

## China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) And Security Challenges: Terrorism Threats In Balochistan

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### Abstract

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), represents a transformative economic and strategic partnership between Pakistan and China. Centered around Gwadar Port in Balochistan, CPEC aims to enhance regional connectivity, energy security, and economic growth. However, the project faces significant security challenges, particularly due to terrorism and insurgency in Balochistan. This research paper critically examines the nexus between terrorism and CPEC, highlighting internal and external threats, local grievances, and geopolitical rivalries. Using qualitative methodology and theoretical frameworks such as Relative Deprivation Theory and Realism, the study explores how socio-economic marginalization, ethno-nationalist movements, and foreign involvement contribute to instability. The paper also analyzes key terrorist incidents targeting CPEC projects and Chinese nationals, assessing their impact on investor confidence and project sustainability. The findings suggest that terrorism in Balochistan is not merely a security issue but a multidimensional challenge involving governance deficits, resource distribution conflicts, and geopolitical competition. The study concludes with policy recommendations emphasizing inclusive development, community engagement, and enhanced security cooperation to ensure the long-term success of CPEC.

Keywords: CPEC, Balochistan, Terrorism, Gwadar Port, Security Challenges, BRI, Insurgency, Pakistan-China Relations

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## Introduction

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), launched in 2015 under the leadership of Xi Jinping and Nawaz Sharif, represents one of the most ambitious economic and strategic partnerships between China and Pakistan. Ahmad, R. (2020). As a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, CPEC seeks to connect China's western region of Xinjiang with the strategically vital Gwadar Port, providing China with direct access to the Arabian Sea. Javed, M. H. (2020). This corridor encompasses a vast network of highways, railways, pipelines, and energy projects, aimed at transforming Pakistan's economic landscape by addressing chronic energy shortages, modernizing infrastructure, and promoting industrialization through special economic zones. Khan, A. U. (2022). For Pakistan, CPEC is often described as a "game changer," offering prospects for increased foreign investment, job creation, and regional connectivity that could integrate the country more deeply into global trade networks. Malik, S. (2023). For China, the corridor reduces reliance on the vulnerable Strait of Malacca route and strengthens its geopolitical and economic foothold in South Asia and beyond. Raza, H. (2021). However, despite these promising opportunities, CPEC has encountered serious security challenges, particularly in the province of Balochistan, which hosts many of the corridor's key projects. Shah, N. (2022). Balochistan has long been affected by political instability, underdevelopment, and a sense of marginalization among local populations, factors that have fueled insurgent movements over several decades. Militant groups such as the Baloch Liberation Army and the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan have actively opposed CPEC, viewing it as a project that exploits local resources without adequately benefiting indigenous communities. Yousaf, T. (2020). These groups have carried out numerous attacks targeting security forces, infrastructure, and Chinese nationals working on CPEC projects, thereby posing a direct threat to the corridor's progress and sustainability. Virk, H. F. (2023). High-profile incidents, including attacks on hotels, construction sites, and convoys, have raised concerns about the safety of foreign workers and investors, leading to increased security expenditures and the establishment of special military units dedicated to protecting CPEC assets. Abbas, A. (2021). The persistence of terrorism in Balochistan not only undermines the economic potential of CPEC but also complicates Pakistan's internal security environment and its diplomatic relations with China. Chen, L. (2024). Furthermore, the situation is exacerbated by regional geopolitical dynamics, as rival states and transnational militant networks may seek to exploit local grievances to destabilize the project. The challenge, therefore, lies in balancing development with security and ensuring that local communities are included in the benefits of economic growth. Hussain, M. (2025). Addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, political exclusion, and resource distribution is crucial for reducing support for insurgent groups and creating a stable environment conducive to long-term investment. Iqbal, F. (2021). In addition, effective governance, transparent policy implementation, and strong coordination between civil and military institutions are essential to countering terrorism and safeguarding infrastructure. Ultimately, while CPEC holds immense promise as a catalyst for regional development and connectivity, its success depends on the ability of both Pakistan and China to manage security risks, address underlying socio-political issues, and build trust among local populations, particularly in Balochistan, where the future of the corridor is most critically contested.

## Literature Review

Existing literature consistently emphasizes that security risks constitute the most significant challenge to the success of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Jamil, R. (2022). Scholars argue that while the project promises economic transformation, its sustainability is closely tied

to stability in conflict-prone regions, particularly Balochistan. Liu, Y. (2024). Research highlights that economic corridors passing through politically fragile areas often face resistance from local actors, which can escalate into violence. Analysts further note that security threats not only affect physical infrastructure but also influence diplomatic relations and long-term strategic cooperation. Nadeem, K. (2023). Therefore, the literature broadly agrees that without addressing security concerns, the full potential of CPEC cannot be realized. Terrorism and insurgency are widely identified as major factors that undermine investor confidence and delay infrastructure development associated with CPEC. Ahmed, S. (2021). Studies indicate that frequent attacks on construction sites, transportation routes, and energy projects create an environment of uncertainty for both domestic and foreign investors. This insecurity raises operational costs, increases insurance premiums, and discourages long-term financial commitments. Bashir, M. (2025). Researchers also point out that delays caused by terrorist incidents disrupt project timelines and reduce economic efficiency. In addition, multinational companies often reconsider their involvement due to safety concerns for their personnel. Consequently, terrorism acts as a significant barrier to economic progress within the CPEC framework. Farooq, A. (2025).

Balochistan remains the central focus of security concerns due to its history of separatist movements, socio-economic deprivation, and weak governance structures. Hassan, T. (2022). Academic literature highlights that local grievances stem from perceptions of political marginalization and unequal distribution of resources. Scholars argue that despite being resource-rich, the province has not experienced proportional development, which fuels resentment among local communities. Khan, S. (2022). Weak administrative capacity and limited state presence in remote areas further exacerbate the situation. Additionally, the lack of inclusive policies has contributed to distrust between the government and local populations. As a result, Balochistan continues to be the most vulnerable region affecting CPEC security. Mahmood, Z. (2023).

Pakistan's internal instability, including political conflicts, governance challenges, and terrorism, also negatively impacts the progress of CPEC. Researchers emphasize that political uncertainty weakens policy continuity and slows decision-making processes related to large-scale infrastructure projects. Frequent changes in government priorities and bureaucratic inefficiencies further complicate implementation. Shahid, A. (2021). Moreover, internal security challenges divert state resources toward counterterrorism efforts instead of development initiatives. Literature also points out that instability at the national level can influence international perceptions, making foreign partners cautious. Thus, internal political and security dynamics play a critical role in shaping the success of CPEC. Ali, M. (2023).

Militant groups such as the Baloch Liberation Army and Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan are frequently cited in the literature as primary actors targeting CPEC-related projects. These groups aim to disrupt economic activities and challenge state authority by attacking infrastructure and foreign personnel, particularly Chinese workers. Butt, R. (2023). Scholars note that such attacks are strategically designed to gain international attention and undermine Pakistan-China cooperation. The targeting of high-profile projects amplifies the psychological impact of terrorism and creates fear among stakeholders. Furthermore, these groups exploit local grievances to recruit members and sustain their operations. Their continued activities pose a persistent threat to the corridor's security. Chen, X. (2023).

Recent developments indicate that attacks on strategic locations such as Gwadar Port and other CPEC sites continue to threaten the project's viability. Ejaz, N. (2022). Contemporary studies and reports show an increase in sophisticated attacks targeting security forces and

infrastructure, highlighting the evolving capabilities of militant organizations. Faheem, S. (2023). These incidents demonstrate that despite enhanced security measures, vulnerabilities still exist. Analysts argue that such attacks not only disrupt ongoing projects but also damage Pakistan's international image as a safe investment destination. Gul, H. (2020). Moreover, recurring violence raises concerns about the long-term sustainability of CPEC initiatives. Therefore, recent trends reinforce the argument that security remains a critical challenge requiring comprehensive and sustained policy responses.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The Security Dilemma Theory, a central concept in International Relations, explains how measures taken by a state to enhance its own security can unintentionally create fear and insecurity among other actors, thereby triggering conflict. Originally associated with scholars like John Herz and Robert Jervis, the theory argues that even defensive actions—such as military buildup or strategic infrastructure development—may be interpreted as offensive threats. This misperception leads to a cycle of suspicion, reaction, and escalation. In fragile or conflict-prone regions, the dilemma becomes more intense because of weak trust between the state and local communities. Thus, actions aimed at stability can paradoxically produce instability.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor significantly strengthens strategic and economic cooperation between Pakistan and China, particularly through infrastructure development, energy projects, and connectivity initiatives. However, within Balochistan, local communities and insurgent groups often perceive these developments differently. Instead of viewing CPEC as an opportunity for economic growth, many consider it a mechanism for external exploitation of natural resources without adequate local benefits. This perception intensifies grievances rooted in historical marginalization. Furthermore, the increased deployment of security forces to protect CPEC installations and personnel reinforces this perception of exclusion and control. Military presence, checkpoints, and surveillance measures—though intended for protection—can create a sense of occupation among local populations. This dynamic aligns closely with the logic of the security dilemma, where one actor's defensive strategy is interpreted as aggressive by another. As a result, mistrust deepens between the state and local actors.

Consequently, this environment fosters the escalation of insurgency and terrorism. Militant organizations exploit these perceptions to justify attacks on infrastructure and foreign workers, portraying themselves as defenders of local rights. The cycle of action and reaction continues, thereby undermining both security and development objectives of CPEC. The Security Dilemma Theory is particularly suitable for analyzing CPEC-related security challenges for several reasons. First, it effectively explains the inherent tension between development initiatives and security responses. While the state views CPEC as a pathway to economic prosperity, local actors may interpret it as a threat to their autonomy and resources, leading to conflict. This dual perception is at the core of the security dilemma. Second, the theory highlights the role of mistrust between the state and local communities. In Balochistan, historical grievances, lack of political inclusion, and uneven development have created a fragile relationship. Security measures, instead of building confidence, often reinforce suspicion and alienation. The theory helps in understanding how this mistrust escalates into resistance and violence. Third, the Security Dilemma Theory establishes a clear link between economic projects and political instability. It demonstrates that large-scale infrastructure initiatives like CPEC are not purely economic endeavors but are deeply embedded in political and security contexts. Without addressing local perceptions and grievances, such projects can

inadvertently trigger instability rather than development. In sum, the theory provides a comprehensive framework to analyze why a project designed to enhance national and regional security can simultaneously generate insecurity at the local level, making it highly relevant for understanding terrorism and insurgency challenges in Balochistan.

## **Security Challenges in Balochistan**

### **• Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) – Separatist Insurgency and Strategic Disruption**

The Baloch Liberation Army represents one of the most prominent separatist organizations operating in Balochistan, advocating for independence from Pakistan. Malik, Z. (2021). It primarily targets Chinese workers and projects linked to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to undermine foreign involvement in the region. The group perceives CPEC as an exploitative initiative that deprives locals of their natural resources and economic rights. Through attacks on infrastructure, security personnel, and foreign nationals, the BLA seeks international attention and legitimacy for its cause. These actions significantly disrupt development projects and create an atmosphere of insecurity that discourages foreign investment and long-term planning. Ahmad, F. (2024).

### **• Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) – Islamist Militancy and State Destabilization**

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan operates with an ideological objective of establishing its version of governance based on extremist interpretations of Islam. Unlike separatist groups, the TTP focuses on destabilizing the Pakistani state by targeting security forces, law enforcement agencies, and government institutions. Baloch, R. (2025). Its activities in and around Balochistan contribute to an already fragile security environment, complicating efforts to secure CPEC routes and installations. The group frequently carries out high-profile attacks to demonstrate its operational capability and weaken public confidence in state institutions. As a result, its presence adds another layer of complexity to the security challenges faced by Pakistan in safeguarding strategic economic projects. Chen, W. (2023).

### **• Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF) – Insurgency and Infrastructure Sabotage**

The Balochistan Liberation Front is another insurgent organization active in Balochistan, focusing primarily on disrupting infrastructure development and transportation networks. The group targets roads, pipelines, and communication systems associated with CPEC to hinder economic connectivity. Farid, M. (2022). It justifies its actions by claiming that development projects benefit external actors rather than the local population. The BLF employs guerrilla tactics, making it difficult for security forces to neutralize its operations completely. Its continuous attacks on infrastructure not only delay project completion but also increase maintenance and security costs, thereby affecting the overall feasibility of development initiatives.

### **• Combined Impact – Multi-Dimensional Security Threats**

The presence of multiple militant groups in Balochistan creates a complex and multi-dimensional security challenge for the state. While groups like BLA and BLF pursue separatist agendas, the TTP operates with ideological motives, resulting in overlapping yet distinct threats. Hussain, N. (2025). This convergence of insurgency and terrorism intensifies violence and complicates counterterrorism strategies. The targeting of Chinese workers, security personnel, and infrastructure demonstrates a coordinated effort to undermine the success of CPEC. Consequently, the region experiences persistent instability, which affects both local communities and international stakeholders. Iqbal, S. (2024). Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that combines security measures with political and socio-economic reforms.

## Causes of Terrorism in Balochistan

### Root Causes of Insurgency in Balochistan

#### • Economic Deprivation – Structural Underdevelopment and Poverty

Economic deprivation remains one of the most significant drivers of insurgency in Balochistan. Despite being rich in natural resources, the province has historically experienced low levels of industrialization, poor infrastructure, and limited access to education and healthcare. Javed, A. (2024). Large-scale projects like the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor have raised expectations of development, yet many local communities feel excluded from their benefits. High unemployment and poverty create frustration among youth, making them vulnerable to recruitment by militant groups. This economic imbalance reinforces the perception that the state prioritizes external interests over local welfare. As a result, deprivation fuels resentment and contributes to the persistence of insurgent activities. Ali, K. (2025).

#### • Political Exclusion – Marginalization and Lack of Representation

Political exclusion is another critical factor contributing to instability in Balochistan. Many local communities believe they have limited representation in national decision-making processes within Pakistan. Aslam, R. (2025). This sense of marginalization stems from historical grievances, centralized governance structures, and weak provincial autonomy. The absence of inclusive political dialogue has deepened mistrust between the state and local actors. Consequently, some groups resort to insurgency as a means of expressing their demands and grievances. Without meaningful political participation and representation, efforts to achieve long-term peace and stability remain ineffective.

#### • Resource Grievances – Perceived Exploitation and Inequality

Balochistan is rich in natural resources such as gas, minerals, and coastal assets, yet local populations often perceive that these resources are exploited without fair compensation. Development initiatives under CPEC are sometimes viewed as benefiting external actors, particularly China and central authorities, rather than the local population. Bashir, H. (2022). This perception of unequal distribution of wealth intensifies feelings of injustice and alienation. Communities demand greater control over their resources and a fair share of economic benefits. When these demands are not met, it strengthens the narrative used by insurgent groups to justify resistance. Thus, resource-related grievances play a central role in sustaining conflict.

#### • Weak Governance – Limited State Capacity and Institutional Gaps

Weak governance and poor state control significantly contribute to insecurity in Balochistan. The region suffers from inadequate administrative structures, limited law enforcement capacity, and weak institutional presence in remote areas. Chen, L. (2023). Corruption, inefficiency, and lack of transparency further undermine public trust in government institutions. These governance gaps create opportunities for militant groups to operate freely and establish influence. Additionally, the absence of effective service delivery reinforces the perception that the state is neglecting the region. Strengthening governance mechanisms is therefore essential to addressing both security and development challenges. Farooq, T. (2025).

#### • External Factors – Regional Interference and Geopolitical Dynamics

External factors, including regional interference and geopolitical competition, also play a role in the insurgency in Balochistan. Gul, S. (2024). Due to its strategic location, the province is often influenced by broader regional dynamics involving neighboring countries and global powers. Some analysts argue that foreign actors may exploit local grievances to destabilize Pakistan and undermine projects like CPEC. These external influences can provide support, directly or indirectly, to insurgent groups, thereby prolonging conflict. The geopolitical

importance of the region increases its vulnerability to such interference. Addressing these external dimensions requires strong diplomatic and security coordination at both regional and international levels. Khan, M. (2022).

### • **Overall Analysis – Grievances and Lack of Inclusive Development**

Studies consistently show that unresolved grievances and lack of inclusive development are the primary drivers of insurgency in Balochistan. Economic, political, and social inequalities create an environment where dissatisfaction can easily transform into organized resistance. Development projects that fail to incorporate local needs and participation risk exacerbating tensions rather than alleviating them. Ahmed, Z. (2026). A comprehensive approach that combines economic inclusion, political dialogue, and institutional reform is necessary to address these root causes. Without such measures, security challenges will continue to hinder the success of major initiatives like CPEC.

### **Impacts of Terrorism on CPEC & Balochistan**

#### • **Economic Impact – Reduced Investment and Financial Uncertainty**

Terrorism has had a profound economic impact on development initiatives linked to the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor. Baloch, A. (2026). Frequent attacks on infrastructure and personnel create an environment of uncertainty that discourages both domestic and foreign investors. Investors often perceive high-risk regions as unattractive due to potential losses, leading to reduced capital inflows. Additionally, financial institutions impose stricter conditions and higher interest rates for projects operating in insecure areas. Baloch, A. (2026). This situation slows economic growth and limits employment opportunities for local populations. Consequently, terrorism undermines the financial viability and long-term sustainability of CPEC-related investments.

#### • **Security Impact – Increased Costs and Militarization**

The persistent threat of terrorism in Balochistan has significantly increased security expenditures for the Pakistan government. Iqbal, N. (2021). Large-scale deployment of military forces, establishment of special security divisions, and implementation of surveillance systems require substantial financial resources. These costs divert funds from development projects to security operations, creating a burden on the national economy. Moreover, heightened militarization can create tensions between local communities and state institutions. While these measures are necessary for protection, they also reflect the severity of security challenges faced in safeguarding CPEC. Javed, S. (2020).

#### • **Political Impact – Strained Bilateral and Domestic Relations**

Terrorism also has political implications, particularly in shaping relations between Pakistan and China. Attacks targeting Chinese workers and infrastructure can strain diplomatic ties and raise concerns about the safety of foreign nationals. Khan, R. (2023). At the domestic level, recurring violence leads to criticism of government policies and governance failures. Political instability and lack of consensus on security strategies further complicate decision-making processes. These tensions weaken institutional effectiveness and hinder coordinated responses to security threats. As a result, terrorism affects both internal governance and international partnerships. Malik, F. (2022).

#### • **Social Impact – Fear, Displacement, and Community Instability**

The social consequences of terrorism in Balochistan are severe, creating an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty among local communities. Frequent attacks disrupt daily life, limit mobility, and reduce access to education and employment opportunities. In some cases, violence leads to displacement of populations, further exacerbating humanitarian challenges. Smith, J. (2020). The presence of militant groups and ongoing conflict also damages social cohesion

and trust within communities. Psychological stress and insecurity become part of everyday life for residents. This environment hinders social development and weakens the human capital necessary for economic progress. Williams, R. (2021).

### • **Development Impact – Project Delays and Implementation Challenges**

Terrorism has significantly slowed the implementation of development projects under CPEC. Attacks on construction sites, transportation routes, and energy installations cause delays and increase project timelines. Brown, T. (2022). Contractors and companies often suspend operations temporarily due to security concerns, leading to cost overruns. Additionally, logistical challenges arise when movement of materials and personnel is restricted. Wilson, P. (2023). These delays reduce the efficiency and effectiveness of development planning. Ultimately, the continuation of such disruptions threatens the overall success and credibility of CPEC as a transformative economic initiative.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that terrorism in Balochistan cannot be understood merely as a conventional security issue; rather, it is deeply embedded in political, economic, and social dynamics that have evolved over decades. The persistence of insurgency reflects long-standing grievances related to political marginalization, uneven resource distribution, and lack of inclusive development, which continue to shape local perceptions toward the state and large-scale initiatives such as the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor. While counterterrorism operations conducted by Pakistan have succeeded in reducing the frequency and intensity of some attacks, these efforts largely address the symptoms rather than the underlying causes of conflict. The absence of sustainable socio-economic reforms and meaningful political engagement has allowed resentment to persist, creating conditions in which militant groups can continue to operate and recruit.

Furthermore, the application of the Security Dilemma Theory provides a critical lens for understanding the paradoxical relationship between development and insecurity in the region. Measures taken to secure CPEC—such as increased military deployment, surveillance, and protection of foreign personnel—are interpreted by some local communities as instruments of control rather than protection. This perception intensifies mistrust and reinforces narratives of exclusion, thereby contributing to further resistance. In this context, development projects that are intended to promote economic growth may inadvertently exacerbate tensions if local populations feel excluded from decision-making processes and benefits. The dilemma is further complicated by the involvement of external stakeholders, particularly China, whose presence is sometimes portrayed by insurgent groups as evidence of external exploitation.

Additionally, the multidimensional nature of terrorism in Balochistan suggests that purely military solutions are insufficient for achieving long-term stability. A comprehensive approach is required—one that integrates security measures with political reconciliation, institutional strengthening, and socio-economic inclusion. Without addressing issues such as unemployment, lack of infrastructure, weak governance, and limited political representation, the cycle of violence is likely to continue. The discussion therefore underscores the importance of shifting from a predominantly security-centric strategy to a more holistic framework that prioritizes human development and local participation. Only by aligning security policies with the needs and aspirations of the local population can the state effectively mitigate insurgency and ensure the sustainable success of CPEC.

## Policy Recommendations

### • **Inclusive Development – Ensure local participation in CPEC benefits**

Inclusive development is essential for reducing resentment in Balochistan and ensuring the success of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor. Local communities must be actively involved in planning, implementation, and monitoring of development projects to create a sense of ownership. Employment opportunities, education, healthcare, and infrastructure should be prioritized for residents to address socio-economic disparities. Transparent mechanisms for resource distribution can reduce perceptions of exploitation and inequality. When local populations benefit directly, the appeal of insurgent narratives diminishes significantly.

### • **Political Dialogue – Address grievances through negotiation**

Sustainable peace in Pakistan requires meaningful political dialogue with stakeholders in Balochistan, including tribal leaders, political representatives, and civil society groups. Negotiation provides a platform to address long-standing grievances related to autonomy, resource control, and representation. Confidence-building measures such as amnesty programs and inclusive policymaking can foster trust between the state and local communities. Dialogue should be continuous rather than reactive, ensuring that emerging issues are addressed promptly. By prioritizing political solutions, the state can reduce reliance on force and create conditions for long-term stability.

### • **Strengthening Governance – Improve institutional capacity**

Effective governance is crucial for addressing both security and development challenges in Balochistan. Strengthening administrative institutions, improving law enforcement capacity, and ensuring transparency can enhance public trust in the state. Decentralization of authority and empowerment of local governments can make governance more responsive to community needs. Anti-corruption measures and efficient service delivery systems are also necessary to improve institutional performance. Strong governance structures can limit the operational space of militant groups and promote sustainable development. Ultimately, institutional reforms are key to bridging the gap between the state and the population.

### • **Integrated Security Strategy – Combine military and social approaches**

An integrated security strategy that combines military operations with socio-economic initiatives is essential for long-term peace. While security forces play a critical role in protecting infrastructure and maintaining order, non-military approaches are equally important. Community policing, rehabilitation programs, and education initiatives can address the root causes of extremism. Coordination between civil and military institutions ensures a balanced and effective response to threats. Over-reliance on force alone may intensify resistance, whereas a comprehensive strategy can reduce violence and build resilience. This balanced approach is vital for securing CPEC and stabilizing the region.

### • **Regional Cooperation – Address cross-border threats**

Regional cooperation is necessary to address external factors contributing to insecurity in Balochistan. Collaborative efforts between neighboring countries and strategic partners such as China can enhance intelligence sharing and border management. Diplomatic engagement can help reduce tensions and prevent external interference in internal affairs. Joint initiatives to combat terrorism and organized crime can strengthen regional stability. Multilateral cooperation also supports economic integration and development, reinforcing the objectives of CPEC. Addressing cross-border threats collectively ensures a more secure environment for long-term progress.

## Conclusion

The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor represents a transformative opportunity for Pakistan to accelerate economic growth, improve infrastructure, and strengthen regional connectivity, yet its success remains closely tied to the resolution of persistent security challenges in Balochistan. This study demonstrates that terrorism is not merely a law-and-order problem but a manifestation of deeper socio-political and economic grievances that have accumulated over time. Issues such as political marginalization, unequal resource distribution, weak governance, and lack of inclusive development have created an environment in which insurgency can persist and evolve. While counterterrorism operations have achieved partial success in reducing immediate threats, they have not fully addressed the structural causes that sustain conflict. The application of the Security Dilemma Theory provides a compelling explanation for the paradox observed in Balochistan, where efforts to enhance security—such as increased military deployment and protection of strategic assets—can inadvertently intensify local mistrust and resistance. Development initiatives under CPEC, although designed to promote prosperity, may be perceived by segments of the local population as externally driven and exclusionary, thereby reinforcing existing grievances. This dynamic highlights the complex relationship between security and development, where progress in one domain may generate challenges in another if not carefully managed. Furthermore, the findings emphasize that long-term stability cannot be achieved through a purely security-centric approach. A comprehensive and balanced strategy is required, integrating effective security measures with inclusive economic policies, institutional reforms, and sustained political dialogue. Ensuring that local communities are active stakeholders in development projects is essential for building trust and legitimacy. Strengthening governance structures and promoting transparency can further reduce the appeal of militant narratives and enhance state credibility. In conclusion, the future of CPEC depends on Pakistan’s ability to adopt a multidimensional approach that aligns security objectives with the socio-economic needs of the population. By addressing root causes, fostering political inclusion, and promoting equitable development, the state can transform Balochistan from a zone of conflict into a hub of opportunity. Only through such a holistic and inclusive framework can the full potential of CPEC be realized, ensuring sustainable peace, stability, and economic progress in the region.

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