 (1.9)/2016                  | Continuous reduction in forestry               |
| Agriculture land (% of T. land) (GE)  | 70/193 (47)/2014                   | 64/193 (47.79)/2016                 | Increased agricultural land                    |
| Electricity production billion kwh (GE)| 32/192 (103.25)/2014               | 32/190 (126.05)/2017                | Constant increase of production               |
| Electricity consumption billion kwh (GE)| 34/192 (86.07)/2014               | 33/190 (105.50)/2017                | Constant increase of consumption              |
| Solar electricity generation billion kwh (GE)| 33/151 (0.24)/2014               | 32/159 (0.89)/2017                  | Rapid progress in renewable energy            |
| Wind electricity generation billion kwh (GE)| 37/111 (0.80)/2014               | 34/119 (2.10)/2017                  | Rapid progress in renewable energy            |
| Happiness (GE)                        | 80/149 (5.29)/2013                 | 65/153 (5.65)/2019                  | Increased quality of life                      |
| Human development (GE)                | 149/185 (0.54)/2014                | 148/184 (0.56)/2018                 | Constant improving development factors         |
| Fragile state (GE)                    | 9/176 (103)/2014                   | 23/176 (94.20)/2019                 | Constant decline in risk and vulnerability     |
| Terrorism index (TE)                  | 9.07/2014                          | 7.54/2019                           | Constant decline in terrorism                  |
| Group grievance (GE)                  | 2/176 (10)/2014                    | 12/176 (9.40)/2019                  | Reduction in divisions and schism              |
| Demographics pressure (GE)            | 15/176 (8.80)/2014                 | 44/176 (7.80)/2019                  | Reducing complaints for necessities            |
| Railway infrastructure quality (GE)   | 72/104 (2.5)/2014                  | 47/101 (3.80)/2019                  | Rapid process of railway development           |
| Road infrastructure quality (GE)      | 75/143 (3.81)/2014                 | 70/141 (4.00)/2019                  | Rapid process of roads development             |
| Internet users (% of population) (GE) | 162/192 (12)/2014                  | 170/194 (15.51)/2017                | Increased users                                |
| Innovation (GE)                       | 134/143 (24)/2014                  | 105/129 (25.40)/2019                | Improving trend                               |
| Research & Development Costs (GE)     | 71/93 (0.29)/2013                   | 54/69 (0.24)/2017                   | Decreased R&D costs against % of total GDP    |

Source. GE refers to Global Economy and data was gathered from website of the Global Economy (GE).

https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Pakistan/; TE refers to Trading Economics, and data was gathered from website of the Trading Economics (TE).

https://tradingeconomics.com/pakistan/indicators.
Table 2. Summary of the Recent Progress of CPEC Projects.

| Opportunities | Descriptions | Observations |
|---------------|--------------|--------------|
| 21 Energy projects (coal, wind, solar, nuclear, and hydro) | Value ≥ $34bn, generation 16,400 mw | 7 projects completed, rest under process |
| 5 roads and 2 railways infrastructure projects | Value ≥ $11bn Roads with 966 km/Railway with 1,830 km | I project is completed, rest near to completion |
| 10 multiple Gwadar development projects | Value ≥ $01bn seaport, airport, roads, school, institute, industry, infrastructure, water-plants, and free trade zone | I is completed, 2 are 60% completed, 3 under process, and rest in initial phase |
| 2 projects of optical fiber cable and DTMB—TV | Value ≥ $37.4mn OFC 3G/4G 820 km, Value ≥ $4mn Digital Terrestrial Multimedia Broadcast DTMB | I project completed, 1 is process |
| 4 rail-based mass transit projects | Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar, Quetta | I completed, 1 feasibility completed, and 2 under study |
| 6 provincial multitype projects | Port development, link roads, water supply, and iron ore steel mills complex | Under study |
| 9 special economic zones (industrial) projects | 09 Zones confirmed in all provinces including FATA, GB, and Capital territory | At initial process |
| 4 social development projects | People to people exchange, knowledge transfer, Pakistan Academy of Social Sciences | At initial process |
| 6 Western route projects (motorway) | Hakla-D.I. Khan-Zhob-Quetta-Khuzdar-Surab-Hoshab-Turbat-Gwadar | 2 completed, 1 near to completion, and 3 under initial stages |
| Job opportunities (direct) | 75,000 locals have been employed | Figure from 22 different projects |
| Job opportunities (indirect) | Jobs in support service industries (raw material process, cargo-transport, manufacturing, and catering) | Externally created jobs in support of CPEC projects |

Source: CPEC official websites: (1) http://cpec.gov.pk/progress-update. (2) http://cpecinfo.com/gwadar-port-city-1/. (3) http://www.pakistan-china.com/wb-pci-pci/demo/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/cpec-1.pdf.

Towards completion in coordination with the institutions (Ahmed, 2018). Given the emphasis on transparency, the government has shown a positive impact on local environment (Ayla, 2018).

In response to the argument regarding priority treatment for CPEC projects and routes in the favor of Punjab and Sindh provinces during its initial phase, it is clarified that the final decision to follow the eastern route rather than western one was determined based on the security conditions, technology choice, distance, and geo-feasibility by different experts of geography, security, and civil engineering sectors (Malik, 2015). And later, rest of the provinces and regions were redressed through equal disparities (Boni & Adeney, 2020). Regarding previous PTI accusations over CPEC, the new prime minister clarified that his objection was raised only against the ex-PM’s non-transparent deals but not China (Elmer, 2018).

CPEC and China’s Political Interaction

The global powers have remained interested in Pakistan due to its geographically ideal location, natural sources, valuable minerals, and strategic usefulness in Asia. With the BRI strategy, China similarly has been growing its political interaction with Pakistan’s governmental stakeholders (P4). With the pace of time, some critics raised their concerns against the joint CPEC project run by the Chinese and Pakistani governments. For example, hasty project operations, favoritism, misappropriations, unequal distribution of resources, ignorance of legal regulations, hurdles through public administrative requirements, and quitting proposed western route of corridor were raised as serious allegations against the multi-billion-dollar development project (Shah, 2018).

Though, government stakeholders from Pakistani side took these issues as a normal part of international projects and expected these issues to be reconciled shortly. And it happened so, when China responded to these discrepancies among Pakistan’s provincial and federal stakeholders by bringing them on one platform in China and resultantly revised the projects under provincial and regional SEZs whilst assuring them with maximum dividend distribution through the announcement of capital-based new projects within the umbrella of CPEC. This addressed their grievances for the project with a positive impression. Eventually the Chinese political government was positively accepted as a neutral cooperative partner (Ahmed, 2018; Hussain, 2019).

Chinese government, through its political initiatives has already started developing its far western Xinjiang province with the aim to reduce the ethnic militancy influence and engage locals in socioeconomic opportunities through BRI corridor routes (Hameed, 2018). Whereas on the Pakistani side China, for CPEC stability, has been demanding Pakistan’s political and military cooperation to overcome insurgencies against China–Pakistan joint economic interests especially in Balochistan province (Shah, 2016). This grand political interaction has resulted in two conditions. First, it
has reduced the physical attacks in the region allowing safe working environment with a positive impact upon both, Pakistan and China. And secondly, both political leaders have reached on one page against the CPEC opposition claimed by different militant groups including Baloch separatists under the support of India has become a growing challenge for China and Pakistan governments and their joint CPEC investments (Ahmed, 2018).

**CPEC and Economic Factors**

CPEC is seen as a potentially beneficial project because the endeavor intended to build industrial zones followed by creating more jobs and business opportunities (P2). Many of the projects listed under CPEC are under construction and both countries will reap its benefits, said a Chinese administration officer of China Harbor Engineering Company (P14, interview, December 1, 2018). The project’s potential is expected to include more countries especially neighboring states, opined a Chinese safety & security manager of Anton Oilfield Services Group (P12, interview, November 13, 2018). Table 2 shows how Chinese FDI is enhancing economic features.

**CPEC and Pakistan’s Economic Dependency**

CPEC is generally recognized as a rightful initiative that is believed to contribute to the Pakistani economy for a much longer term than any other development projects in the past (P6). Chinese ambassador Sun Weidong has said that CPEC energy projects are diminishing electricity shortage, providing trade opportunities and jobs, reducing oil bills, supporting transportation infrastructure, and growing GDP to cater to the high population needs (Menhas et al., 2019). In similar vein, recent figures presented in Table 2 reflect upon increased electricity from 7 out of 21 energy projects (see economic indicators in Table 1). China’s support in the form of CPEC investments over energy and transport is seen as a courageous and trusted partner gesture in Pakistan (P6, P8). Since Pakistan’s decision to sign this multimillion-dollar deal with China, rival powers started to malign CPEC by calling it as a debt trap, corruption, and negative impact of coal energy plants. In order to effectively attend to any environmental concerns, Pakistan began spending huge funds over wind and solar sources, planting trees and introducing electric automobiles as significant support to green development endeavors intended to build industrial zones followed by creating more jobs and business opportunities (P2). Many of the projects listed under CPEC are under construction and both countries will reap its benefits, said a Chinese administration officer of China Harbor Engineering Company (P14, interview, December 1, 2018). The project’s potential is expected to include more countries especially neighboring states, opined a Chinese safety & security manager of Anton Oilfield Services Group (P12, interview, November 13, 2018). Table 2 shows how Chinese FDI is enhancing economic features.

Hence, incomplete projects have given direct and indirect jobs and contracts to locals. Developed transportation system has significantly benefited logistical companies. Smooth and short ways have reduced travel time and expenses (Ali, 2018).

In contrast, CPEC also has found to surge challenging effects on Pakistan’s economy by growing external public debts and causing greater deficits (see Table 1). According to the State Bank of Pakistan, country’s foreign reserves have reached disparagingly low up to US$106 billion up until 2019 due to debt finance and import activities including imports for CPEC projects (Tariq, 2019). So far, few countries and international financial establishments have interfered into Pakistan’s domestic policies and decisions because country has been owing more than US$ 100 billion to them in the form of loans and grants. This has weakened country’s government and institutions but, in case of China’s loans, the Pakistani government needs to adopt a well-organized strategic repayment (P4). To clarify such concerns, planning minister of Pakistan (Asad Umer) admitted the debt crisis reality. The country only owes $18 billion to China through CPEC which is less than 10% of country’s overall liabilities based on 2.34% interest rate with 20 years repayment maturity period (Sherani, 2019).

Between 2001 and 2017, Pakistan spent US$ 123.13 billion on “War-on-Terror” (Ministry of Finance-GoP, 2017). Human and infrastructural damage committed by militants and terrorists are repeated national socioeconomic losses (Syed, 2020). Therefore, government is seen spending more on military and defense budgets. WIs similarly witness a continuous swelling trend of spending on security by the government. But, in relation to threats to CPEC, government raised two SSD force groups, one for north-route and other for south-route, to warrant the safety of CPEC workers and projects. The enormous upkeep disbursements of both SSDs are being borne by country’s entire electricity consumers as an added burden (Rana, 2016) and imposing heavy tax tolls on public transport for using highways and motorways is another burden (Pakistan Today, 2019). Unfortunately, the ruling parties neither stabilized country’s economic system nor produced revenue to get rid of dependency. Ultimately the poor is burdened with a lot of taxes and inflation rather than rich class people who manage to escape from paying taxes (P4).

**CPEC and China’s Economic Debottlenecking**

CPEC is the most important part of China’s BRI strategy. China does not want to hinder its energy import process through pirate-hovered Malacca Strait and contested oceanic areas near Indonesia, Taiwan, Phillipine, Vietnam, and India where China’s ships can be pushed to travel additional 500 miles (Chowdhary, 2015). Corridor is a transit route for China and its construction has been consuming China’s many products and services including excessive cement,
steel, flat glass, aluminum, high skill workers, and other services (Rahman & Shurong, 2017).

CPEC is helping China to recover its early Silk Route that went through Asia Minot, sub-continent of India, Rome, Greece, Britain, and Africa. Apart from commercial objective, the prime value of the Silk Route is to exchange different cultures, architecture, science, and technology which may take different nations close to acceptance and peace (Alam et al., 2019). Economists believe that multiple CPEC projects would enhance Chinese companies through FDIs (Rahman & Shurong, 2017). As a plus point, China’s western Xinjiang province alone touches eight international borders, that is, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Mongolia, and Russia. Thus, CPEC contributes in China’s western development strategy for Xinjiang, Qinghai, and Tibet (Malhotra, 2015). Xinjiang government has recently experienced to receive 10% cheaper sea food from Gwadar port only in 10 days with the help of CPEC route and now has decided to progress transport network between Pakistan and China under the investment of US$ 24.72 billion which will enhance Xinjiang’s economics through exports and imports with Central and South Asian markets (Jingjing, 2017).

**CPEC and Sociocultural Factors**

The impacts of CPEC are believed to remain on the societies of both Pakistan and China for a long time because the ongoing and proposed projects are of very futuristic nature. These projects are supposed to not only uplift socio-cultural domains of both countries but also extend interaction between both communities by offering socioeconomic development opportunities. Thus, it prompts to find the kind of influence, complexities, and risks regarding communal project and host and guest cultures so that the related information as roadmap may guide stakeholders accordingly (Sun et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018).

**CPEC and Pakistan’s Sociocultural Uplift and Integration**

In Pakistan, societies have been facing backwardness in several ways; deprived lifestyle, obsolete infrastructure, rare utility facilities, low income with less savings, and redundancy (Kanwal, Pitafi, Ahmad, et al., 2019). In such circumstances, the study of Shafi et al., (2019) gives an ideal insinuation that can be utilized through CPEC. For instance, the ongoing Chinese influx through CPEC will knowingly motivate and enable Pakistani manpower through knowledge sharing by Chinese experts that will transform the leadership style of Pakistani employees of information technology industry. Chinese technological collaboration will not only support employee creativity but will also diversify Pakistan’s local software industry having positive impact upon society and economy. In addition, CPEC-based infrastructural development has shown a positive and significant impact to improve quality of communities’ lives with the help of various existing and forthcoming developmental projects (Kanwal, Pitafi, Ahmad, et al., 2019). But, the development of transportation infrastructure and ports cannot pledge to alter society into recipient through CPEC influence. Until and unless the government links a vast number of Pakistan’s rural population with mainstream routes. Integration among the Chinese technical methods and Pakistani rural areas will also have a greater impact on Pakistan’s micro and macro economy with GDP growth, argued by an ex-bureaucrat and senior analyst (Maqbool, 2019).

So far, the Chinese government has introduced several cultural programs in Pakistan. In return, Pakistan also cooperated with China. Pakistan initiated teaching of Chinese language in Pakistani schools and launched various academic and entertainment projects such as Pak-China Institute, Confucius Institute, Chinese Cultural Center, Joint Research Centers, CCTV News Channel, International Documentary Channel, Pak-China Radio Channel, Chinese scholarships, and youth exchange programs (Ibrar et al., 2016). In addition, development of electricity power plants, industries, and transport infrastructure have offered new employments, ease of access, income growth, and economic engagement to local residents on one side (Kanwal, Pitafi, Rasheed, et al., 2019). As, WIs show the well-matched results through improved trends in “happiness” and “human development” in recent years. And, constant decline in “fragility and terrorism” which combinedly have decreased the frustration from society side (see social indicators in Table 1).

Balouchistan is geographically the largest and resource-rich province of Pakistan. The province possesses variety of valuable minerals and a port-city of Gwadar that make it far-superior. The fact that the locals, living in remote areas, have been experiencing deprivation, poverty, backwardness, and dominancy by ethno-tribal sardars (chiefs) and federation (P6). Apart from majority of Balochistan people, a very little number of people has gone through brainwashing process by their tribal chiefs against federation and national elite forces. Which led them to join separatist and sectarian groups, shared by ex-deputy superintendent police (P7, interview, June 20, 2018). It was contextualized that the authoritative negligence creates various classes among society and lead many towards demotivation process. As Johan Galtung’s theory of violence says that violence is created, it is not built-in function in society. Therefore, subsequent issues including terrorism cannot be controlled without the help of military force (P9). Because of the existence of crucial part of CPEC in Balochistan, it is imperative to include most of Balochistan’s populated areas into CPEC route (P6).
**CPEC and China’s Sociocultural Variance and Expansion**

CPEC is believed to be a helping hand to reduce cleavages among Uygur community and government stakeholders (Cai, 2017). This will be done through building import and export zones, cross-border socioeconomic activities, industries, logistics, transport network which will provide locals with jobs, income, and integrated living with other Chinese (Kanwal, Pitafi, Ahmad, et al., 2019). Thus, CPEC has been providing Chinese nationals with more employments and fair returns. With this, Chinese expatriates will be enhancing their personal and professional learning and development (Zhang et al., 2018). Also many more Chinese visitors have been exploring Pakistan’s various domains including society, culture, tourism places, business markets, and industries. This is giving more opportunities, entertainment, and social well being for both countries.

Some Chinese workers expressed their difficulties in Pakistani environment. One revealed that the Pakistani people are always considerate towards foreigners. Co-workers and security forces always help us to get accommodated and assisted greatly (P10). Another Chinese manager of Anton Oilfield Services Group (P12, interview, November 13, 2018) said, “we feel functional difficulties while working in areas away from towns because the communities live around project area are not educated enough to understand our matters that creates social gap and seems difficult” (P12). But because of security risks, we have no social life except job work, stated by Chinese professionals of China Harbor Engineering Co. (P13, P14) and we are restricted from self tours and outings (P10, P11, P13). Workload, socially limited, and strict security caused foreigners with discomfort (P10, P13, P14). Language is a big barrier between us (P10). Many of us cannot speak English and Pakistani locals also cannot speak Chinese with us (P10, P11, P12, P14). Weak communication can be considered as a cause of task delays and security risk (P11, P12, P14). To create a well balanced cross-cultural environment, both governments should invest to upgrade sociocultural areas (P10, P14), both cultures and values should be instructed to all workers (P14), and foreigners must be educated about socio-cultural risks and protective measures to avoid damages (P10, P11, P12).

**CPEC and Techno-Industrial Factors**

Pakistan, being one of the nuclear-atomic powers, still lags behind in industrial and technological spheres. But China, being “All-weather friend” of Pakistan, seems to add more technological value in the main fields in Pakistan, that is, energy and transport infrastructure, agriculture, industries, security, and technology transfer. The fact that China is not only known as a second-largest economy in the world but the country is also the biggest raising power in the filed of innovative technology, science, and research and development. Because Pakistan calls China as “Time-tested partner” therefore through CPEC potentials there are more technology-based opportunities and implications for host country (Baig, 2019).

**CPEC and Pakistan’s Techno-Industrial Transformation**

In Pakistan, unmanaged and uncontrolled traffic system (P12), old infrastructure with limited road access (P12, P14), back dated technical system and unavailability of town surveillance have caused many risks and threats (P14), and also made the country lose its GDP more than 6% yearly before CPEC (Alam et al., 2019). In reality, Pakistan is facing backwardness in science, technology, and innovation (ST&I), research and development (R&D) but, same time, China is excelling in artificial intelligence and many other various fields including quantum computing. Therefore, Pakistan needs to move in similar directions (Baig, 2019). With CPEC, Chinese firms have contributed heavily with standard technology in the field of highways, motorways, railways, ports, renewable energy plants on solar and wind projects (Ayla, 2018; Ullah, 2018).

WIs (see Table 1) for technology indicators show rapid technological transformation of energy and transportation sectors. Domestic “railways quality” takes Pakistan on 47th from previous 72nd pre-CPEC rank. “Road quality” brings national rank on 70th from previous 75th rank. Pakistan has advantage to utilize the fourth revolutionary industrial technology through China’s Huawei, 5G products, and big data (Haq, 2019). Regarding the use of security technology by Chinese companies in Pakistan, Chinese employees said that there were not sufficient security measures, extra security tools and technology except some traditional tools (P10–P14). Therefore, it is necessary for both government and Chinese companies to invest in installing town surveillance system to control criminal and terrorist activities (P14). According to a report, Pakistan is willing to advance its military technology through China’s advanced technology for improving protective mechanism of Pakistan (Dawn News, 2020).

The change in the development of technology innovation has uplifted e-commerce in Pakistan because, in 2018, Alibaba group purchased Daraz.pk, a biggest e-commerce portal, of Pakistan. Devin Wenig (eBay chief executive) at World Economic Forum in 2017, expressed Pakistan as the fastest growing e-business markets of the world (Ayla, 2018). As a result, 15.51 percentage of total population has increased “internet use” as compare to previous 12 percentage and “innovation” ranks country on 105th from previous 134th position. Moreover, the new fiber optic cable project is expected to protect the communication route and privacy of both countries by joining it with Asian-European-Chinese network which will secure country from interruptions in its communication lines of international under-water cable network (Ali et al., 2019).
CPEC and China’s Techno-Industrial Utilization

During recent years, Chinese technology has been observed transferring to Pakistan’s other small level factories, shops, offices, and households. Rapid innovative products are facilitating businesses and daily lives of people but also encouraging domestic industry to incorporate with Chinese technology producing industries (Ayla, 2018). A Chinese employee on CPEC project expressed that, “technology transfer is needed at our projects in Karachi and Gwadar to maximize operational output within its due course of time. But such import process takes at least 1 month and it is also associated with installation and maintenance challenges” (P14). Similarly, a lecturer whose job is related to technology field told that, “our industrial environment have used European and western technology across Pakistan, but recent flow of Chinese technology is replacing Pakistan’s previous trends and even Chinese technology is cheap and effective but, comparatively, a bit difficult in application for our engineers due to technical and language difference” (P8, interview, June 21, 2018).

Regarding the use of operational and security control technology within CPEC projects, a Chinese employee revealed that, “our company has modified the quality of our operational facility. And, we are considering to buy and install smart security tools and applications including latest surveillance and face recognition detectors from China in order to ensure both project functions and protection of entire assets” (P14). But, technology expert said that, “current world is experiencing solutions through sophisticated modern technology but also facing modified terrorism trend in parallel. Therefore, for security technology companies, it has been a complicated task to guarantee an organization with a promising secured environment due to emerging uncertain intrusions” (P8). Thus, China, through its hard-earned advanced fields, will be having distinctive value and practical exposure to needy countries including Pakistan.

CPEC and Security Challenges

Security risk has been perceived highly adverse for the construction of CPEC on which both China and Pakistan depend devastatingly (Zhang et al., 2018). We illustrate security challenges in CPEC from two perspectives: (1) CPEC and Pakistan’s security overview and (2) CPEC and China’s security concerns and perceptions.

CPEC and Pakistan’s Security Overview

In Pakistan, terrorists are classified as militants, separatists, and sectarian activists, who have been targeting masses with the aim to create domestic instability and discourage foreign investments, stated by an officer of Pakistan Air Force (P3, interview, June 1, 2018). These terrorists are mainly using the platforms of BLA and TTP groups (Elmer, 2019). Hence, Pakistan has Shouldered huge economic and human losses due to “War-on-Terror” (Zeb & Ahmed, 2019), and since 9/11, more than 60,000 innocent humans have lost their lives (Sabri, 2017).

CPEC initiation has resulted in a big increase of foreign enterprises in Pakistan. As of 2017, Gwadar Real Estate (2017) notified that there were 750 Chinese companies, and about 60,000 Chinese nationals used to reside in Pakistan excluding temporary visitors (Afshan, 2018). In Gwadar, a separate town is planned to accommodate 500,000 Chinese professionals till 2022 (Brewster, 2018). Their security provision would not only be a top priority but also a challenge for security agencies. Because, recent attacks, by BLA over Chinese consulate in Karachi and Pearl Continental hotel Gwadar during 2018 and 2019 respectively, increased security challenges for Chinese enterprises (Elmer, 2019). Du Youkang (Director of Pakistan Research Center at Fudan University Shanghai) revealed that the Chinese enterprises were already informed about threats and to remain cooperative with security agencies. Director further said “Security issues are factored into contracts for projects in Pakistan, and are part of the cost of doing business. Of course, these costs would be lower in other countries that are safer, but costs definitely go up in places where terrorist attacks are more frequent” (Elmer, 2019).

Realizing such conditions Pakistan government already provided more than 12,000 well trained SSD to protect 8,112 Chinese staff engaged on 210 projects over long route of 3,000 km (Zahid, 2015) for securing and witnessing rapid prosperity (P3). The occurrence of attacks has been controlled greatly by national forces (P1, P3, P6, P7, P9). Therefore, WIs resemble positive results of Pakistan for “state-fragility” factor indicating recently international rank on 23rd from previous 9th number, and for “terrorism activities” factor showing Pakistan on 7.54 lowered point from previous 9.07.

But security forces are still in high demand due to repeated insurgencies since last three decades and government cannot provide more forces to protect private businesses. Therefore, our firm fulfills security needs of private firms, local VIPs, and foreigners through providing them forces, shared by a manager of a private security firm (P1, interview, May 29, 2018). Yet, security threats are not over and our soldiers are devotedly protecting country’s assets including CPEC from domestic TTP and BLA on western border along with Afghanistan and Iran respectively (P3). There are also some other security risks, reasons, and weaknesses which should be identified. For example, a senior motorway police officer (P5, interview, June 18, 2018) shared that, “the roads, other than motorway system, are poor in quality and there have no patrolling police, traffic controllers, signs, and emergency management units which cause problems for communities and projects. Whereas, our motorway police system has contrarily not only helped vanish the road crimes but also decreased the road accidents by 80%.” This indicates that
new transportation including CPEC roads, is helping reduce number of accidents, criminal activities, and terrorist attacks in Pakistan. Moreover, ineffective and overwhelmed forces, obsolete monitoring technology, unavailability of city and town surveillance network, and old crime controlling methods are proved as weaknesses of police institution (P8).

CPEC and China’s Security Concerns and Perceptions

Since CPEC is booming, there have been terrorism attacks by militant groups over Chinese enterprises and manpower with the aim to destabilize CPEC and China–Pakistan relations. The necessity of protective measures in Chinese companies is becoming an essential part of their practice and policy making (P2). During interview, the Chinese professionals shared that before coming to Pakistan, they were knowing that some of Chinese workers were previously targeted, kidnapped, harassed, and killed (P13, P14). And, one revealed that their project in Gwadar had to face delays due to threats (P14). They told that they have been comfortable within the project sites and residencies because of being protected by government’s security forces together with company’s own security measures (P10, P11, P13, P14). But, “we feel risky when moving outside during political, social, and religious events,” said two of them (P10, P11).

They further shared that while observing outside culture, “we saw people carrying weapons with them as defensive support which revealed the impression of harassment in public. In order to create environment peaceful, government should apply restrictions over public on not to expose any weapon in public and entire weapons should be collected back” (P13, P14). The last thing which they shared was that they had very little knowledge about sociocultural risks, different kinds of outer threats, external issues, religious sensitivities, reasons behind differences, lack of counter-terrorism trainings, improper knowledge on disaster management and risk reduction process, and lack of using protective measures. This may increase security risks and lead to negative impression over security mechanism followed by Chinese companies and ultimately consequent incidents may hinder new investments.

Implications

Policy Implications

China’s role through JCC meeting to convince center and provincial government representatives on distribution of CPEC projects equally, remained positive in reduction of disagreements between political parties. Such an action is continuously needed to not only increase China’s credibility in Pakistan but also take domestic politicians closer for diminishing conflicts (Ahmed, 2018). China, India, and Pakistan are in warlike situation due to territorial issues, therefore, the role of CPEC can be a possible resolving effort if India conceives the true impact of CPEC for regional prosperity (P3). This will surely reduce regional aggression, security costs, polarization, but raise regional peace and sustainability (P2, P3; Sial, 2014). CPEC may encounter domestic socio-environmental risks due to excessive traffic and pollution, deforestation, cultural mix, and security threats (Zhang et al., 2017, 2018). Therefore, both governments should take urgent initiatives to increase forests (Huang, 2019), protect heritage, and invest in health-oriented activities for locals to raise trust and loyalty toward China–Pakistan cooperation (Kanwal, Pitafi, et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2018). Moreover, heavy tax tolls on public transportation, and expensive and interrupted electricity supply are not only burdens on income deficient public but also create bad image of CPEC projects. Therefore, government needs to reduce the costs of toll taxes and electricity and also ensure uninterrupted power supply to avoid criticism leading to opposition (Khawar, 2018; Pakistan Today, 2019). To get out of import and trade deficits, Pakistan, using CPEC instrument, can enhance its industries to not only satisfy national import needs but also export the excessive goods which will balance current account, grow tax revenue, and motivate local production and buying (Masood et al., 2016). To create own goodwill and be independent in technology, it is crucial for Pakistan to motivate public and private sectors to invest in the IT, R&D, and innovation bringing sectors to create Pakistan’s own identity in the field of technology by promoting IT environment and creating IT parks (Baig, 2019; Haq, 2019). Majority of Pakistan’s population is associated with agriculture sector which is in backward position (Maqbool, 2019), Pakistan needs to initiate a project by which barren, less productive, and infected lands should be cultivated to increase the output and income of communities (Kanwal, Pitafi, et al., 2020).

Practical Security Implications

Security plays a vital role in the sustainability of a country’s micro and macro environmental indicators. Without peace, a country would face serious social, cultural, economic, industrial, and political problems (ACPO U.K., 2014). Therefore, Pakistan should advance its security mechanism to overcome terrorism and provide peaceful environment to foreigners (P9). Unemployment, poor facilities, poverty, injustice, and illiteracy may lead communities to wrong doings (P6). Through Chinese companies, CPEC may eliminate grievances of communities by delivering facilities to inhabitants within the scope of corporate social responsibility (CSR), and recruit inhabitants on security and CSR jobs to gain their loyalty and protection. Since Pakistan is internationalizing through CPEC, the expose of weapons publicly gives an impression of harassment and insecurity. Therefore, high authorities need to stop weaponry use except national forces.
To avoid fatal incidents, Chinese companies must cooperate with domestic forces in counterterrorism, by increasing employee awareness (Elmer, 2019), enhancing sociocultural knowledge, improving workers’ behavioral practice, and obeying security protocols (Zhiqin & Yang, 2016). But such procedures have been found lengthy by Chinese workforces due to completing their job within limited time. Therefore, security authorities need to simplify respective procedures to save the time and energy of employees (P10, P14). Rapid and clear communication is always required on work sites, but many Pakistani and Chinese workforces cannot communicate which can be risky (P10, P11, P12, P13). This gives an opportunity to China’s technology industry to develop any cheap multilingual real-time portable offline translator to increase the effectiveness of BRI projects (P8).

**Conclusion**

CPEC has been seen as casting both positive and negative effects on Pakistan. The issues except security threats, that is, inter-governmental demands, institutional concerns, civil-military misunderstanding, and ethnic reservations, have been considered as controllable and negotiable by Pakistani government. Findings discovered the positive changes in Pakistan’s key aspects from political integration to socioeconomic transformation, and from unifying societies to advancing technology. But, China’s prime purpose of energy imports and goods exports through CPEC is still far-away, however, industries, enterprises, and manpower of China are being benefited. Statistics also confirmed that the CPEC, with some extent, positively has contributed Pakistan’s various indicators, that is, energy and transport infrastructure, technology transfer, investments, business environment, and socioeconomic growth and satisfaction. Contrarily, results also showed a continuous negative trend in the indicators of political violence, corruption, security costs and threats, electricity cost and supply, debts, imports, and forestry. Moreover, opposition, trust-deficit, and attacks against CPEC are yet unchanged factors. Thus, study argues that if negative impact factors are recognized for elimination, the CPEC as a result will improve the both host and investor environments with promised socioeconomic advantages, and minimize challenges including terrorism.

**Appendix**

**List of Interviewees**

| Name   | Profession and organization                      | Interview date |
|--------|--------------------------------------------------|----------------|
| P1     | Manager, National Police Foundation, Karachi     | 29 May 2018    |
| P2     | Director, Pakistan Institute of Management, Karachi | 29 May 2018    |
| P3     | Squad Cadre, Pakistan Air Force, Karachi         | 1 June 2018    |
| P4     | Chairman, Edhi Foundation, Karachi               | 2 June 2018    |
| P5     | Officer, Motorway Police, Hyderabad              | 18 June 2018   |
| P6     | Advocate, High Court, Karachi                    | 19 June 2018   |
| P7     | Ex-Deputy Superintendent Police, Hyderabad       | 20 June 2018   |
| P8     | Lecturer (Information & Technology), University of Sindh, Jamshoro | 21 June 2018 |
| P9     | Lecturer (Peace & Conflict Studies), University of Sindh, Jamshoro | 23 June 2018 |
| P10    | Manager, Anton Oilfield Services Group, Karachi  | 02 November 2018 |
| P11    | HR Manager, Anton Oilfield Services Group, Karachi | 06 November 2018 |
| P12    | Security & Safety Officer, Anton Oilfield Services Group, Badin | 13 November 2018 |
| P13    | Engineer, China Harbor Engr. Co. Karachi/Gwadar | 13 November 2018 |
| P14    | Administration Officer, China Harbor Engr. Co. Karachi/Gwadar | 1 December 2018 |

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