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The Strategic Importance of Gwadar Port in Regional Connectivity and Rivalries
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Abstract

The Gwadar Port, strategically located on Pakistan's southwestern coast near the Strait of Hormuz, serves as a critical node in regional and global geopolitics. As a cornerstone of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the port enhances trade connectivity between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, while reducing China's reliance on the vulnerable Strait of Malacca for energy imports. Gwadar's deep-water capabilities and proximity to key maritime routes position it as a potential global trade hub, offering economic benefits such as job creation and regional integration, particularly for landlocked nations. However, its development is fraught with challenges, including political instability in Balochistan, security threats from insurgent groups, and geopolitical rivalries involving China, India, and the United States. The port's strategic significance also fuels competition with regional ports like India's Chabahar and raises concerns over militarization in the Indian Ocean. Despite these hurdles, Gwadar's future as a transformative economic and strategic asset hinges on effective governance, conflict resolution, and balanced international partnerships.

Keywords: *Gwadar Port, CPEC, Belt And Road Initiative, Regional Connectivity, Geopolitical Rivalries, Strait Of Hormuz, Maritime Trade, China-Pakistan Relations, Indian Ocean, Balochistan Security*

Introduction

The Gwadar Port is the strategic hub in the geopolitical and economic infrastructure of the region and is situated on the Southwestern coast of Pakistan. It is located at the mouth of the Arabian Sea making it strategically important as well since it is close to the Strait of Hormuz which is a major choke point of global oil where a good percentage of the world oil flows (Rahman, Ishaq, & Naeem, 2024; Malik, 2012). The port is historically owned by the Omani Sultanate which Pakistan purchased in 1958 (Rahman et al., 2024). Gwadar, the port city along the Arabian Sea, has evolved over the years, as it is part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is aimed at boosting trade and economic connectivities in the region (Ahmad, 2024). The construction of the port is highly related to the issue of security in the region especially with China, Pakistan and India and other international players like the US and the Gulf nations. Besides offering Pakistan an essential yearning to the ocean,

Gwadar also forms a part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of China, which aims to enhance connectivity in Asia, Africa, and Europe (Rahman et al., 2024). Such a strategic growth turns Gwadar not only into a facilitator of trade but also a source of rivalry in the extended geopolitical scenario of South Asia and the world as a whole.

Gwadar Port is located at the Balochistan province of Pakistan and is located on one of the critical sea routes linking the Middle East, Central Asia, and South Asia (Rahman & Naeem, 2024). It is strategically situated to dominate sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) between the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea and as such, it is a critical hub of global energy and trade (Malik, 2012). The history of the port is connected to the maritime heritage of the region and the first historical records can be traced to the Omani period when it used as a trading and naval base (Rahman et al., 2024). The port is of paramount importance in the economic strategies of both Pakistan and China today, and massive infrastructure investments are being made to turn the port into a deep-sea port that can accommodate bigger ships and serve as a hub in international trade (Ahmad, 2024).

Moreover, the development of Gwadar is promoted by China with CPEC, and the project will provide new routes of trade to landlocked countries of Central Asia and give them the opportunity to enter the world market without any difficulties through the Arabian Sea (Rahman & Naeem, 2024). This geo-economic policy has been more significant to China which wants to minimize its reliance on the busy and exposed strait of Malacca as an energy importation route (Ahmad, 2024). The operationalization of the Gwadar Port represents the larger strategy of China to develop a stronger presence in the Indian Ocean and to improve its maritime influence, which is part of the transformation of the economic and strategic aspects of regional relations (Rahman & Naeem, 2024).

This paper will discuss how the Gwadar Port can help to improve connectivity in the region and the strategic impacts of the same to the current geopolitical competition between China, India, and other regional actors. The main stream of thought is to learn the way development of Gwadar has influenced the trade routes, economic integration and security concerns in South Asia and elsewhere. The port will play a major role in promoting trade between the Middle East, South Asia, and Central Asia as part of the Belt and Road Initiative in China (Rahman et al., 2024). Also, this paper will deal with the intricacies associated with the development of Gwadar such as the problem of regional rivalries. Specifically, the Gwadar versus Chabahar Port in India rivalry, along with the Sino-Indian rivalry in general, will be discussed in terms of energy security and domination of the trade routes (Malik, 2012). This is aimed at giving a subtle perspective of the fact that Gwadar is not only a commercial gateway but also a centre of focus in the power shift of the region..

The Strategic Location of Gwadar Port

Gwadar Port is situated on the south western side of Pakistan, at the mouth of the Arabian Sea. It is located approximately 400 kilometers away from the Strait of

Hormuz, which is one of the most important chokepoints of the sea-based oil deliveries in the world (Rahman, Naeem, & Ishaq, 2021). This location has put Gwadar Port in direct contact with major sea routes that connect the Middle East, Africa, Central Asia and South Asia. It is strategically positioned to strengthen the power of Pakistan over the important sea routes, and it is a major gateway to the international trade. The port is a natural transit point of the sea between South Asia, the Middle East and Central Asia and becomes a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is expected to connect the western regions of China to the Arabian Sea (Malik, 2012). Moreover, the location of the port at the meeting point of the major energy supply chains is an economic and geopolitical advantage, especially to China and Pakistan in terms of their ability to control maritime trade routes (Gholizadeh, Madani, & Saneinia, 2020).

The geographical location of Gwadar Port is even boosted by its access to some of the largest markets in the world. Gwadar through its association with CPEC offers a direct access route to the world markets by the landlocked countries within the Central Asian region (Malik, 2012). This presents new trade to nations in South Asia, Middle East and Europe and thus it becomes a very important regional connectivity hub. Also, it makes the access to the energy sources in the Middle East easier as the port is the safer and shorter way of delivering the oil, unlike the other routes that run through the Strait of Malacca. Gwadar has all the potential to be one of the key points of the global trade system with its growing infrastructure under CPEC, composed of roadways, railways, and industrial zones, creating not only economic growth opportunities but also developmental ones to Pakistan and other surrounding areas (Rahman et al., 2021).

There also is a security implication with the strategic location of Gwadar Port. Being close to the Strait of Hormuz, where more than a fifth of oil transportation is carried out worldwide, the port location enables it to control the key shipping routes (Gholizadeh et al., 2020). This domination is not only in the trade sector; it renders significant implications in the energy security especially on China which aims at diversifying its energy routes not through the politically sensitive Strait of Malacca (Malik, 2012). In the case of Pakistan, Gwadar will be of significant help in terms of high security because it will be an alternative route to the sea, and Pakistan will have less reliance on the Karachi Port, which is near the Indian border and, hence, vulnerable (Rahman et al., 2021). Strategically, the port location offers strategic depth to Pakistan because it enables the country to observe the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and safeguard its maritime interests in the Arabian Sea and beyond (Rahman et al., 2021).

This growth in Gwadar Port has great repercussions on China Pakistan relationships and regional competitions. To China, Gwadar is a strategic component of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), where it has guaranteed safe passage of energy and trade routes that does not go through the Malacca Strait (Rahman, Naeem, & Ishaq, 2021). The

port also enhances the Chinese power in Indian Ocean region, which opposes the increasing influence of the U.S. and India in the region. Specifically, India views Gwadar as a threat to its maritime power and has invested a lot in the Chabahar Port in Iran in order to offset the rising influence of China (Malik, 2012). Such strategic considerations render Gwadar to be a hotbed of the current geopolitical tug-of-war between India and China where Pakistan is the center of this tug-of-war (Rahman et al., 2021). Although the future of Gwadar Port is bright and has the prospect of being a major transshipment hub in the region there are some challenges. The country (Pakistan) is also faced with internally based security issues especially in Balochistan where the area of Gwadar is situated. The development of the port has been hampered by terrorism, insurgency and regional instability (Malik, 2012). Moreover, the increasing interest of China, along with rivalry of other regional powers such as India and Iran, introduces additional complexity to the Gwadar as a hub of world trade. Nevertheless, given that these issues are overcome, Gwadar can become one of the most significant ports in the Indian Ocean region and stimulate the economic growth of Pakistan in the process (Gholizadeh et al., 2020).

Gwadar Port and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

A huge infrastructure and energy project, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is considered a transformational project on both sides Pakistan and China. In essence, Gwadar Port has been a strategic choke point and connects the western part of China to the Arabian Sea directly. CPEC greatly narrows the transportation distance and promotes trade connectivity by linking Kashgar in Xinjiang, China to Gwadar Port in Balochistan, Pakistan. Not only is this a cheaper logistical expense to China and this will be beneficial to them (particularly in their energy transportation), but this will also be a significant boost to the infrastructure development and the economic scene of Pakistan (Ahmad, Mi, & Fernald, 2020; Rizvi, 2015). The geographic position of Gwadar explains its importance as part of the Chinese attempt to find a less vulnerable way to transport energy and goods without having to go through the geopolitical difficulties of the South China Sea. By taking this new path, through a shorter and safer sea and land connection, China can have direct access to the world markets especially in the Middle East, avoiding the long and politically troublesome Malacca Strait (Khan, 2015). CPEC is a project within China Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) that can make Pakistan one of the major regional centers of trade and hence, minimize the dependency of China on the long-distance trade routes (Afzal & Naseem, 2018).

The mainstay of the CPEC project is infrastructure and Gwadar Port is at the centre of these developments. The port itself is undergoing great investments as far as modernization and capacity building are concerned, thus it has become a world class trade hub. Also the road and rail connections that are being developed between Gwadar and the western parts of China will enable the transportation of goods and energy resources to be done faster and at a cheaper rate which will give the Chinese a

much needed trade outlet. These are infrastructure improvements that are backed by an estimated 46 billion dollars investment (Ali, 2020) and not only the port but also energy projects such as power plants and pipelines which would ensure long term energy security of both countries (Afzal & Naseem, 2018). The improvements are meant to ease the debilitating energy crisis in Pakistan as they would help it transfer energy imported by China and Central Asia to its economy. Moreover, the enhanced connectivity to provinces and China is likely to incite the growth in the region, specifically in the provinces of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, which were traditionally neglected in terms of infrastructure (Rizvi, 2015). Such initiatives, such as highways, such as the Karakoram Highway, and the proposed rail networks are also very important to boost local commerce and to connect Pakistan with the adjacent regions (Khan, 2015).

Gwadar Port's strategic positioning in the CPEC network offers enormous potential for transforming regional trade. The port not only connects China to the Middle East and Africa but also creates an economic bridge between Pakistan and Central Asia. Trade routes via Gwadar will significantly reduce the time and cost involved in transporting goods from the landlocked Central Asian countries to global markets (Afzal & Naseem, 2018). This potential is particularly important as countries like Afghanistan and Tajikistan, with limited access to maritime routes, see Gwadar as a gateway to international trade. For Pakistan, this translates into enhanced regional integration, where trade flows from Central Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East converge. By improving connectivity, CPEC fosters trade between Pakistan, China, Iran, Afghanistan, and India, positioning Pakistan as a central player in regional economic activity (Ali, 2020). Gwadar's capacity to handle a diverse array of goods will strengthen Pakistan's trade infrastructure, attracting both foreign and regional investments. However, the success of this trade integration hinges on the security and political stability of the region (Rizvi, 2015).

Despite its vast potential, the development of Gwadar Port and the broader CPEC initiative faces several challenges. These include concerns over security, particularly in the conflict-ridden Balochistan region, where insurgent groups have targeted Chinese interests in the past (Ahmad, Mi, & Fernald, 2020). While Pakistan has bolstered security efforts by deploying large forces to protect the projects, these concerns persist and could hinder the smooth execution of CPEC plans (Khan, 2015). Additionally, the geopolitical implications of CPEC are significant, as India perceives the project as a strategic maneuver by China to expand its influence in the Indian Ocean. The rivalry between India and China in this region complicates the future of CPEC, as it could exacerbate regional tensions (Ali, 2020).

The Role of Gwadar Port in Regional Connectivity

The Gwadar Port development is also central in increasing the connectivity between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Gwadar, situated conveniently at the southern coast of Pakistan close to the Strait of Hormuz, is emerging as a key trade

and transport gateway in the area. Gwadar is to be a part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that will connect China, South Asia, and Middle East, enhancing trade and transportation ties. This connectivity shortens the transport routes of goods and energy resources between these regions, which offers China another route to transport its goods which was previously in a geopolitically unstable Strait of Malacca (Ahmad, Mi, & Fernald, 2020). Also, the port provides landlocked nations such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan with the access to the global markets, which they sorely needed to the Arabian Sea (Rahman, Naeem, & Ishaq, 2022).

In addition, Gwadar is a key access point to landlocked nations especially Afghanistan and the Central Asian states to access the international trade lines. The Gwadar will be accessible to these countries, which in the past have suffered in terms of expensive and inefficient trade routes. This access is the most direct and least expensive means of reaching the international markets particularly in the case of resource rich nations such as the Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Afghan will also be a great beneficiary to this strategic advantage as it can access the Indian Ocean through Gwadar hence avoiding the traditional routes that are complex and politically demanding (Malik, 2012). The Gwadar has a strategic location that makes it to be a direct and efficient export channel of these countries, which further integrates them into regional and global trade networks (Rahman et al., 2022).

Besides transport by the sea, the possibility of Gwadar becoming a multimodal transport centre adds greater importance to it. The continued enhancement of critical infrastructure, including the Gwadar Eastbay Expressway and the New Gwadar International Airport, enables the port to cater to more than maritime transport capabilities, including those of land and air transport. Construction of effective rail connections especially the Gwadar-Kashgar railway line, China which will bring ease in connectivity between the sea, road and rail networks is an important feature of the CPEC project. This multimodal connectivity will significantly cut transporting time and costs, making Gwadar the regional and international trade, energy transportation, and supply chain hub (Rahman et al., 2022; Malik, 2012). Therefore, the infrastructure of Gwadar and its connection to the CPEC project label Gwadar as a critical point of the global trade route with extensive economic consequences of Pakistan and the entire region.

Regional Rivalries and Gwadar Port

The Gwadar Port is of strategic importance far beyond its geographical position, as it becomes a prominent actor in the larger geopolitical and economic competition in the area. The maritime trade routes of the Arabian Sea have always been dominated by regional ports in Dubai and Oman. Both Jebel Ali Port in Dubai and Port Sultan Qaboos in Oman have experienced a lot of investment and infrastructure building, thus presenting viable options to Gwadar. Nevertheless, the position of Gwadar, its deepwater port and proximity to Strait of Hormuz, provide strategic advantage over these opponents. A good example is that the deep draft of Gwadar will enable it to

host larger ships that are not able to dock in most of the current ports in the region such as Dubai (Malik, 2012). In addition to this, it is also a part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), in which its development will also guarantee significant investment to be made by Chinese organizations to strengthen its infrastructure to rival the already existing ports in the area (Chohana & Chandiob, 2021).

Another factor that complicates the future of Gwadar is a geopolitical rivalry between China and India. India has raised its concerns over the growing Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean especially due to the construction of Gwadar Port. India views it as a direct threat to its strategic power in the region especially with the port being located close to the strategic Hormuz Strait. The location of a Chinese facility at Gwadar may change the nature of the power equation in the Indian Ocean, where India will find it harder to extend its naval reach in the area (Chohana & Chandiob, 2021). Gwadar is, therefore, not only a business center but also a ticking time bomb of a possible war between two giants in the region. Chinese military, and in particular its naval, presence in the region, especially the one that is promoted by its so-called String of Pearls strategy, is expected to counterbalance the Indian influence, and Gwadar is envisaged as one of the hubs of this string (Malik, 2012; Khan et al., 2024).

The United States, meanwhile, has strategic interests in ensuring that no single power dominates the key maritime routes of the Indian Ocean. Gwadar's rise as a Chinese-supported port has raised alarm in Washington, especially as the U.S. seeks to maintain its presence in the region to safeguard the free flow of energy through the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial chokepoint. The U.S. has long maintained a significant naval presence in the Arabian Sea, particularly through its base at Diego Garcia. China's growing naval capabilities, along with its investment in Gwadar, might pose a challenge to U.S. naval dominance in the region. The U.S. has expressed concerns that Gwadar could serve as a Chinese military base, though China has denied these claims. Despite this, the potential for Gwadar to act as a dual-use facility, serving both commercial and military functions, remains a significant point of contention for U.S. policymakers (Khan et al., 2024; Malik, 2012). Gwadar Port's development is at the heart of several regional rivalries, with competition from other regional ports, particularly Dubai and Oman, intensifying the stakes. Additionally, the port's strategic alliance with China exacerbates tensions with India and attracts the attention of the United States, which views Chinese naval expansion in the region as a potential threat to its interests. The future of Gwadar, therefore, will not only shape Pakistan's economic future but also influence the broader geopolitical dynamics of the Indian Ocean region (Khan et al., 2024; Malik, 2012; Chohana & Chandiob, 2021).

Economic and Security Implications

Gwadar Port is a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project that could stimulate the economy of Pakistan and the region, in general, dramatically. As it is located in the cross point of the international sea routes, Gwadar has become a key trading point between south Asia, central Asia, Middle East and other regions. It is

proposed that the port will support the trade in the region by providing landlocked countries of Central Asia with access to the sea hence not relying on the longer and costly routes of trade. In addition to that, the establishment of Gwadar is expected to generate many employment opportunities in construction, transportation, and logistics, thus, leading to the generation of employment, especially in the less developed province of Balochistan (Khan, Shi, & Ali, 2024).

The port will also have a positive economic impact through the infrastructure investments to support the port development such as roads, railways and energy initiatives. The decision to incorporate Gwadar into the larger picture of CPEC means it will be connected to China western region and other important markets and thus become a critical hub of a larger system of trade routes. This is a major competitive advantage of the port since it is close to the international energy transit routes and most importantly the Strait of Hormuz. This facilitates the transportation of goods and energy more efficiently. This will save transportation costs and time and turn Gwadar into a viable investment choice, leading to promotion of industry and trade in Pakistan (Rahman, Naeem, & Ishaq, 2022; Malik, 2012).

Even though Gwadar Port has the prospects of economic gains, the development of the port is coupled with various security concerns. Balochistan the province that hosts the port has been one of the most unstable provinces in Pakistan since it has been facing insurgency and political instability. Insurgent groups such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) have also raised questions about the security of the local and foreign workers operating in the projects of CPEC (Ali, 2020). Moreover, the terrorists, such as the Pakistani Taliban (TTP), have targeted the Chinese workers and facilities, which indicates the threat to foreign investments in the area (Khan, Shi, & Ali, 2024). Pakistan has rolled out a lot of resources in efforts to secure Gwadar against such security threats by deploying special military forces to guard the port and the environs. The Pakistani Navy in cooperation with China plays an important role of defending the maritime routes that are vital to the operation of the port. Nevertheless, the geopolitical relationships of the region, as well as the interests of Iran, India, and the United States, make the situation even more complicated (Rahman, Naeem, & Ishaq, 2022). With the increase in the significance of Gwadar, it is bound to continue being targeted by a range of other forces aiming to interfere with Pakistan-China collaboration and stability in the region.

In addition to its economic significance, Gwadar Port holds considerable military strategic value for both Pakistan and China. From Pakistan's perspective, the port offers a much-needed alternative to Karachi, which has historically been vulnerable due to its proximity to India. Gwadar's location provides Pakistan with enhanced strategic depth and the ability to monitor critical maritime routes through the Strait of Hormuz. This is crucial for ensuring the security of Pakistan's trade routes and defending against potential maritime threats (Malik, 2012). For China, Gwadar serves as a key asset in its broader strategy to secure energy supplies and extend its naval

presence in the Indian Ocean. Given the port's proximity to the Persian Gulf and its role in connecting China to the Middle East, Gwadar is strategically positioned to reduce China's dependence on the Strait of Malacca a chokepoint for global oil trade. The development of Gwadar could, therefore, play a pivotal role in China's energy security by providing a more secure and efficient route for oil transportation (Rahman, Naeem, & Ishaq, 2022). Moreover, Gwadar offers China the opportunity to project its naval power into the Indian Ocean, challenging the maritime dominance of India and the United States in the region (Ali, 2020; Malik, 2012).

Future Prospects and Challenges

Gwadar Port holds immense potential to emerge as a global trade hub, particularly due to its strategic location, which connects key markets across South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, and beyond. As part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Gwadar is expected to become a crucial transit point for trade between China and the world, offering China an alternative, shorter route to the Middle East and Africa via the Arabian Sea. Given its deep-water harbor, which allows it to accommodate large vessels, and its proximity to the Strait of Hormuz a key maritime chokepoint for oil trade Gwadar is well-positioned to handle significant volumes of international trade in the future (Khan, Shi, & Ali, 2024). The port's expansion prospects include upgrading its infrastructure, expanding its capacity to handle even larger vessels, and improving its connectivity through road, rail, and pipeline links to Central Asia and China. The expansion of industrial zones around Gwadar will also stimulate local economic growth by attracting manufacturing, processing, and logistics operations, thus creating employment opportunities and further driving the regional economy. Moreover, Gwadar's potential as a transshipment hub for goods flowing between Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia further boosts its prospects as a key node in global trade routes (Rahman, Naeem, & Ishaq, 2022).

Despite the promising future of Gwadar Port, several challenges could hinder its growth. One of the most significant obstacles is political instability within Pakistan. Balochistan, where Gwadar is located, has historically been a region of unrest, with insurgent groups such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) continuing to challenge the central government's authority. This instability poses a risk to the safety of foreign workers and investors, particularly from China, who are essential for the development of Gwadar as part of CPEC (Ali, 2020). The ongoing political tensions, coupled with the challenge of managing diverse regional interests, could undermine the smooth functioning of the port and its surrounding infrastructure projects.

Additionally, regional rivalries are another significant challenge. Gwadar's strategic importance has made it a point of contention between Pakistan, India, and other regional powers like Iran. India, in particular, perceives the development of Gwadar as a move to expand Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean and undermine its maritime dominance. As a result, India has sought to counterbalance China's growing influence by strengthening its own ties with countries in the region, such as Iran, which is also

developing the Chabahar Port, located not far from Gwadar. This geopolitical competition could lead to tensions, further complicating the security situation and limiting Gwadar's potential to function as a fully integrated global trade hub (Malik, 2012). Economic mismanagement also poses a significant challenge. Given the massive financial investments required to develop Gwadar Port and the surrounding infrastructure, effective governance and financial management are essential for the success of the port. The potential for economic mismanagement, corruption, and inefficiencies in the allocation of resources could delay or hinder the intended economic benefits of the port (Rahman, Naeem, & Ishaq, 2022). Furthermore, there is a need to ensure that the local population in Balochistan benefits from the port's development, addressing concerns about displacement, land rights, and access to employment.

The future role of Gwadar Port will be heavily influenced by the partnerships it forms with global powers, particularly China, the Gulf countries, and other regional stakeholders. China's involvement in the development of Gwadar under the CPEC framework provides it with significant leverage in shaping the port's growth trajectory. As China continues to invest in Gwadar and strengthen its maritime presence in the Indian Ocean, it could potentially use the port for naval purposes, which could reshape the region's security landscape. This partnership also provides China with greater energy security by offering a shorter route for oil imports from the Middle East, bypassing the vulnerable Strait of Malacca (Khan, Shi, & Ali, 2024).

Gwadar has attracted the interest of the Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), owing to its strategic position as a trade corridor. Such countries have already shown their readiness to invest in the infrastructure projects of the port and to create business relations in Gwadar which will bring more funds to the country. Besides, the UAE has well-established ports such as the Jebel Ali port, and it can cooperate with Gwadar in the development of transshipment services thereby improving its competitiveness in the region (Malik, 2012). Also, international alliances with other key players like the United States, European Union, and economic regional blocs would determine the position of Gwadar in the international economy. Such nations will tend to consider the security implication of the port given the growing influence of China in the region. Such strategic alliances with these world players may assist in making sure that the development of Gwadar is as per the international standards and this would be important in positioning Gwadar as an international trade hub.

Conclusion

The Gwadar Port is one of the most significant sites in the South Asian geopolitical and economic context and the world as a whole as it is a focal point of international competition and regional connectivity hub. The fact that it is strategically located, close to the Strait of Hormuz which is a global choke point in terms of oil deliveries, is what makes it very important in terms of international trade and energy security.

Gwadar is a key component of the China- Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) through which China aims to diversify its energy supply channels, lessen its reliance on the Strait of Malacca and extend its power to the Indian Ocean. To Pakistan, the port provides economic regeneration, employment, and greater regionalization, especially to the landlocked Central Asian countries. Nevertheless, the development of Gwadar is not a problem-free process. Political uncertainties in Balochistan, security concerns of insurgent groups, and regional politics especially between China, India and the United States are major challenges. The success of the port depends on these issues on one hand and the conflicting interest of global and regional powers.

In the future, Gwadar Port can become the trading centre of the world, but it is subject to its challenges which it should overcome successfully. The deep-water capacity of the port, along with the current investments in infrastructure, makes it a critical point in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), because it contributes to economic development and regional integration. Its involvement in the international trade could be further increased by strategic affiliations with the Gulf States, China, and other actors across the globe. But the realization of this potential needs strong governance, resolution of a conflict in Balochistan, and diplomacy to reduce geopolitical tensions. The development of Gwadar will not only determine the economic future of Pakistan, but also the dynamics of the power in the Indian ocean region, which is why Gwadar will play a central role in the 21st-century maritime and economic order. The future of the port will be determined by the extent to which the stakeholders resolve its complexities but take advantage of its unrivalled strategic positioning.

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