

Makuran: Gateway to Middle East

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Abstract

Makuran was established as a division in July 1977 and it is the third largest administrative division of Balochistan and second largest in terms of population. It is the heartland through which more than 700 km of the coveted China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) passes, linking Gwadar with RCD Highway in Kuzdar. This paper focuses on the strategic importance of Makuran vis-à-vis its strategic Gwadar Deep Sea port in the Arabian Sea of the Indian Ocean which lies just outside of the Strait of Hormouz which is gateway to world's 20-25% oil trade into the international markets. Gwadar is an important warm-water port in Indian Ocean which is believed to be the future gateway towards the oil-rich Middle East, mineral-rich Africa and the highly-developed Europe. Currently, Gwadar is under control of China and it aspires to connect Chinese mainland to the Middle East and onward via much talked-about CPEC. This study attempts to evaluate that how Gwadar port provides easy connectivity to major strategic areas and help China to exert its expanding strategic influence in Indian Ocean and the adjacent areas including Gulf States and Middle East. The aim of the paper is to highlight the significance of CPEC for Balochistan in the light of the strategic importance of Makuran which bridges Pakistan with Middle East. This study also analyses the emerging security challenges from the arch-rivals of China and Pakistan towards the much talked about CPEC. Those security challenges can best be minimized by sharing the prospects of the CPEC among all provinces equally.

Key Words: *Geo-Strategic, Gwadar, New Silk Road, CPEC, Arabian Sea, Energy Corridor*

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Introduction

Makuran is situated on the southwest of Pakistan and southeast of Iran. Geographically, Makuran zone marks the plate boundary between the Eurasian and Arabian plates within the northern Arabian Sea. Some parts of the south-eastern Sistan-Balochistan are considered to be part of the historic Makuran region. The Greek geographers had divided the combined areas of present-day Pakistani and Persian Balochistan into three regions; Oritene/Tomerus (Hingol river), the Fish-eaters (Makuran coast) and Gedrosia (comprise of the inland Persian Balochistan and half of the area of Pakistani Balochistan). However, officially, Makuran is the third largest administrative division of Balochistan, Pakistan's largest but least populated province. On the east of Makuran there lies the historic region of Jhalawan, the tribal region of the incumbent Chief Minister of Balochistan and parts of Lasbela, a former princely state. On the south of Makuran lies the commercially important Arabian Sea, connecting the Persian/Arabian Gulf with the rest of the world. It consists of three administrative districts; Kech, Panjgur and Gwadar with a geographical area of 54,647 square kilometres, equal to that of New York. Its population is roughly 1.5 million. Turbat is headquarters of Makuran Division which is the second largest city of Balochistan after Quetta.

Makuran is a tribal-less region with highest literacy rate and political awareness and. politically it has been dominated by National Party, Balochistan National Party and other nationalist forces since late 1980s. It is the coastal region of Balochistan with around 600 km coastline that starts from the Iranian side of Makuran and extends up to the Somniani Bay near northwest of Karachi. The historic Makuran region is bisected by the existing political frontier between Iran and Pakistan. The territorial boundary between the British controlled Makuran and Persian Makuran was demarcated by an Anglo-Persian Boundary Commission in 1870-1972 which is also known as Goldsmith Line. According to the ancient inscriptions, this land was known as Magan (Sumerian/Babylonian), Maka (old Persian), Makararene (Seleucid/Byzantine) and Gedrosia by the time of Alexander the Great. The etymology of the word Makuran or Makuran is uncertain, however many historians believe that this has been derived from two Persian words, *Mahi Khuran* (Fish Eaters). The climate of Makuran is extremely rigid, warm, wild and untamed with harsh desert landscape and limited rainfall where mercury moves up to 50 centigrade in June/July. However, the north-eastern region (Panjgur) falls in the winter zone. Climatically, Makuran has four ecosystem; sea, rivers, forests and deserts. The coastal areas of Makuran are magnet for tourism where the Hingol National Park, Pakistan's largest Park, spread over an area of 1650 km offers scenic images of nature and lap the Hinglaj Temple

(*Nani Mandir*), one of the oldest Hindu temples in the world. The Geologists have marked Makuran as a high seismic zone and quite prone to tsunami where an earthquake of 8.1 magnitude wreaked havoc in November, 1945. The main sources of income in Makuran are agriculture especially date production, fisheries, livestock and oil-smuggling from neighbouring Iran.

The region had been sandwiched among the Indus, Mesopotamian and Persian civilizations but it has retained its distinguished culture until it was invaded by the Muslim Arabs during the caliphate of Hazrat Omar (R.A). Later on it remained a central part of the Mohammad bin Qasim invasion of Sind in the 8th Century. According to great historian, Inayatullah Baluch, before the arrival of 44 Baloch tribes from Sistan/Kerman to Makuran in the 12th Century the original tribes of this region had been Jats and Arab settlers who were either destroyed or assimilated by the Baloch invaders. Following the British exit from India in 1947, the ruler of Makuran Nawab Bai Khan Gichki had very strained relations with the Khan of Kalat Mir Ahmed Yar Khan and merged its princely state in the newly independent state of Pakistan on 18 March, 1948 along with Kharan and Las Bela excluding the Kalat State. In the contemporary regional politics, Makuran has become the most important part of country due to its strategic position in the Indian Ocean and the Chinese-led New Silk Route to connect oil-rich Middle East, mineral-rich Africa and attractive export market Europe.

Brief History of Makuran

Makuran coast has featured in the historical and archaeological records since as early as the 3rd Millennium B.C and it has remained a conduit to connect Indus Civilization/Harappan with the Mesopotamian/Middle East. (George & Carl, 1992) The According to the Persian Gulf Studies Centre, Makuran is the area in the southwest of Iran where original Aryan people of warrior nature live for centuries. Previously, the adjacent sea was known as Makuran Sea, however with the arrival of Islam and subsequent Arab invasion, it was changed to Arabian Sea. (Parsapoor) Historically, Makuran is said to be the oldest region where first Baloch settlements occurred after their migration from heartland of the modern Middle East. Later on Baloch tribes migrated towards the hilly areas of modern Kalat and moved on towards fertile lands of Kachhi and onward Punjab. At present, it links the rest of Pakistan with the Middle East including Arabian Sea and Iran where all of its three districts share border with historic Persia known as Goldsmith Line. Makuran's 400 mile coast running from Iranian border eastward along with the Arabian Sea directly across the Gulf of Oman constitutes a huge transition zone which bears a deep imprint of Middle East especially Arabia through which around 80,000 army

of the Alexander the Great march westward in its disastrous retreat from sub-continent in 325 B.C. (Kalpan, 2009).

Makuran was once a part of great Persian Empire in the time of Cyrus the Great. Archeologically known as Gedrosia, it is geographically located in the junction of Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia. After that this strategic land also came under the control of Greeks when Alexander the Great passed through while returning back to his empire. Alexander defeated Raja Pours on the edge of river Jhelum and reached on the brink of Baeas River but his army refused to go further. After defeating Raja Pours, Alexander on the way to Sind passed through Makuran where his army faced extreme water shortage. The horrible loss of personnel in the Makuran desert on his return march from India to Persian Gulf where lack of water and food defeated his army what no enemy army had been able to do. (Garraty, 1991). In Gedrosia to Makuran Coast range including the west of Hingol river, Alexanders army coming from Kolwa tract suffered many hardships. (Eggermont, 1975)

Makuran also remained strategically important during the post-Islamic history owing to its immediate proximity with the Arabia to which it shares maritime border. Soon after the death of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) Arabs warriors under the Caliphate of Hazard Umar conquered Persia and moved towards Makuran. Historically Makuran is the *Bab-ul-Islam* (gateway of Islam) as Islam came towards sub-continent/Sindh while passing through Makuran as it is the closest region with Arabian Peninsula. In 644 A.D, under the direction of second caliph Hazrat Umer (R.A), Hakim bin Amr al-Taghlabi crossed over Makuran region but could not gain complete control of it. Another invasion during the reign of Hazrat Ali (656-561) but it was repulsed but finally Makuran was subjugated under Mauwiya, the first Umayyad caliph and was declared as the easternmost border of the Muslim dominions. (Sugata & Ayesha, 2004) In 712 A.D, Muslims under the command of Muhammad Bin Qasim captured Gwadar and moved on towards Sindh. However, in the following centuries, this area remained contested between different Indian and Persian dynasties including Mughal and Safavid. Being a sparsely populated hostile but strategic region, Makuran had remained contested among regional and extra-regional powers. In medieval era, the Portuguese invaded the coastal area but faced stiff resistance from local tribes. The Portuguese voyagers attacked and captured the coastal areas of Makuran in 16th Century. (Hussian, 2016). When Vasco de Gama discovered a new maritime route between Europe and Southeast Asia the Portuguese were the first European colonizers to reach the Makuran shores. (Badalkhan, 2009)The Rind tribes established a powerful confederacy in Makuran under Mir Jalal Han which went into decline after Mir Chakar Khan Rind moved towards the fertile lands of Kachhi. Under the

leadership of Mir Chakar Khan Rind Makuran Confederacy become stronger and extended towards Kharan and Lasbela by defeating Mir Umar of Kalat and establishing Sivi (Sibi) his administrative capital in 1487. (Baluch, 1987) Afterwards, the Buledis ruled over Makuran until the rise of Gichkis in second half of the 18th Century and virtually Makuran came under the suzerainty of the Confederation of Kalat, led by the Khan of Kalat. Following the First Anglo-Afghan War of 1839, the British India also dragged the Kalat Confederacy including the Makuran region under its sphere of influence for the reason that the Britishers were quite interested towards its warm waters. The coastal areas of Makuran assumed important staging positions on the sea routes between India and Gulf countries where the British government established Indo-European telegraph line and a British Political Agent was posted in Gwadar in 1863. (Qatar Digital Library). Makuran's coveted geographic position gained more importance when its fishing town of Jiwani, some 30 km away from Iran border, was used as a strategic base by the Allied Powers during the Second World War. After the fall of the British Indian Empire in 1947, Makuran joined newly established state of Pakistan as a princely state. According to Inayatullah Baluch, the ruler of Makuran had strained relations with the Khan of Kalat Mir Ahmed Yar Khan when the political map of the Indian sub-continent started changing and on 17th March 1948 Sardar Bai Khan Gichki along with Jam of Lasbela and Nawab of Kharan met with Mr. Mohammad Ali Jinnah and in the following day Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced through a press statement that Pakistan had accepted the accession of princely states of Kharan, Makuran and Las Bela. (Baluch, 1987, p. 186-187)

Since then its strategic Gwadar District has remained the most attractive peninsula of this region. Territorially and culturally Makuran is very much close with the Sultanate of Oman located in the eastern edge of the Arabia, at a distance of around 210 nautical miles. In 1783, Sultan Siad of Oman took asylum from Khan of Kalat in Balochistan after developing differences with his brother Saiad Said. The Khan of Kalat gifted Gwadar to Saiad Sultan for his livelihood which was included as an exclave of the Oman after Khan's royal guest dethroned his brother and enthroned himself as the Sultan of Muscat in 1797. Gwadar also remained the headquarters of the British Political Agent for quite some time in the second half of the 19th Century. (Syed, Akhtar, & Usmani, 2011). Considering the strategic value of Gwadar enclave, Pakistan's government got it back in 1958 by paying around \$3 million (then Agha Khan Prince Sultan Mohammad Shah was the leading contributor) to Oman and agreeing that Balochistan would be catchment for recruiting troops from all three districts of Makuran, owing to which Makurani Baloch

constitutes a major part of the Royal Army of Oman (Gwadar Port: Harbinger of prosperity for Baloch people, December 07, 2015). During the Cold War, the Soviets attempted their best to reach the warm waters of the strategic Makuran by supporting and encouraging the nationalists in Balochistan but it failed to galvanize the divided nationalists. From Gwadar, Soviet Union could have exported hydrocarbon resources of its Central Asian satellite states. (Kaplan, 2009) In the post Cold War era of 21st Century, Gwadar has again become the center of the regional politics especially between China and the USA which has become the part of the New Great Game. Today, Gwadar with its deep sea port is the jewel in the crown of the Chinese strategic aspirations as it is the second largest economy after US and gives it's the access towards the resource-rich Middle East and international markets of the Europe.

CPEC: A Gateway to Middle East

The geostrategic standing of Makuran among Central Asia, South Asia, West Asia and the Indian Ocean signifies its merit among all other regions of the CPEC which passes into all of its administrative districts. The following five worth mentioning international event are considered to be watershed instances for clearly defining the geopolitical importance of Makuran:

- Alexander's march through the Makuran, archaeologically known as Gedrosia that proved to be too much for many of his army,
- Arabs invasion of Sindh through Makuran under Mohammad Bin Qasim in early 8th Century,
- Russian attempts to reach the warm waters of Makuran during the Great Game in late 19th and early 20th centuries,
- Use of Jiwani (tehsil of Gwadar) as a forward base by the Allied forces for the Gulf region,
- Soviet invasion of Afghanistan to access the Arabian Sea through the natural deep warm-water harbor of Makuran,
- Gwadar Deep Sea Port as gateway for energy-rich Middle East and Central Asia in the New Silk Route.

Owing to its peninsular Gwadar District, Makuran holds an extremely high position in the context of much talked-about China Pakistan Economic Corridor. Above all, Makuran is destined to be the heart of the CPEC because all three important sections of the CPEC connecting Gwadar with Kashgar travel into this highly coveted piece of land. Around 650 km long Makuran

Coastal Highway also known as Nation Highway (N-10) running beside the 500 km coastline of Makuran in the Arabia Sea connects Gwadar, Pasni and Ormara with Karachi and Kuzdar. The coastal region of Makuran is unique with mountains and rivers. The M-8 is the jugular vein of the CPEC that starts from Ratodero in Sindh and ends in Gwadar, connecting Turbat, Hoshap, Awaran and Kuzdar with the Indus Highway (N-55), Pakistan's busiest road, connecting Karachi with Peshawar. Newly-constructed 193-km M-8 connects the eastern, central and western routes of CPEC with Gwadar. (Zafar Baloch, 2016). The National Highway 85 (N-85) is another major road which runs through central Balochistan and links Hoshap (M-8 zero point) with RCD Highway in Kalat District via Panjgur and Kharan. Resultantly, Makuran laps around 700 km of the CPEC which constitutes around 25% of the total length of 3000 km long CPEC route.

- 650 km long Makoran Coastal Highway also known as Nation Highway (N-10) running along the coastline of the Arabia Sea connects Eastern Route of the CPEC with Gwadar via Karachi and Lasbela,
- The M-8 is the jugular vein of the CPEC that starts from Ratodero in Sindh and ends in Gwadar, linking Central Route of the CPEC with Gwadar via Kuzdar, Awaran, Hoshap and Turbat,
- The National Highway 85 (N-85) is another major road which runs through central districts of Panjgur, Kharan and Kalat which links Western Route of the CPEC through the RCD Highway.

China wants to revitalize its glorious past by reviving the historic Silk Route through its famous "One Belt One Road" initiative. China used to be a great power for centuries. In 15th Century China had a navy of 28,000 men with 317 vessels under admiral Zheng He which widely sailed through Indian Ocean and Southeast Asian region, however it went in hibernation in the following years as Napoleon once said, "let China sleep, for when China wakes, she will shake the world." Today, China is the most successful development model in the world history that has moved around 400 million people out of poverty with 9% GDP growth rate for almost 30 years where trade-to-GDP ratio is 70%. (Zakaria, 2011).

With such a huge trade share in its GDP, China is in constant search for international markets to sell its products and the coastal area of Pakistan's largest province provides the best access to China to enter in western Indian Ocean and reach in the Persian Gulf's energy resources (Wang, Lee, Chen, Jiang, & Liu, 2016). The CPEC is 3000 km long route, consisting of highway, railways and pipelines that Far East with the West Asia including Europe

through Gwadar deep sea port. China has developed a sophisticated economy with highly profitable sectors such as manufacturing, telecommunications, high-tech goods, logistics and financial services. Through the CPEC, China can export its goods towards new markets like Middle East, Africa and Europe. In November last year, Chinese goods were exported to Middle East and Africa through Gwadar port, using the CPEC for region trade for the first time. According to World Integrated Trade Solution, the Chinese total exports to Middle East and North Africa have increased to \$140 billion in 2015 from \$122 billion in 2013. Since 2014, China has emerged the dominating trading partner of the Middle Eastern region. Among Middle Eastern countries, the UAE is the largest trade partner of China. The bilateral trade has increased from \$54.8 billion in 2014 to \$60 billion in 2016 and it is projected to go up to \$80 billion in the next two years. (Sandhya D'Mello, 2016) Simultaneously it can import oil from the oil-exporting countries of the Middle East as China is quite vulnerable in terms of energy security. China consumes over 11 million barrels of oil per day which is projected to exceed 13 million barrel per day in 2020 and China imports 60% of its oil needs from Middle East. (Daniels; Brown, 2015). Owing to secure its economic and strategic interests in West Asia, China is investing heavily on infrastructure for greater territorial connectivity. China has already pledged to spend more than \$40 billion for the construction of infrastructure at major checkpoints along with the old Silk Road trade routes including Arabian Peninsula and by the end of 2014, seventy seven out of 188 Chinese bilateral or multilateral free trade agreements were lying across the One Road and One Belt routes. (Feng, 2015) To enhance its trade relations with the Arab states, China has already founded the China-Arab State Cooperation Forum in 2004. Moreover, the China's Arab Policy Paper released in early 2016 heralds 1+2+3 formula for China-Arab cooperation where energy cooperation would be the core, the infrastructure, trade and investment as the two wings and 3 high and new tech fields of cooperation in nuclear energy, aerospace and clean energy. (Tiezzi, 2016).

The strategic Gwadar District of Makran is the most sought-after peninsula in the region, located at the heart of the Arabian Sea and the mouth of the Gulf of Oman where China has already built a deep sea port in 2007 which is 14 meter deep. The warm-water deep sea port is operated by the state-run China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) and connected to mainland China via the 3000-km CPEC. It connects China with the resource-abundant Gulf countries which would ultimately multiply the economic and cultural ties between Pakistan and its Gulf allies. Saudi Arabia, the largest oil supplier to China and UAE, the largest non-trade of China among the Mideastern states could utilize the CPEC as the shortest route to East Asia as China imports 60%

of its oil from Middle East and 80% of it is transported through the dangerous Strato of Malacca and South China Sea where China is at loggerheads with the other contesting state to claim complete sovereignty in the surrounding waters. China imports more oil from Middle East than the USA. Nearly 75 percent reliance on oil imports shipped by sea leaves China extremely dependent on marine routes particularly those in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. (W. Kolb, 2013)

Similarly, the US and its regional allies especially India are exceedingly nervous and seriously concerned how to checkmate this gargantuan Chinese investment in this contested region as China has made enormous inroad by pursuing its greater economic-military interests through the String of Pearls Strategy and New Silk Route. China is predicted to be world's largest energy consumer by 2030 and its imports are expected to grow from six million barrels per day to 13 million barrel by 2035.. The String of Pearls strategy is designed to protect Chinese energy security besides negating the Indo-US influence in the Indian Ocean including the South China Sea. (Myo, 2011). China has already entered in resource-rich Central Asia through mending its long-strained ties with Russia which are cooperating and collaborating over all international issues including the contemporary crises in Middle East. As Russia is increasingly isolated from West, it aspires to strengthen its reset ties with Beijing already exemplified by a huge gas deal of more than \$400 billion. (Standish, 2015) On the other hand, China has a bridging role between Pakistan and Russia which have been relentless to forget the Cold War revulsion so far. The emerging strategic Sino-Russian strategic triangle with Pakistan seems to a stark reaction to the budding strategic triangle between USA, India and Japan. Although Japan is relatively a declining power but it is increasingly turning to India as a counterweight to China. (Green, 2011)

The policy makers in Pakistan assertively believe that India is the main sponsor of the ongoing low-level insurgency in its largest province which laps around 50% of the bilateral economic corridor. The hard-nationalists in Balochistan have been fighting against the central government on decades-long grievances of exploitation of the provincial rights. Many analysts consider this ethnic insurgency in the wider picture of simmering competition across the Indian Ocean rim in South Asia, Southeast Asia and Middle East as part of the New Great Game among the regional and extra-regional powers which are already engaged in turf-war to dominate the Central Asia, Middle East and South Asia. The Great Game was a term coined for the shadowy competition between Russian and British empire to influence and control Central Asia but now it is used to refer a battle on many fronts, being fought

with investment, aid, politics and culture from Pakistan to Nepal including South East Asia. (North, 2011).

It goes without saying that dominant and hegemonic actors attempt to search for strategic allies (state and non-state) but one has to look into the internal dynamics of the issues since none denies that fact that the resource-rich province has been kept backward and marginalised owing to the indifference and apathy of the federal government. The ongoing armed remonstrance is the fourth of its kind. The longstanding grievances of the local inhabitants have coupled with vital strategic location in the changing dynamics of the regional and global politics which warrants a cautious approach to sail in the cataclysmic waters of the Indian Ocean where the heavyweights are poised to face-off and control sway over this vital region that attracts more than 60% of the internal maritime trade.

The CPEC passes in all three districts of Makuran, Panjgur, Kech and Gwadar. Interestingly various media outlets have declared the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) the New Great Game of the 21st Century. The \$46 billion worth of CPEC was signed between Pakistan and China in April 2015 that envisages connecting Far East with the Middle East and beyond via Chinese built Karakoram Highway and Gwadar Deep Sea Port. The Karakoram is world's highest metalled road situated at an altitude of more than 15000 feet while Gwadar Port is naturally deepest port in the region with a 14 meter depth. Also known as Friendship Highway, 1300 km long Karakoram Highway took almost 20 years to complete which starts from upper Punjab and ends in Khunjerab Pass in Gilgit-Baltistan. Both, the Karakoram Highway and Gwadar Ports have been built with the Chinese help. The CPEC also connects Pakistan's deep sea port in its extreme southwest to its 10,000-foot high Sust Dry Port in Gilgit which is located in the Sust town inside Pakistan on Karakoram Highway before the Chinese border.

The CPEC is assumed to be the jugular vein of the Chinese One Belt One Road initiative which includes a Eurasian Silk Road Economic Belt and Maritime Silk Road where CPEC lies at the confluence of both, connecting South Asia, Middle East and Central Asia. (Markey & West, 2016). The Chinese authorities are looking forward to earn an additional \$2.5 trillion trade with the regional states over the next decade as China is already world's largest trading country with largest exports of the world. According to the Financial Times, the New Silk Road involves approximately 70 per cent of the world population, 75% of the global proven energy reserves and produces around more than 50% of the global GDP. Resultantly, the CPEC truly materializes Pakistan's Look East Policy and Chinese Go West Policies.

The 3000 km long CPEC provides the shortest and easiest land route to China for its imports from Middle East and export to Africa and Europe as the maritime distance between Gwadar and Port of Shanghai is around 12000 km which is 5000 km far away from Chinese newly industrialized northwest region. Simultaneously, the CPEC is also gateway for the energy-rich but landlocked Central Asian Republics (CARs). Initially it was thought that Gwadar Port would serve as a sea access to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan via Afghanistan but now it can also serve Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan since the Karakoram Highway could be extended to across Wakhan Corridor which connects separates Pakistan from Tajikistan but connects Afghanistan with China. Gwadar is extremely important for Pakistan seeing that the CPEC is estimated to increase Pakistan's GDP by 2.5% annually and 95% of Pakistan's international trade is sea-borne that contributes around 40% of total Gross National Product (GNP). (Khan S. A., 2013). Additionally, the strategic port in Gwadar could be an alternative in case of any future conflict with India that attempted a blockade of Pakistan's Karachi Port during the 1971 War. "A blockade of Karachi was to be instituted to prevent petroleum and other essential supplies needed in war from reaching Karachi". (Cardozo, 2006)

Similarly, the Gwadar Port and CPEC also offers China an alternative route for importing oil from Middle East in case of any future dispute with the Southeast Asian countries on the sovereignty claim over contested islands of South China Sea. The Chinese militarization of the South China Sea risks any conflict between China and its neighbouring countries, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei including Taiwan that also put in danger the US strategic-commercial interests as each year, \$5.3 trillion of global trade passes through this disputed sea. (Glaser, 2012). Moreover, China's commercial interests could also be at risk from India, its regional arch-rival, which holds strategic sway over the waters in the Bay of Bengal where the India strategic outposts at Andaman and Nicobar islands on way to Strait of Malacca pose severest security challenge to Chinese security interests. China may have territorial superiority over India but India has probably maritime edge especially its military build-up in Great Nicobar and Andaman islands which enable India to cut Chinese Sea Lanes of Communication between the Persian Gulf and Straits of Malacca. (David, 2008).

For China the CPEC is part of its expanding foreign policy but for Pakistan it is more internal than external where it is considered to a panacea for all domestic issues including strengthening the federation which ensure long term political and economic stability. The multibillion bilateral project roughly accounts for around 20 percent of Pakistan's total GDP which is set to enhance the intra-state connectivity through network of highways, railways, cyber-lines,

pipelines, economic/industrial zones and energy generation plants. Moreover, the CPEC would be instrumental to enhance the existing \$15 billion bilateral trade between the two countries around \$100 billion over the next decade that will ultimately herald politico-economic stability in Pakistan's precarious national security. Over and above, Pakistan foresees to connect its deep water port with the landlocked Central Asian Islamic states which are quite abundant in hydrocarbon resources. For the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CARCE) the CPEC is the shortest and cheapest route to access the commercially important North Arabian Sea. Luckily, Pakistan has already party to number of regional trade agreements with Central Asian states like Cross-Border Transport Agreement (CBTA) along with Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan, Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (QTTA) along with China, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan and Customs Convention on International Transport of Goods (TIR), ECO Transit Transport Framework Agreement (TTFA). The incumbent pro-trade government has also announced to build Gwadar-Termez motorway to connect Gwadar Central Asia as Termez lies between Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Since very long, Pakistan has anticipated expanding the Karakoram Highway to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan which can increase its existing \$45.3 million annual trade up to \$4 billion a year with those countries. Furthermore, Sherkhan-Ninipayan border route has been identified by Pakistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan as a trade corridor under the CARCE. Pakistan Railways has also planned to connect Gwadar with Afghan railway via Quetta and Chaman to boost trade ties with CARCE. (Mubarak Zeb Khan, 2016). Likewise, the much anticipated supplementary corridors would be extremely instrumental to extend CPEC for maximum extra-regional connectivity. A West Asian Corridor will link Makuran's Gwadar Port to Central Asia, Eurasia and China via Iran and Turkey while a marine Gulf Corridor will connect the CPEC with Africa and beyond. Interestingly, Russia and Egypt have recently expressed their solemn desire to join CPEC which would be imperative for the strategically placed Makuran region.

Conclusion

Historically, Makuran has remained important for regional and extra-regional connectivity between the Far East and the Middle East by dint of its maritime routes connecting the zones of the Indian Ocean with landlocked territories. Due to its immediate proximity with Gulf States and rapid globalization, this administrative division has become Pakistan's jewel in the crown from the CPEC perspective. But except Gwadar, the other areas of Makuran have been ignored in the CPEC-related development projects which could further exploit the sense of lasting deprivation especially among youth since the region has

been severely affected by the insurgency in the province which is alleged to be linked with the simmering power politics in the emerging New Great Game as the strategic constituency provides the shortest secure route to China for its exports and imports in Middle East. Moreover, every successive government in Islamabad and Quetta has turned a blind eye towards this highly potential and fertile region. More than 100 varieties of dates are produced in Makuran region. According to an estimate, more than 42 hectares cultivated areas of Makuran produces 0.5 million tons of quality dates annually which is 53% of the total date production that makes Pakistan world's 5th largest date producer, earning \$5 million annually. Two-thirds of Pakistan's total annual date production comes from this region which could earn around \$250 million foreign exchange if exported but unfortunately more than 70% of whole production is wasted due to lack date factories. Similarly, livestock which shares a considerable component of the rural economy and 40% of the provincial GDP still awaits government attention. Alarming, the continued apathy from the federal and provincial governments, the marine life in Makuran is depleting rapidly. Makuran fish-rich coastal areas accounts for more than 50% of the total fish production in the province which is livelihood of more than 80% of the local inhabitants. But despite of this indifference, the region has achieved satisfactory results in terms of education and socio-economic development which could be replicated in other areas of Balochistan.

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