

## China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Case Study of Internal Security Challenge Faced by Pakistan

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*The security issues that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is now experiencing are examined in this essay. As part of the One Belt One Road (OBOR) application, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) seeks to attach the ports of Kashgar in China with Gwadar in Pakistan. With an anticipated of entirety date of 2030 and an expenditure of \$46 billion, CPEC is anticipated to cope with some of issues impacting regional protection and to combat exclusive organizations that take gain of inner and external ethnic tensions between the 2 nations. But most effective if each government successfully cope with the associated security problems will the hall be capable of evolve. One of the maximum essential strategic and business partnerships in South Asia is the relationship between China and Pakistan. Both countries emphasize their centuries-long, trusting, and sincere historical exchanges. With a predicted \$sixty-two billion, the Chinese investment in CPEC is the biggest economic dedication ever made among these two friendly nations. The success of the corridor is jeopardized by the various inner and foreign protection dangers that each international locations face regardless of this strong collaboration. In addition to wider geopolitical conflicts involving the USA, UK, and Israel, Pakistan confronts protection concerns from nearby rivals like Afghanistan and India. By helping nationalist actions like the Baloch, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, and Sipah-e-Muhammad, as well as terrorist businesses just like the Taliban and ISIS, those nations exacerbate internal warfare in Pakistan. In light of the CPEC, this paper examines the complex threats to Pakistan's inner safety.*

## 1. Introduction

From Gwadar in Balochistan to Kashgar in China's Xinjiang province, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) stretches almost the whole length of Pakistan. Before accomplishing the Khunjerab Pass, it passes thru a number of provinces, such as Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Azad Kashmir, as well as the Gilgit-Baltistan place (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015).

Around the globe, local economies had been substantially impacted by both natural and man-made calamities, inclusive of terrorism, floods, economic downturns, inflation, and diseases. Both advanced and developing countries are in particular liable to terrorism and cutting-edge protection challenges. The United States launched "Operation Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan as a part of a big global counterterrorism effort after the September 11 attacks. In addition to its purpose of fighting insurgency in Afghanistan, this operation had some distance-achieving outcomes on Pakistan. Since the Taliban's comeback has precipitated complicated problems for Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the US, the insurgency's spillover into Pakistan has led to significant political and economic difficulties (Rafique & Anwar, 2014). Pakistan's political stability and national integrity are significantly threatened by militant violence, which creates concerns that need to be carefully considered. Pakistan has several internal and foreign security issues that have a big influence on the stability of the nation (Ibrar et al., 2016). Defects in Pakistan's economic policies have made these problems worse by impeding efficient resource allocation and decision-making.

China is spearheading the major infrastructure investment known as CPEC, which is seen as a game-changing initiative for strengthening Pakistan's economic and regional connections. It aims to connect Asia with the Middle East, Europe, and Africa as a crucial component of China's "One Belt, One Road" (OBOR) program. However, a project of this magnitude entails a number of intricate difficulties and significant concerns over its implementation. One of the biggest obstacles to the proper implementation of CPEC is security concerns. Pakistan has been battling terrorist groups that pose a danger to CPEC projects for many years, which might cause delays and disruptions in the project's development (Jamal, 2015). Pakistan's growth is often impeded by a number of internal and foreign security issues, which have a negative impact on its economic stability and national unity due to its strategically significant position (Siddiqui, 2019).

Since Pakistan's founding in 1947, the long-standing, mutually respectful, and trustworthy friendship between China and Pakistan has only been stronger. The "Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence," which serve as the foundation for this relationship, have promoted cooperation in a number of industries and opened the door for robust CPEC projects (Ali, 2017). Chinese Premier Li Keqiang first proposed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in 2013, and it was officially recognized during President Xi Jinping's 2015 visit to Pakistan. This crucial occasion led to a formal agreement to build CPEC infrastructure, which would connect Gwadar in the south to Kashgar in the north and establish Pakistan as an essential part of the Maritime Silk Road and the New Silk Road Economic Belt of the twenty-first century (Mengsheng, 2015).

Nawaz Sharif, the top minister of Pakistan, visited China in 2014 and inked 19 contracts with Chinese groups and banks. This movement strengthened pledges for infrastructure and power projects alongside the CPEC route. President Xi's visit to Pakistan in April 2015 in addition cemented the cooperation, main to fifty-one agreements totaling \$forty six billion that improved Pakistan's infrastructure and strength sectors (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). These occasions highlight the strategic importance of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which serves as both a conduit for economic expansion and a crucial vicinity for safety concerns essential to its success.

## 2. Understanding Internal Security Challenges in Pakistan

Numerous domestic security concerns that Pakistan is dealing with jeopardise the stability and a hit implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The developing effect of Talibanization in places like the western parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) is one of the maximum urgent troubles. Particularly in the tribal areas and throughout KP, militant organisations like Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other extremist factions pose serious threats. Furthermore, religious and ethnic conflicts in Punjab and Karachi, as well as the separatist insurgency in Baluchistan, further threaten national stability and pose significant challenges to the security and building of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The CPEC is also seriously threatened by terrorism and religious extremism. Over 30,000 civilians and several security personnel have been killed by terrorists in Pakistan since the September 11 strikes. A concentrated effort has been made to address the underlying roots of religious extremism and fight terrorism (Hussain, 2017).

External meddling, especially from India, is a major problem. CPEC is seen by several nations as a strategic danger to their economic and military interests. Because CPEC may provide Pakistan a strategic edge along the Arabian Sea, India in particular has been adamantly against it. There are hints that attempts have been made to sabotage CPEC projects in Pakistan by India's intelligence agency, RAW. The United Arab Emirates, a long-time supporter of Pakistan, sees Gwadar as a challenger to its dominant position in Gulf commerce. India is also supporting its Chabahar Port proposal, which might have a greater impact on the UAE than Gwadar and seeks to establish a different trade route to Central Asia and Europe. The security situation is further complicated by the support that rebel organizations get from Afghan Pashtun tribes, including the Norzais, Ghilzais, Durranis, and Eshaqzais. Tribes such as the Wazirs, Ahmadzai, and Mahsuds have backed insurgent activity in North and South Waziristan, endangering stability and impeding the implementation of CPEC. A significant duty that entails addressing these difficulties, including persistent problems like terrorism and extremism that have dogged Pakistan since the 1990s, is ensuring the security of CPEC. Internal dangers to the nation include sectarian disputes that threaten national unity, religious and ethnic bloodshed, and the TTP's dominance in FATA and Swat. Furthermore, some Afghan tribes still aid rebels, which exacerbates insecurity within Pakistan's borders (Ibrar, Mi, Rafiq, & Karn, 2016).

## 2.1 CPEC's Economic and Political Significance for Pakistan

Pakistan's political and economic landscape is significantly shaped by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). However, security issues pose a significant barrier to this project's successful completion. Since the corridor facilitates commerce and growth between China and Pakistan, its security is crucial. Timely CPEC development is a problem shared by both nations (Sial, 2014).

Although they confront many obstacles, Gwadar and Kashgar are important locations linked by CPEC from a security perspective. China is establishing five economic zones in Kashgar with the aim of transforming the region into an economic hub in order to mitigate the dangers associated with nationalist and militant groups. These concerns are also reflected in anxieties about nationalist movements in Balochistan. The primary goal is to guarantee the short- and medium-term security of CPEC, including its routes and personnel. Although Pakistan's terrorist activity has decreased as a result of military operations, dangers still exist. Since the start of CPEC construction, there has been an increase in violence and instability in the Gwadar harbour in Balochistan. For Pakistan, safeguarding the Chinese labour force has grown to be a prime concern. As a result, the Pakistani army has formed a Special Security Division (SSD) with 10,000 soldiers tasked with defensive Chinese labourers engaged in CPEC-related projects. Nine military battalions, including the Frontier Corps and the Rangers, and six paramilitary force wings contain this department. Al-Qaeda, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, the Turkestan Islamic Party, the Movement of Islamic Uzbekistan, and terrorist businesses, especially those from Afghanistan's Nuristan and Kunar areas, pose a hazard to CPEC. A sort of internal and external variables makes a contribution to these risks, along with:

- **Political Unrest and Administrative Challenges:** These are major security concerns for Pakistan, significantly impacting the CPEC project.
- **Opposition from Regional Actors:** Both domestic and foreign entities, particularly India, view CPEC as a game changer for Pakistan's economic and strategic position, leading to resistance.
- **Local Political Opposition:** Certain political parties, including the Awami National Party (ANP), Baloch Nationalist Party, Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), and Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (F) (JUI-F), have raised objections due to perceived unequal rights granted to provinces.
- **Balochistan's Role:** As a pivotal province for the Gwadar port, which is a cornerstone of CPEC, Balochistan has been plagued by a violent separatist insurgency that opposes CPEC-related projects, including gas pipelines and railway routes.
- **Violence Against Workers:** Baloch separatists have engaged in kidnappings and centered killings of people, and they have attacked tankers transporting fuel for Chinese companies working inside the place.
- **Political Discontent in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa:** Some political factions in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have hostile the hall due to changes made to the unique plan via the federal government, which they consider redirect monetary advantages usually to Punjab.

- **Lack of Political Consensus:** Political discord poses a extensive project to the effective implementation of CPEC.
- **Militant Networks:** A large spectrum of militancy extends from Xinjiang to Gwadar, comprising companies consisting of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP), Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LEJ), Daesh (ISIS), Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), and Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF).
- **Corruption and Financial Risks:** Concerns about potential theft of invested funds due to corruption are prevalent, particularly amidst the backdrop of ongoing security challenges in Balochistan.
- **Balochistan's Socioeconomic Issues:** Despite its abundant natural resources, the Baloch people have long felt marginalized and denied social, political, and economic rights. Many lack access to safe drinking water and basic healthcare (Ishaq, Ping, & Ahmed, 2017). The local populace harbors fears and hostility toward the Gwadar project, stemming from their inability to secure royalty rights due to the control exerted by the Chinese government and the dominance of non-local individuals over local resources.

## 2.2 Role of Provincial and Federal Authorities in Ensuring CPEC Security

Through a number of significant infrastructure projects, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a significant effort designed to strengthen economic links between China and Pakistan. However, there are significant obstacles to the successful implementation of CPEC, particularly in relation to internal security in regions like as Balochistan. In this case, protecting CPEC projects requires the cooperation of both the federal and provincial governments, each of which has specific responsibilities and approaches to deal with these security issues (Hussain, Bogheiry, & Alam, 2023).

When it comes to creating national security policy and coordinating efforts across provinces to safeguard CPEC assets, Pakistan's federal authorities are crucial. To safeguard Chinese citizens and CPEC projects, the federal government established specialised organizations such as the Special Security Division (SSD), which consists of army employees (Wolf, 2020). The Ministry of Interior oversees this section, which collaborates intently with neighborhood law enforcement corporations to broaden a unified protection plan. In order to foster an ecosystem this is conducive to funding and boom, the federal government also participates in diplomatic efforts to relieve security concerns expressed by way of Chinese stakeholders. Furthermore, especially in Balochistan, in which neighborhood frustrations occasionally result in violence in opposition to infrastructure projects, federal authorities have played a crucial role in allocating intelligence resources to display viable threats from insurgent enterprises opposed to CPEC (Siddiqui K. , 2023).

Implementing safety features which can be suitable for the nearby environment is a critical characteristic of provincial authorities, especially in areas like Sindh and Balochistan which can be without delay impacted by way of the CPEC. To guarantee that safety techniques are correctly implemented regionally, the province governments and federal authorities need to collaborate closely (Hussain E. , CPEC: Governance and security challenges—Implications

for the Belt and Road Initiative, 2019). This involves deploying regulation enforcement and setting up checkpoints along vital CPEC transit traces. Additionally, nearby troubles that may spark unrest or violence towards CPEC tasks should be addressed by using provincial government. Provincial officials may also lessen animosity and foster a feeling of ownership amongst locals about the benefits of CPEC by means of interacting with them via development initiatives and discourse. Building trust and collaboration thru community engagement is crucial for keeping peace and security around CPEC projects (Siddiqui, 2019).

Establishing a strong protection framework for CPEC requires cooperation among federal and provincial government. Joint challenge teams and everyday meetings had been installed to enhance conversation amongst the exceptional tiers of presidency. These collaborative efforts deal with changing facts, assessing dangers, and developing coordinated answers for safety-related problems. Additionally, with the aid of dispensing finances and presenting training publications, the federal and provincial governments collaborate to help local law enforcement enterprises (Hanif, 2021). To efficiently cope with the complicated safety problems related to CPEC, a multi-tiered safety gadget that blends central supervision with provincial implementation is critical.

### **2.3 Impact of Extremist Groups on CPEC Security Efforts**

One sizeable undertaking aimed at enhancing Pakistan-China economic ties is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). However, because of the activities of extremist organizations, it faces extreme protection challenges. The safety of CPEC projects, Chinese people, and regional protection are all critically threatened via those corporations, which consist of Baloch separatists and different violent businesses. Their moves no longer only jeopardise the security protocols in region however also foster an atmosphere of hysteria and unpredictability which can deter growth and investment (Hussain M. , 2017).

Baloch separatist organisations, particularly the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), are one of the foremost dangers to the security of the CPEC. Because they see the CPEC undertaking as a manner to take gain in their riches without a price to the local populace, these enterprises have constantly resisted it. Asserting that their worries about economic marginalisation must be addressed before any significant progress can be achieved, the BLA has launched many assaults on Chinese citizens and CPEC infrastructure. Kidnappings and attacks on building sites have been among these crimes, which have greatly increased security worries for Chinese businessmen as well as Pakistani officials. Since these organisations usually operate with limited control in remote areas, the ongoing unrest in Balochistan makes attempts to safeguard CPEC projects more difficult (Ullah & Akhtar, 2024).

Terrorist groups such as Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K) have targeted operations associated with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in addition to separatist actions. These organizations assault security personnel and foreigners by using the unrest in regions like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. As part of its larger campaign against the government, the TTP has targeted foreign investors and

Pakistani state symbols in particular. These militant organizations' existence exacerbates the security situation and need a thorough plan to offset their effect.

These extremist groups have a big impact on CPEC security initiatives. Effective execution is hampered by the persistent danger posed by these organizations, No matter the status quo of specialized protection divisions and a heightened military presence around crucial infrastructure initiatives. Due to the complex sociopolitical surroundings, the Pakistani authorities has tried to enhance safety via a number of tasks, along with as military operations supposed to lessen insurgency. Nevertheless, those projects frequently offer inconsistent effects. Furthermore, local lawsuits about monetary disparities exacerbate tensions, making it difficult for officers to win community help for applications geared toward maintaining CPEC (Basit, 2019).

International elements complicate the difficulty, mainly in mild of the Taliban's 2021 takeover of Afghanistan. As many enterprises locate new possibilities for cooperation and operation, this shift has reportedly led to an increase in terrorist pastime inside Pakistan. The prospect of cross-border terrorism necessitates greater collaboration among China and Pakistan as each nations ought to deal with nearby threats that could jeopardise CPEC similarly to nearby insurgencies.

#### **2.4 Cross-border Threats and Their Implications for CPEC**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a considerable infrastructure task that ambitions to bolster industrial and monetary connections by way of linking China's Xinjiang area with Pakistan's Gwadar Port. However, cross-border threats—specifically those posed with the aid of terrorist firms and geopolitical tensions—gift enormous barriers for the hall. These dangers have broader ramifications for nearby balance, monetary enlargement, and worldwide relations similarly to jeopardising the safety of CPEC projects (Ali M. , 2020).

Numerous extremist organisations inside the region, mainly the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA), pose a severe risk to the CPEC. The BLA has been specially active in criticising CPEC tendencies, claiming that the mission frequently serves foreign pastimes even as ignoring neighborhood citizens. Attacks on Chinese employees and infrastructure have improved because of this point of view, creating an environment of worry that deters investment and impedes venture development. Additionally, the TTP has exploited the scenario by undertaking attacks in border areas like as Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, making security features for CPEC ventures an awful lot greater tough (Rashid & Shafiq, 2023).

An vital factor in figuring out the safety environment around CPEC is geopolitical factors. Cross-border risks are elevated by means of the engagement of other nations, in particular Afghanistan and India. According to reports, Indian intelligence services stationed in Afghanistan are supporting and training Baloch rebels in their efforts to destabilise Pakistan and undermine the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). In addition to intensifying nearby insurgencies, this outside meddling makes Pakistan's security policy extra difficult

because it need to contend with each foreign and inner enemies (Bukhari, Khan, & Khan, 2024).

Investor consider in CPEC projects is extensively weakened through the continual worry of violence. Chinese authorities have expressed concerns about their people' and their investments' safety in Pakistan, which has led to calls for more potent security. Frequent attacks have created instability, which has delayed mission completion and made Chinese groups reluctant to absolutely decide to CPEC ventures. This scenario has a damaging effect on China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which is based on strong occasions for its execution, in addition to Pakistan's economic potentialities (Sial, 2014).

It takes a multifaceted method that consists of navy, diplomatic, and socioeconomic elements to counter those cross-border threats. For Pakistan and China to effectively combat terrorist sports, their military cooperation should be strengthened. Additionally, addressing CPEC-related troubles with nearby populations might assist reduce animosity in the direction of the assignment and guide for extremist agencies. Reducing outdoor affects that exacerbate safety issues additionally requires diplomatic efforts to stabilize ties with neighbors.

### **3. Security Measures and Initiatives to Safeguard CPEC**

One critical initiative to bolster financial hyperlinks between China and Pakistan is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). However, owing of the dangers posed by way of terrorist businesses and geopolitical crises, the safety of CPEC sports has come beneath severe scrutiny. To shield this crucial infrastructure, the Pakistani government and other interested parties have carried out a number of safety features and efforts (Malik, 2018).

One crucial protection mechanism installed place to defend CPEC is the established order of the Special Security Division (SSD). Thousands of armed men make up this section, that is dedicated to defensive Chinese citizens and CPEC initiatives for the duration of Pakistan. To preserve a good safety presence at essential sites, consisting of as constructing web sites and transit corridors, the SSD works with regional regulation enforcement organizations. Particularly in risky regions like Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, wherein Chinese labourers have frequently been the target of attacks, this application aims to lessen the dangers posed by means of terrorist companies (Iqbal, 2018).

Federal officials have set up monthly assessment classes targeted on CPEC with a purpose to decorate security features. Key stakeholders attend these meetings, along with officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior, and different law enforcement companies. The objective is to assess present day protection troubles, share information, and ensure that each one methods are being properly accompanied. To discover safety flaws and take proactive measures to close them, this concerted effort is essential.

With connection with CPEC particularly, Pakistan's new counterterrorism policy, "Azm-e-Istehkam," presents a thorough technique of improving national security. This method targets to address the socioeconomic troubles that cause instability similarly to violent extremism. The government desires to lessen the attraction of extremist beliefs in nearby communities by addressing underlying troubles like poverty and illiteracy.



To avoid threats to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Chinese and Pakistani government ought to effectively proportion facts. To improve communication approximately possible dangers and plan incident responses, joint operating agencies have been installed. This cooperation is essential to ensure that both international locations can reply hastily to new dangers and provide a secure funding environment (Rasool & Zaheer, 2024).

Initiatives for network participation have been applied in popularity of the significance of neighborhood guide for CPEC's long-term achievement. These initiatives concentrate on resolving nearby proceedings about socioeconomic inequalities which are made worse by CPEC initiatives. Authorities want to foster goodwill and lessen animosity in the direction of foreign investments by making sure that local populations take gain of the monetary prospects added forth with the aid of CPEC and incorporating them in development procedures (Amna, 2024).

Fighting disinformation strategies that would erode public trust in CPEC is some other crucial element of defensive the undertaking. The Pakistani government has burdened the need of a high-quality media landscape that refutes negative notions and surely depicts the advantages of CPEC. By putting in place fast response facts systems, it will be viable to fight incorrect information quick and preserve public and investor self-assurance (Khan, Alam, & Yasir, 2024).

#### **4. Impacts of CPEC Security Challenges on Pakistan's Economy and Society**

Considered a sport-changer for Pakistan, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) guarantees good sized economic enlargement and stepped forward connectivity. Nonetheless, the state's financial system and tradition are significantly impacted by using ongoing security troubles. These problems, which stem from geopolitical difficulties, cross-border terrorism, and home insurgencies, together undermine the ability benefits of CPEC (Hussain, Bogheiry, & Alam, China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): Opportunities and challenges for Implementation, 2023).

Pakistan's financial system is at once impacted negatively by using the safety issues surrounding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Investor trust has declined due to the upward thrust in violence towards Chinese citizens and CPEC projects. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Gwadar, for instance, recent attacks on Chinese engineers have sparked issues about the security of foreign hobbies, main some investors to reevaluate or postpone their commitments to CPEC tasks. This hesitancy might also prevent essential infrastructural advancements that are necessary for financial enlargement. Furthermore, the affect of uncertainty hurts nearby organizations that rely upon the sales produced by means of CPEC projects further to discouraging overseas direct funding (Rajput, et al., 2022).

In addition, these safety worries threaten the predicted monetary gains from CPEC. It become predicted that the undertaking will raise neighborhood economies, improve exchange channels, and provide employment, especially in growing nations like Balochistan. Nevertheless, chronic instability and violence have caused undertaking cancellations and delays, impeding monetary boom in these areas. This hassle is made worse by way of a lack of

consistent investment, as is the case in Gwadar, in which security troubles have impeded improvement regardless of the port metropolis's strategic significance (Khan, Shi, & Ali, 2024).

The security issues with CPEC have equally critical socioeconomic repercussions. The nearby population is greater anxious and aggravating due to the growth in violence and instability. Communities in CPEC-affected regions often enjoy marginalisation, which breeds animosity towards the government and foreign businessmen. Baloch inhabitants, who trust that CPEC is an exploitation of their resources with little blessings for their communities, are especially vocal in this regard. Such complaints have the capability to bolster aid for anti-CPEC extremist establishments, ensuing in a vicious cycle of violence and instability that in addition muddies the security environment (Saoud, 2019).

Furthermore, the Special Security Division and different security features installed region to safeguard CPEC tasks may motive impacted groups to become militarised. Residents may also become resentful of the government and overseas events collaborating in CPEC resulting from the growing navy presence, which may result in disputes or human rights abuses among safety employees and neighborhood human beings. Any ability social cohesiveness that can result from financial improvement attempts may be undermined via the influence of overbearing security movements, that can accentuate citizens' sentiments of disenfranchisement (Ahmed, 2024).

The protection problems surrounding CPEC also are linked to greater fashionable geopolitical elements, mainly in South Asia. The lack of confidence created by way of out of doors variables, such Afghanistan's instability and India's resistance to the CPEC, makes it greater difficult for Pakistan to guard the corridor. Pakistan finds it challenging to hold a safe surroundings for CPEC operations when overseas intelligence services assist rebel sports, further destabilising the location. Therefore, the fulfillment of CPEC depends on Pakistan's capability to manipulate those geopolitical conflicts even as keeping internal balance (Fazal, Khan, & Ali, 2023).

## **5. Future Outlook: Strategies for Strengthening CPEC Security**

An essential challenge that has the potential to enhance Pakistan's financial state of affairs and improve members of the family with China is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). However, there are critical threats to its achievement from continual protection troubles. A diversified approach is important to assure the security of CPEC tasks and overseas investments. The following are a few procedures that may be used to bolster protection round CPEC.

Improving cooperation between military and civilian safety employees is one of the main approaches to reinforce CPEC protection. An crucial step in this approach has been the introduction of the Special Security Division (SSD), which has masses of employees working to guard CPEC projects. Nonetheless, it is imperative that intelligence-sharing methods among different security organisations, including local military and police units, be more integrated. Frequent cooperative training sessions and exercises may enhance reaction skills and

operational preparedness against any threats from terrorist organisations and extremist groups such as the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) (Hussain, 2019).

Resolving local complaints via community involvement is essential to reducing security threats. Initiatives for socioeconomic development in CPEC-affected areas, especially Balochistan, should be given top priority by the Pakistani government. Authorities may promote goodwill among local residents and lessen support for radical narratives that portray CPEC as exploitative by making investments in infrastructure, healthcare, and education. Long-term stability depends on trust and collaboration, which may be developed by talking with local leaders and people about the advantages of CPEC (Menhas et al., 2019)

To handle both kinetic and non-kinetic threats to CPEC, a comprehensive counterterrorism policy such as "Azm-e-Istehkam" must be put into action. This approach should concentrate on tackling the socioeconomic causes of extremism in addition to military solutions. The government can more accurately evaluate security threats that stem from socioeconomic problems by strengthening the National Counter Terrorism Authority's (NACTA) capabilities and making sure it operates efficiently. This all-encompassing strategy will lessen the vulnerabilities of young people who are at risk of radicalization (Hussain & Bhatti, 2024).

The public's view of CPEC and investor confidence are seriously threatened by the proliferation of false information. A quick reaction information system may be put in place to combat misinformation that erodes support for the project. Promoting a favourable narrative around CPEC requires cooperation on the communication fronts between the Chinese and Pakistani governments. Building public confidence and overcoming unfavourable opinions may also be achieved by working with local media sources to provide factual information regarding CPEC's advantages (Usman, 2024).

As security concerns persist, the involvement of Private Security Companies (PSCs) may become increasingly important. Given the challenges faced by local law enforcement agencies in ensuring safety, contracting PSCs especially those with experience in securing infrastructure projects can provide an additional layer of protection for Chinese workers and assets involved in CPEC. This approach should be carefully regulated to ensure compliance with local laws while enhancing overall security measures (Ghaffar & Khan, 2024).

Strengthening regional cooperation is vital for addressing cross-border threats that impact CPEC security. Engaging neighboring countries in dialogues on security cooperation can help mitigate risks from external forces seeking to destabilize Pakistan. Initiatives such as the Quadrilateral Cooperation and Coordination Mechanism (QCCM) involving China, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan can facilitate collaborative efforts against terrorism and enhance regional stability.

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