

Belt and Road Initiative: Regional and Global Dimensions

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to explore the regional significance and global dimensions of the Chinese President Xi Jin Ping's vision and initiative regarding Belt and Road which can transform adjacent countries like Afghanistan, Central Asian Republican States (CARS), India, Iran, Nepal and Pakistan into a real economic hub in coming time. Belt and road initiative is a mega project which includes; massive road connectivity, geographical linkages, rail and road transportation system, people to people contacts, development of understanding through cultural, academic, business and professional exchanges for the progress and prosperity of this vast region. In fact, the initiative of China Pakistan Economic Corridor is one of the mega projects which focuses; the creation of new regional connectivity through Gwadar Sea Port, giving direct access to Chinese goods from Kashgar (China) towards Gwadar (Pakistan). Hence, this development of faster infrastructure of rail, roads, towards maritime transportation and communication is an important project which can connect the countries of the area like Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Central Asia as well as Iran. Thus, the Gwadar Port will connect China, Russia, Middle East, Central Asia and South East Asia. The OBOR and CPEC are a burning issue and much debated topic in today's Pakistan and world at large. In Pakistan mostly people believe that the CPEC will be a major source of economic development, peace and prosperity. On the one hand, US and India nexus, is trying to develop negative image about the project of CPEC by creating the impression of another colonial domination on the Pakistan territory in the form of Chinese presence. India is making all efforts, to sabotage and to damage the credibility of the CPEC project. This paper by delving and investigating the OBOR and CPEC connections will try to encapsulate the regional importance, dimensions of the project of Belt and Road initiative.

Keywords: Indian Ocean; CPEC, Gwadar, China, Central Asian Republics (CARs)

Introduction

The geographical environment, shorter route access has been helpful and desirable for the rapid progress, prosperity and economic growth of human society and the most important element so far is considered 'Sea' which in habits almost three quarters of the exterior of earth and also plays a pivotal role for the regional and global trade (Kalim, 2016). Human civilizations always achieve exuberance and profuse growth along waterways universally. The channels have been used as being trading routes since long times have further heightened the importance of trade carried out over the oceans, rivers and inland waterways. In the contemporary geo-strategic and geo-

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economics state of affairs, the importance of the sea harbors cannot be overlooked in global economic structures (Mir, 2013). Therefore, the Sea anchorages provide a key link to a country with the external world. Obviously, the Sea ports constitute an obligatory center of commercial activity and can provide an extensive intensification to the economy of the state. The oceans and sea represent a dynamic part in shipping of transport as well as global scheme of trade (Malik, 2012).

Throughout the modern human civilization, oceanic and sea routes always remained a chief pool of natural resources and has been offering abundant prospects for the amelioration of national interests. Oceans can be a link of connection and responsible for entrance to the core of the outer world and Pakistan is lucky to have two important ports of the world and one is the Gwadar port. Historically, Gwadar port, being a fishing town is located in the Baluchistan on the opening of the Gulf of Oman, consequently, has been one of the key routes of the maritime communications between the regions of the Middle East and India and Far East. Therefore, Gwadar port, because of its 'warm water', has been of immense importance for Greeks, the Arabs, the Portuguese, the Persians, the Russians and the British in different periods of history. The port of Gwadar is famous for its location, existence and as a hub to provide regional connectivity. This sea port, on the major global energy routes of Strait of Hormuz, provides a direct passage to the Arabian Sea and also situated at adjacent route of Iranian Seaports of Chahbahar and Bander Abbas (Kalim, 2016).

After having a geological survey in collaboration with United States Geological Survey (USGS) in 1954, Pakistan decided to purchase in the return for a cash payment of 3 million Pounds Sterling from Oman on 7th September 1958. Subsequently, it was merged into the territory of Pakistan during the tenure of Feroz Khan Noon. It brought to an end of Oman's end over 200 years of Omani control of the enclave (Rodeni, 1997) In 1964, for the first time, it was decided to launch a seaport at Gwadar but due to indecisive circumstance, it was not carried out. (Husain: 20116) The region was incorporated within the province of Baluchistan on 1st July 1977. The decision regarding the establishment of Gwadar seaport was undertaken in 1991 and no work was initiated upto 2002 (Ali, 2013). At that critical juncture, China came forward with the required resources for the building the sea port. During the period of 1988-1992, a slight harbor was built at Gwadar, later, the task of construction was assigned to the Chinese company in 2002 which accomplished the completion of the 1st phase in 2006 (Haider, 2009). An agreement was signed with China in 2001 for its participation in the construction and enlargement of the deep seaport project. In 2008, the first shipping vessel anchored at the Gwadar harbor, carrying food grains from Canada to Pakistan. "Post Glory" being the first commercial shipment anchored at the seaport of Gwadar. Now the Civil Aviation Authority was allotted 3000 acres of land for the construction of Gwadar International Airport (Hussain, 2016). This mega plan encompassed many other sub-projects for the development of Gwadar seaport including transportation routes, production units capable of producing over 12,500 tons 'raw copper' daily, power generation units and railway lines, etc. (Daily Times, 2013).

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Theoretical framework

Joseph Nye maintains that there are three foremost soft dominance outlines: culture, political values, and foreign policy (Joseph, 2014). China is pursuing through its Belt and Road Initiative the Soft Power model suggested by political scientists to achieve its goals

As an honest evaluation, in case an aid was prearranged without any interactions captivating. As an exemplification, numerous industrialized lands, incorporating the Washington, London, and Beijing, provided scholarships to get education in the patron land (Li, 2009). Though, the benefactor management habitually does not necessitate or inquire scholars to perform any service in benefit. Nonetheless the sponsor authority does not test to affiliate with them. Indeed such tendencies fetch a constructive persona of the subscriber state to the beneficiary.

However, there are other theories that can help us understand the dynamics of the rise of China as second economic power.

Kenneth Waltz, the originator of theory of Neo-Realism, argues to accommodate security in a self-improvement framework. The subsequent Balance of Power is the most essential thought administering the outer conduct of incredible powers in dealing with their relations. Recently, it appears that multi polarity would re-emerge because of rise of China and that may create once again balance of power. After two decades, pragmatists state that China, as per Balance of Power rationale, is extending its energy and interests by building an effective military, particularly naval force, and additionally planning new monetary and political administration under its initiative so as to lessen the power and potential risk of the US.

Geo-Strategic Dynamics of CPEC

In the recent geo-strategic and geo-political global scenario, the importance of Gwadar sea port possess a unique worth which not only expand regional trades but also can enhance the prominence of Pakistan in the entire region. It will help to strengthen Pakistan's geostrategic position from the Persian Gulf through the Indian Ocean to the Southeast Asia. Nautically, the seaport is circumscribed in the west by the Persian Gulf and in the southwest by the Gulf of Oman. Pakistan's geo-strategic location and geo-political fixations are quite substantial and have attained enormous significance in the realm of the national security. The proximity of Gwadar seaport to the Persian Gulf, to Central Asia, to the Eurasia and the world's chief energy and trading chokepoints, contribute to demonstrate its exclusive distinction in the region. The geostrategic position of Gwadar in the Arabian Sea can also furnish the capacity to monitor naval activities of the entire region linking Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf (Kalim, 2016). In fact, Gwadar sea port is a strategic nautical post. Gwadar is located at the point of intersection of three economically emerging regions of the world renowned as the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia. This geographical locality imparts it being very essential strategic place (Hussain, 2016).

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It is pertinent to explain that Gwadar seaport being entrance to the Persian Gulf at the strait of Hormuz will offer several harbor facilities of show casing and storage of sea resources, shipments, trans-shipping, and manufacturing expediencies for the regional and extra regional key players like UAE and the European states. The Persian Gulf republics are the pivot of the oil trading of the world. They share 2/3 of global oil trade. Gwadar is an important economic and strategic chokepoint that provides unobstructed access to the Indian Ocean that is the passage way of 100,000 shipping vessels annually amounting to about 70% of world's total oil trade (Tanoli, 2016).

The geo-strategic position of Pakistan at the crossing point of Central and South Asia offers these countries the shortest probable track to the deep waters of the Arabian Sea, from where Karachi and Gwadar seaports of Pakistan a trading and pipeline routes for export of their oil and gas to the outer world, being the desperate requirement of the (CARs) for their economic growth (Alamgir, 2011) Regardless of its apprehensions Iran has taken an initiative for the establishment of an oil processing plant at Gwadar in order to share the benefits of trade, shipment and strategic capabilities. Further, due to ongoing uncertainty in the Persian Gulf region has led the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to consider Gwadar sea port as a substitute to the Persian Gulf ports on the basis of its geostrategic location. The Caspian Region is looking for an appropriate transit route for pipeline approaches and in this way, Gwadar being an entry way to the Strait of Hormuz might be the most suitable preference. It is estimated that oil will constitute as a source of 40% of the world's energy, whereas coal being 26% and natural gas about 24%. At present, about 80 million barrels of oil is being used and in 2035, about 140 million barrels of oil is required to be consumed. The estimated future reduction of oil resources and increasing energy requirements in the world has intensified the importance of Pakistan manifold, as the energy and trading routes from Central Asian Republics (CARs), China and Afghanistan will pass through Pakistan. These countries have been desirous of accessing warm waters for a long time. Pakistan enjoys geo-economics and geo-political significance in the region, mainly due to the geostrategic position of Baluchistan, the southwest province of Pakistan, which has been located at the coastline of South Asia, the Central Asia and the Middle East.(Abro, 2015) The locus and unfathomable maritime natural features of Gawadar seaport have also been accepted by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) as an alternative seaport to the Persian Gulf sea ports for handling of large oil shipment tankers and shipping vessels in the due course of time.

Gwadar has the potential to accomplish the position of being a center piece and a gateway to the Strait of Hormuz as it can contest the UAE seaports by enhancing the existing linkage to the Caspian Region. Gwadar seaport was the dire need of Pakistan due to its dependency on sea trade that has intensified up to 95%. The people of Pakistan visualize Gwadar as a fortune changer for their economic development and prosperity. The strategic interests of nation-states inevitably stem from their monetary concerns. Gawadar, endowed with potential to function as a pivotal seaport, can enable the convergence of the interests of all countries by bringing about harmony and

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prosperity in the region. Gwadar, as being world's largest deep water seaport will increase trading volumes, growth rating, employments, foreign direct investment (FDI), and revenues in Pakistan and the region leading towards enroot to affluence and prosperity. In the contemporary geo-strategic and geo-economic environment, the importance of the seaports cannot be disregarded, particularly, after the occupation of Iraq by the US and Kuwait that has enormously influenced Saudi Arabia and has also caused in the neutralization of Iranian seaports of Bandar Abbas and Chahbahar. The demands of the European nations are going to be fulfilled by the seaports of Dubai and Salalah. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has characterized the Gwadar seaport as an alternate to Dubai World Port of (UAE), which is out of the chokepoint and the Strait of Hormuz and is capable of handling larger 'S' class cargo ships and oil vessels. Gwadar is comparable with the cities of Singapore, Hong Kong and Dubai. Being an alternate to Dubai World Port, one needs to be located in close proximity so that an uninterrupted and continuous supply of oil is guaranteed from the Gulf Region to the world even in the case of a worst political scenario. Gwadar has deep and hot waters coastline as it is located at the intersection of various regions and is part of Baluchistan rich in natural resources. The most advantageous characteristic giving Gwadar sea port the paramount political and economic prominence is that, it is a connecting region. Gwadar seaport is an inter-link between the East and the West on account which it can change the strategic atmosphere and economy of the regional political community. Gwadar is the direct and most reasonable sea route for landlocked Central Asian Republics (CARs), Afghanistan and for seaports of Russia specifically during the period of winter season when most of its seaports are closed. Gwadar links the world to a colossal economic market figuring about \$20 trillion. It holds a leading position in the Gulf Region as being a part of the 'Great Game'. After 9/11 the US and its NATO partners occupied Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban regime from the corridors of power. The regional states supported the US in its so called war against terrorism including Russia, China, the Central Asian Republics (CARs), India and Pakistan.

The regional imperatives of CPEC

Because of geo-strategic location of Gwadar that transient routes from Pakistani territory to South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia can facilitate the direct access to the deepest sea port at Arabian ocean for the trade through maritime communication. Thus, Pakistan is emerging as a convergence point for numerous corridors between the three regions with the involvement of collaboration in energy sector, shipment trade, transport and tourism. The Strategic Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and trade links between South Asia, Central Asia and West Asia have been passing through Pakistan that would transform the state into a commercial pivot in terms of giving enhancement to the inter-regional economic activities. The distinguish features of Gwadar, in context of deep sea, and its vast location, can make it the hub of energy in Asia.

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In fact, Pakistan has been located at the junctions and can play pivotal role in the productive regional incorporation for maintenance of peace and development. This seaport will corroborate to be a strategic center for the commercial activities of the entire region. Being a trading center for the whole region, Gwadar seaport equipped with the contemporary shipment handling will serve the consumer markets of Asia in order to meet the growing challenges of international trade. The seaport is expected to open new vistas of collaboration and progress in the region. Gwadar is capable of having potential to act as a central sea port enabling the junction of the interests of all countries, bringing about progress, tranquility, peace and prosperity to the region. Gwadar sea port has a colossal consumer market of Asia with over 1/3 of the world's population situated geo-strategically at the crossroads of natural resources. Gwadar sea port would be able to play its due part in trade and shipment of natural resources. There are huge prospects for establishment of combined projects and the development of economic collaboration in fisheries, food processing units, exploration of oil and gas, and extraction of minerals.

Owing to the role, it is going to play as being an inter-link between the landlocked countries and rest of the world through Arabian Sea, it can appropriately be known as an entry way to Asia' (Naseem, 2014). It will boost the trade of Central Asian states which are rich in hydrocarbon reservoirs. Furthermore, the Gwadar seaport facilities would prove beneficial and fruitful to the Central Asian Republics (CARs) after the establishment of peace, tranquility, stability and willingness of Afghanistan to participate in regional connectivity, mobility of goods and to become the part of larger economic integration (Chawla, 2017). It is estimated that nearly 20 countries belonging to the Middle East, Central Asian Republics, South Asian states and China would benefit from this mega-project of Gwadar (Alamgir, 2011). The seaport will make available the facilitation of warehouse, maritime shipment, transportation of vessels, coastline trade, commercial and industrial services for global import-export trading, particularly that of Afghanistan, Central Asian Republics (CARs), Oman, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Iraq, Iran, China and other regional states. Gwadar has massive geostrategic importance on account of being located at the entry point of the Persian Gulf at a distance of 460 km away from Karachi. Hence, the vision and initiative of Belt and Road is connected with the smooth functioning of Gwadar and participation of aforesaid nations for the larger economic activities, capital integration and infrastructural development to connect the various nations through this port (Hameed, 2017).

There are numerous challenges for the successful completion and functioning of the CPEC project. Sadly, the consistent wave of violence and prevalence of conflicts among neighbors of Pakistan, unstable security scenario in the Persian Gulf can lead towards the deterioration of economic impacts of Gwadar for the entire region. The war trodden Gulf region should be brought towards peace and it should be given connectivity to the Central Asian Republics after the disintegration of the USSR. Bearing in mind, the geo-strategic and geo-economic limitations of the regional changes, the Asian Development Bank (ADB's) Ports Master Plan studies considers

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Gwadar seaport as an alternative to the Persian Gulf Ports in addition to capturing the shipment trade of the Central Asian Republic (CARs) as well as of the whole region. It may be useful for Saudi Arabia and Gulf countries to utilize Gwadar not only for the transportation of oil and gas but also to make investment in the envisaged oil refineries to be established at Gwadar. The chief reservoirs of oil and gas have been explored in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Due to the politics of energy and natural resources, the Caspian Region will constantly be dominating the course of events in the regional states like Pakistan, Iran, India, China, Russia as well as the other stake holders being the US, Saudi Arabia and the UAE. The aim of Gwadar seaport project is to be developed as an industrial city having facilities of private owned warehouses, cold storage, cargo handling equipment, truck yards and corporate offices in the same way as to be found at Jebel Ali, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Singapore. The participation of Pakistan in this project will represent the reappearance of the Indus valley period in terms of economic and cultural interaction at the regional level. The renaissance of ancient trade linkages between the South and Central Asia and the establishment of new interlinks predominantly in the areas of infrastructure, roads, electricity, communications will further enhance the economic development and regional collaboration (Chawla, 2016).

Connectivity to Central Asia

In fact, the reemergence of Central Asian Republics (CARs) as independent states in world politics has transformed the geopolitical environment of the international politics after the disintegration of the USSR. The Central Asian region occupies an area of about 1.6 million square miles. The reservoirs of oil of Caspian Sea are projected about 200 billion barrels, while existing production is one million barrels of oil per day that is expected to reach at 3.4 million barrels per day in the coming years in view of rising demands of oil in the world markets. On the other hand, gas reserves of the region have been estimated to over 3,000 billion cubic meters. The natural gas reserves of the Caspian Region are larger than the oil reserves in the region. The Central Asian Republics (CARs) are embedded with sufficient natural resources like oil and gas as well as several precious metals like silver, gold, uranium, manganese and the raw materials of industry like copper and iron. CARs have been considered to encompass up to 250 billion barrels of petroleum and the biggest gas reserves. Central Asia has been endowed with the immense hydro-electric potential whereas Pakistan is suffering from shortage of electricity. Pakistan has been facing sever energy crisis for a decade and the gap between production and consumption is widening with the passage of time which is hobbling the business life as well as decreased 3% of the economic development every year. The Central Asian Republics (CARs) are entrenched with the mineral wealth of natural resources as well as highly skilled human capital workforce. The area of Central Asia (4 million square km) is considered significant strategically because it has been matched with the Heartland Theory of Mackinder. The Central Asian Republics (CARs) have been looking for a

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feasible access to the outer world and in this way, Gwadar sea port is the best opportunity. The Central Asian region is landlocked and it has been in the need of proper trade routes of pipelines for the export of its resources to the world market place. Gwadar seaport will make available a reasonable and inexpensive route for trading with Central Asian landlocked Republics being embedded with the natural resources (Hameed, 2018).

In fact, every nation desires to gain the maximum share in order to establish its domination in the region to achieve the objectives of its strategic interest. The geographical location of Central Asia and its deposits of oil and gas have been playing vital role in defining its significant place in politics of the world since the immemorial times. Central Asia may help Pakistan to become an important economic power if Pakistan can utilize its potentials. The geostrategic location of Central Asia is center of the corridors of North-South and the West-East communications. The Caspian Sea has been of great significance for the region being chief source of food and the pivot of hydrocarbon deposits. Most of the natural reservoirs are untapped and the Central Asian Republics (CARs) do not have capability to extract these resources.

It is important to mention that Central Asia has excessive importance in political arena of the world that it has been known as the 'heart of Asia'. The geostrategic situation and its enormous reservoirs of hydrocarbon have made it as a bone of contention among big powers. The Central Asian Republics (CARs) have been dependent on Russia for trade. Presently, most of the Central Asian Republics (CARs) have been exporting their supplies through Russia via Europe which is considered to be the lengthiest route. Gwadar seaport route would be a viable option for the (CARs) in order to save time and money in the transportation of their productions. The Central Asian States have depended on Russia to transport their goods and natural resources, and have been remained in the need of their access to the outer world (Tanoli, 2016). In relation to it the short and most viable link can be the deep waters of North Arabian Sea, either through Iran or Pakistan. Due to the unpleasant relationship of Iran with the Western world and the Gulf monarchies, the Gwadar seaport of Pakistan has been supposed to be the preferred option of the world for linking to the CARs. The CARs have been still dependent on Russia mainly due to Moscow based old communication grids controlling international mailing, telephones, telegraph links and other communicational infrastructures. Russia has also been frightened by the likelihood of low-priced Central Asian gas for the European market economies that would compete with Gazprom which is the gas giant of Russia. The route to the Mediterranean Sea passes through the Russian territory which has been a point of apprehensions for the Europe, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. In order to turn away from the effects of the Russian influence and for strengthening of economy by the export of their mineral and hydrocarbon resources the CARs need an outlet. There are two possible routes that can be available to the CARs, one through Iranian port of Chahbahar and the other by Pakistani seaport of Gwadar (Ahmad, 2015).

After the disintegration of the USSR as a result of end of the Cold War Era, the Central Asian Republics (CARs) are struggling for the expansion and development of

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trade routes towards the South Asia, Turkey and China. The energy supplies of the regional powers have brought them to the agreement of TAPI and IPI oil pipeline projects. The Northern channels and transport routes have not been sufficient for the export of Central Asian hydrocarbons resources. The alternative route lies in South Asia particularly through Afghanistan and Pakistan being a convergence point of the region i.e. Gwadar sea port. The plan for establishment of gas pipelines either from Daulatabad fields of Turkmenistan or South Pars fields of Iran towards Gwadar seaport has provoked cold war between the pro-project and anti- project players in the regional geopolitics. It is worth mentioning that the US opposes IPI gas pipeline, being known as “peace pipeline”, while on the other hand it supports TAPI gas pipeline project. The relations between India and Pakistan can be normalized through IPI and TAPI oil pipelines projects by playing their role as CBMs. The oil giant of the US named as ‘UNOCAL’ has projected the construction of (TAPI) oil pipeline, which highlights the strategic significance of deep seaport of Gwadar. Central Asia is also important for the establishment of a Muslim bloc in the region having border with Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and the Middle East that could be a potential threat to the rest of the world. According to the human geography, the ideology and understanding of human beings changes due to the stratagem of time and hegemony in global political culture. The development of Gwadar seaport and inter-connecting trade routes with Afghanistan will reduce the distance of Pakistan Central Asian traffic up to approximately 500 km. (Kakar, 2014) Gwadar will become center of regional trade and an interlink connectivity with Afghanistan and the rest of Asia. About 85% exports of Afghanistan pass through Pakistan. Gwadar seaport makes available the undeviating and cost effective approach for Afghanistan to the Indian Ocean. Gwadar offers an economical, feasible and secure trading route to Afghanistan. It would be a corridor for by-road transport for linking Central Asian Republics (CARs) through Afghanistan, which makes Gwadar as the energy pivot of Asia (Aman, 2009). The European nations have been struggling to reach out this region which is rich in mineral and hydrocarbon resources through the Caspian Region prior to other key actors via Gwadar and Afghanistan. The regional and other great powers have interests in maintaining the peace and security in the region in form of economic integration that will create conducive atmosphere.

The South and Central Asian regions have abundance of hydrocarbon and other natural resources. The Multinational Corporations (MNCs) as well as regional and global powers have been taking keen interest in access to the oil and gas reserves of the region. It had been assumed primarily that the Gwadar seaport would work for Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan via Afghanistan due to its geographic proximity. Kazakhstan possesses the biggest energy reserves of the world. Uzbekistan has been the leading producer of gold and cotton. Turkmenistan has the world’s largest reservoirs of natural gas. The Central Asian massive energy resources and geostrategic position have appealed great powers to attain control of the region in order to achieve the objectives of their national interests (Alamgir, 2011). Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan having more liquid shipment can export their supplies

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through alternative routes to the Mediterranean Sea of the Caspian region being 1800 km, whereas Gwadar seaport will reduce the distance to 1400 km. Turkmenistan has world's 4th gas reserves estimating about 7.5 trillion cubic meters (TCM), Kazakhstan 2.41 trillion cubic meters (TCM) and Uzbekistan about 1.84 trillion cubic meters (TCM) of gas reservoirs. The Caspian Sea basin possesses about 46% of the world total gas reserves. Kyrgyzstan is world's 8th biggest gold mining region and exporter of gold to the world. Moreover, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan produce a massive quantity of best quality cotton. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan will be producing more dry cargo than other Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Gwadar seaport would be the shortest way to the warm waters. The natural gas reservoirs of Turkmenistan would be linked to Pakistan and India from side to side with Afghanistan. Gwadar seaport known as the Chinese port in Pakistan and Chahbahar being called as the Indian port in Iran would be connected to the oil and gas pipelines in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and the other (CARs) nation states. Some experts consider the seaports of Iran and Pakistan to be the points for Caspian Sea oil deliveries to the world (Anwar, 2011).

Gwadar has been the sole seaport having the potential of receiving 200,000 tons of supertankers in the region. In order to make encouraging Iran environment for the development of industry in the region, rigorous efforts have been required on the basis of scientific approach and effective directions for making it an inclusive project. If there is existing no collaboration between regional and extra regional actors, then there would be no security or apprehensions regarding Gwadar that may crumble the importance of her ports for Central Asian Republics (CARs) and Afghanistan, particularly Chahbahar being helped by India to be developed in order to counter Gwadar seaport. The competition between two emerging seaports may exaggerate Pak-Iranian economic competitiveness due to the deteriorating relations since 1990s. The UAE and Iran envisage Gwadar seaport as an emergent challenging port in the region. Further, Iran has been developing its own port Chahbahar with the help of India along with a plan for the construction of 200 km road joining the Iranian seaport of Chahbahar and Afghanistan that will offer trade from the Central Asian Republics (CARs). Iran and India would manage to overturn the intimidations posed by Gwadar seaport by this way. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Iran may also have incompatible interests in relation to Gwadar, while the Central Asian Republics (CARs) and China has most important economic interests. Pakistan, China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have agreed for the initiation of bus service that will enhance trade and promote the people to people contact between the states. The geographical position of the seaport and the willingness of China to help in establishing the port have attracted responsiveness of the regional and extra-regional players equally. Strategic policymakers, politicians, and international scholars have since been debating Gwadar, giving rise to different theories, assumptions and stratagems. Gwadar has been specified to become a core of transit trade, shipment and logistics, and may also be responsible for opening the new panorama of progress and prosperity for Baluchistan and Pakistan. The accomplishment of Gwadar seaport

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depends upon its utilizations by the Central Asian Republics (CARs), South Asia and China, in this perspective collaboration with Afghanistan may be the need of time. It will create employment prospects and offer vast economic activities which would directly be transformed into the regional progress and prosperity.

Conclusion

The study attempted to understand the regional and global dynamics of BRI and CPEC by adopting the soft power theory framework. Belt and Road Initiative is a mega project which includes massive road connectivity, geographical linkages, rail and road transportation system, people to people contacts, and development of understanding through cultural, academic, business and professional exchanges for the progress and prosperity of this region. In the current global economic scenario, the oceanic transportation is the central and important part of international trade which constitute of 90% consumer goods and 65% of petroleum products. Thus, the Indian Ocean is the source of mobility of container traffic of almost 70% of petroleum products which utilizes its routes from Middle East to pacific region. For the exportation oil from the Middle Eastern states, the control over the energy chokepoints like Bab el Mandeb Strait, the Gulf of Aden and the Strait of Hormuz, the Gulf of Oman, and the Strait of Malacca have been of the strategic importance due to the transit of energy across it. In fact, the initiative of China Pakistan Economic Corridor is a significant scheme which focuses on the creation of new regional connectivity through Gwadar Sea Port, giving direct access to Chinese goods from Kashgar (China) towards Gwadar (Pakistan). Hence, this development of faster infrastructure of rail, roads, towards maritime transportation and communication is an important project which can connect the countries of the area like Afghanistan, India, Nepal, Central Asia as well as Iran. Thus, the Gwadar Port will also connect China, Russia, Middle East, Central Asia and South East Asia. The Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca have been two major chokepoints in Arabian Sea- and Indian Ocean. The Strait of Hormuz interconnects the transit trade between the regions of the world. The interconnection of the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf through the Strait of Hormuz has prominence as a key corridor of energy transportation in the world. Further, Gwadar has been located at the intersection of South Asia, West Asia and the Central Asia. Some experts consider the ‘seaports of Iran and Pakistan to be the points for Caspian Sea oil deliveries to the world’ (Pascu, 2011). Gwadar seaport route would be a viable option for the (CARs) in order to save time and money in the transportation of their productions. The Central Asian States have depended on Russia to transport their goods and natural resources, and have been remained in the need of their access to the outer world. Convincing Iran for the development of industry in the region, rigorous efforts are required. If there is no collaboration between regional and non-regional actors, then there would be no security. India and Iran have apprehensions regarding Gwadar, perhaps because they are apprehensive that the upcoming developments may crumble the importance of her ports for Central Asian

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Republics (CARs) and Afghanistan, particularly Chahbahar which is being developed by India to counter Gwadar seaport. Pakistan has historical ties with China and showing great trust on China's soft power theory and making best use of the belt and Road Initiative and concluded the CEC. But these kinds of development, apparently the emergence of bipolar world arrangement that is a serious challenge to US unipolar power, consequently. US and India nexus, is trying to develop negative image about the project of CPEC by creating the impression of another colonial domination on the Pakistan territory in the form of Chinese presence (Chawla, 2017). India is making all efforts, to sabotage and to damage the credibility of the CPEC project. Although the vision of Belt and road initiative is a viable project which can be the harbinger of regional development, progress and economic integration yet it requires dedicated efforts, sincere will and participation of regional countries to transform this scheme into an operational reality.

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