

## **Game Changer for Pakistan: Significance of Gwadar for Pakistan Economy & Factors of Underutilization of Gwadar Port**

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### **Abstract:**

*Gwadar is a game-changer for Pakistan's economy because of its tremendous potential for growth and development across many industries. The project was built and run mostly by China, with financial support from Pakistan. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative will play a significant role in the development of Gwadar, which is now viewed as a strategic asset for Pakistan and China's economic interests. CPEC aims to connect China's western region with the Gwadar port through a network of highways, railways, and pipelines. Gwadar is an essential part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a vast infrastructure and development project that aims to improve regional connectivity and promote economic growth throughout Asia and beyond. Gwadar is a key strategic asset for Pakistan's economy with the potential to fundamentally alter the country's trade and commerce environment. Thanks to its deep-water facilities and advantageous location, the port makes a perfect transit point for both international trade and energy supplies via pipelines and other infrastructure. The Gwadar Free Zone, a special economic zone within the port, aims to attract investment and provide a business-friendly environment for businesses. This will enhance possibilities. Pakistan has a coastline of approximately 1,050 kilometers along the Arabian Sea, making it a country with significant potential to harness the benefits of the ocean for its economy. Pakistan can harness the benefits of the ocean for its economy by investing in its fishing industry, shipping industry, offshore oil and gas exploration, tourism industry, and renewable energy sector. The government must ensure sustainable and responsible use of ocean resources while promoting economic growth.*

### **Keywords:**

*Transit hub, Strategic location, Economic growth, Gwadar Free Zone, Special economic zone, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)*

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**Introduction:**

On Pakistan's southwest coast, close to the Iranian border, is the port city of Gwadar. It is one of the most significant towns in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a significant infrastructure project that seeks to connect China's western region to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan. It is the seat of the Gwadar District in the province of Baluchistan. Strategically situated close to the energy-hungry markets of Asia and the Middle East, Gwadar features a deep-water port. Particularly for the landlocked Central Asian nations, which may utilize it as a gateway to the rest of the world, the port has the potential to become a significant Centre for global trade and business. China has made major investments in Gwadar in recent years as part of the CPEC project, which has seen the port and the neighborhood's infrastructure developed. A new airport, roadways, and other infrastructure projects have been developed as a result of Chinese investment, which is anticipated to have a large positive impact on the local economy.

Promoting healthy seas is essential for the survival of our globe since they are essential to supporting life on our planet. Pakistan, a coastal nation, may contribute significantly to the cause of healthy seas. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) may be used as a platform to advance regional ocean sustainability. Marine conservation is one of the most important parts of CPEC and Pakistan's promotion of sustainable seas. To encourage maritime conservation, Pakistan can create marine protected zones, enforce fishing regulations, and lessen marine pollution. (N. A. Khan, 2018) By include steps to lessen pollution, support biodiversity protection, and mitigate the effects of infrastructure development on marine ecosystems, CPEC projects like the Gwadar Port and the related Special Economic Zone may encourage sustainable development. Fostering sustainable fisheries is another part of fostering sustainable seas. Pakistan can put in place laws to control fishing activity, lessen bycatch, and conserve endangered species in addition to strategies to limit overfishing. By encouraging value addition and lowering post-harvest losses, CPEC initiatives like the installation of fish processing facilities and new fishing methods may assist sustainable fisheries.



Last but not least, CPEC and Pakistan's waters may both benefit greatly from the promotion of a sustainable blue economy. This may entail generating marine renewable energy, fostering sustainable fishing, and promoting sustainable tourism. By offering physical and logistical assistance, CPEC projects like the construction of the Gwadar Port and its related economic zone can aid in the growth of a sustainable blue economy. Overall, supporting CPEC and sustainable oceans in Pakistan can result in the development of jobs, higher foreign exchange revenues, and long-term economic prosperity.

### **Statement of problem:**

The issue is that, despite enormous investments made in the growth of Pakistan's Gwadar Port, the facility is underutilized and has not yet attained its full potential as a center for regional trade and business. Inadequate infrastructure, a lack of investment, political unrest, and insufficient access to the national grid are just a few of the elements that contribute to this issue.

First off, the region's weak infrastructure including shoddy road systems, shoddy rail connections, and a lack of facilities for logistics has restricted the port's ability to handle significant amounts of goods. The port is now less appealing to potential consumers and investors due to rising transportation costs, extended transit times, and congestion.

Second, the port's development has been significantly hampered by the lack of investment in the port and associated infrastructure. (McCartney, 2021) There has

been little private sector investment in the area, despite major Chinese investment, and the Pakistani government has had difficulty securing money for crucial infrastructure projects, including as road and rail connectivity.

Thirdly, the growth of the port has been hampered by political unrest in the area, which has restricted commerce and investment due to security concerns and geopolitical tensions. Potential investors now have a poor impression of the area, which is hurting the port's growth even more.

The underutilization of the Gwadar Port is a serious issue that has to be addressed right away by the Pakistani government and its allies. The success of the port and the realization of its potential to spur economic growth and development in the area depend on addressing the root causes of the issue, which include inadequate infrastructure, a lack of investment, political instability, and inadequate connectivity to the national grid.

### **Methodology:**

This research uses a comparative and analytical technique. The purpose of the research is to analyze and analyses the economic importance of Gwadar for Pakistan as well as the reasons why Pakistan underutilizes Gwadar Port.

### **Significance:**

It is impossible to exaggerate the importance of Pakistan's political turmoil being resolved. With repeated changes of administration, military meddling in politics, and civil unrest, Pakistan has faced significant political challenges. This unrest has slowed economic expansion, discouraged foreign investment and tourism, and restricted access to healthcare and education, two things that are crucial for fostering social progress. Political unrest has also encouraged extremism and terrorism, endangering Pakistan's and the region's security.

For Pakistan to flourish, be stable, and prosper, political instability must be overcome. By addressing the underlying causes of political instability, a stable climate that is favorable to economic development may be created. This may result in the creation of jobs, the opening of enterprises, and long-term economic expansion. Additionally, overcoming political instability can aid in the development of powerful democratic institutions that can support stability, accountability, and transparency. This can guarantee that the administration is receptive to populist demands and stop the military from meddling in political affairs. (Committee, 2015)

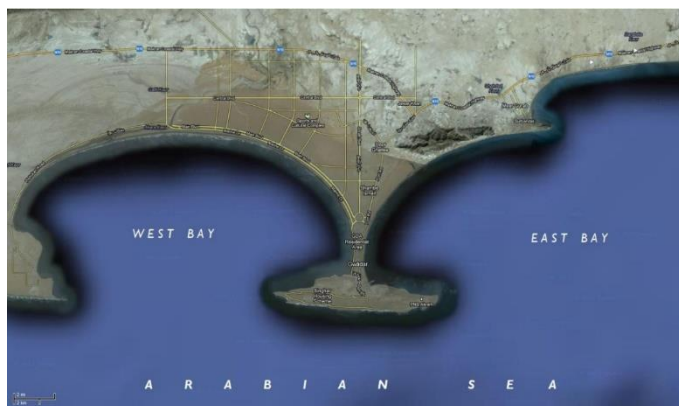
Resolving political unrest might result in increased security, particularly when it comes to battling terrorism and extremism. A country with lower levels of crime

and violence can be made to feel safer. Additionally, eliminating political instability can lead to better social development, notably in terms of healthcare and education. These crucial public services may be made sure of by a stable and effective administration, which will improve health results and increase access to education. Eliminating political unrest can result in improved foreign relations as Pakistan forges close ties with other nations. Benefits from trade, assistance, and investment may arise from this, which might boost economic growth and development. Overall, ending Pakistan's political unrest is of utmost importance and necessitates long-term work to build a stable, democratic, and wealthy nation.

### **History of Gwadar Port Pakistan:**

The Pakistani government originally suggested building a deep-sea port in the southwest region of Baluchistan in the early 1950s, which is when the Gwadar Port's history began. The port was initially intended to be a means of enhancing the impoverished area's economic circumstances and giving Pakistan access to a different channel for trade and commerce. A number of political and economic problems caused the port's development to be postponed for many years. The Pakistani government and China only signed a contract in 2002 to build the Gwadar Port as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative. China agreed to offer both financial and technical support for the construction of the port and associated infrastructure (Haslam, 2016).

The Gwadar Port was built starting in 2007 and was finished in 2016 for a price of more than \$250 million. At the mouth of the Persian Gulf, the port is strategically placed on the Arabian Sea. With a depth of up to 18 meters, it is Pakistan's deepest port and can accommodate huge cargo ships and oil tankers. The Pakistani government has been seeking to entice international investment and foster regional economic growth ever since the port was completed. (Kosiński & Elahi, 1985) An agreement between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to spend \$10 billion in the Gwadar Port and related infrastructure projects was inked in 2018. Additionally, it is anticipated that the construction of the Gwadar Port would raise the region's standard of living and open up job possibilities.



### **Harnessing the benefits of Ocean for Pakistan's Economy:**

Over 1,000 kilometers of the Arabian Sea's coastline are in the nation of Pakistan. The nation has not properly utilized the potential of its nautical resources despite having such a large coastline. There are, however, a number of ways Pakistan might use the ocean to its economic advantage.

- Fishing Industry
- Maritime Transport
- Offshore Energy
- Marine Tourism
- Marine Biotechnology

#### **Fishing Industry:**

Seafood is an important export from Pakistan's booming fishing sector. The sector still mostly uses conventional fishing techniques, although there is a great deal of room for modernization and mechanization. Investment in cutting-edge fishing gear and technology, as well as the construction of fish processing facilities, may boost the fishing industry's productivity and value addition, increasing exports and creating jobs (Mir, 2018).

#### **Maritime Transport:**

Pakistan may take use of its advantageous position to grow its maritime transport sector as it serves as a gateway to the landlocked nations of Central Asia. The country's commercial connections with the regional and international markets may be strengthened via the construction of new ports, the installation of logistics and warehousing facilities, and the strengthening of road and rail connectivity.

#### **Offshore Energy:**

Pakistan may find great value in the water as a source of energy. The nation may investigate the potential for offshore wind energy, which is thought to be approximately 50,000 MW, and make investments in offshore wind farms to provide

sustainable energy (Muzaffar et al., 2016). Additionally, the nation might lessen its dependency on foreign energy sources with the aid of offshore oil and gas development.

### **Marine Tourism:**

Due to Pakistan's extensive coastline, marine tourism has enormous potential to grow. To draw domestic and foreign visitors, the nation can build beach resorts, water sports facilities, and other leisure activities (Collection, 2005). The growth of maritime tourism has the potential to generate more foreign exchange profits and new jobs.

### **Marine Biotechnology:**

A wide variety of marine flora and animals may be found in the ocean and utilized for biotechnological purposes. Pakistan has the potential to generate medicines, cosmetics, and nutraceuticals by utilizing marine biotechnology.

### **Causes/Factors of under exploitation of Gwadar Port:**

In Pakistan's Baluchistan province's southwest, there is a deep-water port called Gwadar. The port has not been fully utilized despite its advantageous position for a number of reasons, including:

- Infrastructure
- Security concerns
- Lack of investment
- Political instability
- Regional competition
- Lack of skilled manpower
- Regulatory framework
- Corruption
- Lack of marketing
- Lack of inter-provincial coordination
- Legal issues
- Limited capacity of port infrastructure
- Lack of supporting industries

### **Infrastructure:**

The expansion of the port has been hampered by a lack of infrastructure, including roads, railroads, and supporting services. Businesses have difficulty moving

products into and out of the port due to the poor connectivity to the hinterland (*Downloaded from Www.Csstimes.Pk, n.d.*).

### **Security concerns:**

Violence and terrorism have long afflicted the region of Balochistan, which has had a detrimental effect on the growth of the port. Due to security worries, companies and investors frequently hesitate to invest in the area (Yousaf, 2012).

### **Lack of investment:**

The port needs enormous investment to flourish, and a lack of both private and state investment has stifled its expansion. Although there has been limited development, the Pakistani government has been trying to entice international investment.

### **Political instability:**

The underutilization of the Gwadar Port is partly a result of Pakistan's political unrest. Progress has been slowed down by government changes and a lack of political agreement on the port's expansion (Saoud, 2019).

### **Regional competition:**

There are several other ports in the area, notably the Iranian port of Chabahar, which is also vying for the same commercial routes. It has been challenging for Gwadar Port to get business due to competition from other ports in the area.

### **Lack of skilled manpower:**

A trained personnel is necessary for the construction and maintenance of ports. The growth of the port has been significantly hampered by the scarcity of trained labor in the area. To solve this problem, training and development initiatives that create a qualified workforce are crucial.

**Environmental concerns:** Significant environmental effects of the port's expansion might include pollution, harm to marine ecosystems, and a decline in biodiversity. It will be essential for the port's development to address these issues and promote sustainable growth. (RASOOL & HASSAN, n.d.)

### **Regulatory framework:**

For a port to be developed and run, a clear regulatory framework is necessary. For the Gwadar Port, there is no clear regulatory structure, which makes it challenging for firms to invest there.



**Corruption:**

In Pakistan, corruption is a serious problem that has also had an influence on the growth of the Gwadar Port. The growth of the port has been hampered by the lack of accountability and openness in the awarding of contracts and tenders.

**Lack of marketing:**

The Gwadar Port's underutilization is partly a result of a lack of marketing and promotion. To entice investors and companies to the area, the port must be adequately advertised.

**Lack of inter-provincial coordination:**

Between many provinces and government organizations, coordination and collaboration are necessary for the development of the Gwadar Port. The growth of the port has been hampered by the absence of interprovincial collaboration. (Saoud, 2019)

**Legal issues:**

The expansion of the port has been hampered by legal issues, such as ownership and land acquisition problems. These legal issues have stymied construction and held down the port's expansion.

**Limited capacity of port infrastructure:**

The port infrastructure's inadequate capacity has also contributed to its underutilization. The current infrastructure might not be adequate to manage the anticipated number of shipping and commerce activities. (*The Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Finance Landscape*, 2018)

**Lack of supporting industries:**

For a port to flourish, supporting sectors like manufacturing and logistics are crucial. The Gwadar Port's potential has been constrained by the absence of supporting industries in the area.

Overall, overcoming these obstacles will need for large financial outlays, political stability, and increased security (N. A. Khan, 2018). By fostering economic growth and regional connections, the effective development of the Gwadar Port would not only benefit Pakistan but the whole region as well.

**Recommendations to Overcome underutilization of Gwadar Port:**

- Improve the regulatory framework
- Enhance security measures

- Develop supporting infrastructure
- Increase investment
- Promote regional economic integration
- Enhance connectivity
- Expand port facilities
- Improve human resource capacity
- Promote local industries
- Facilitate trade
- Improve access to finance
- Address legal issues
- Foster inter-provincial coordination
- Promote environmental sustainability
- Develop a long-term vision

#### **Improve the regulatory framework:**

Ports are essential for a nation's economic growth because they make trade and the movement of products easier. A thorough regulatory framework that lays forth precise standards for port operations and investment is necessary for the efficient running of ports. Ports can function effectively and safely, draw investment, and foster competition with the help of a well-designed regulatory framework (Usher, 2008).

#### **Enhance security measures:**

To secure the security of the port and its operations, the security situation in the area has to be strengthened. For a port to operate safely and effectively and to guarantee the security of the supplies, personnel, and machinery used in port operations, it must be secure. A variety of security risks, such as theft, piracy, terrorism, and other criminal activities, can put ports at risk. These dangers may interfere with port operations, result in property damage, and jeopardize the security of port personnel and customers (Los, n.d.).

#### **Develop supporting infrastructure:**

Building new roads and highways to link the port to important towns and industrial regions, creating rail connections to convey cargo to and from the port, and establishing logistics facilities to store and distribute commodities are all examples of infrastructure development. In addition to these, the enhancement of current infrastructure, such as ports, terminals, and airports, may also be considered part of the development of supporting infrastructure. The creation of auxiliary infrastructure can also aid in lowering transportation costs and enhancing supply chain effectiveness.

A well-designed infrastructure network can make it possible for commodities to be transported to and from the port more quickly, safely, and reliably, cutting down on transit times and enhancing delivery schedules (Harutyunyan, 2019).

**Increase investment:**

The Pakistani government may put policies into place that foster an enabling climate for investors in order to draw in foreign investment. This might involve taking steps to lower bureaucratic barriers, such as expediting the application procedure for permissions and licenses, and enhancing how simple it is to conduct business in the nation. The government may also provide tax rebates, tariff exemptions, and other perks associated to investment to attract international investors.

**Promote regional economic integration:**

The Gwadar Port ought to be built up as a focal point for regional economic integration, linking Pakistan with surrounding nations in the area. The Pakistani government may concentrate on establishing the infrastructure and logistics necessary to enable cross-border commerce in order to promote Gwadar Port as a hub for regional economic integration (*The Belt and Road Initiative in the Global Trade, Investment and Finance Landscape*, 2018). This might involve building special economic zones and industrial parks, enhancing the road and rail connections between Gwadar and the surrounding nations, and making investments in border and customs infrastructure to make it easier to transfer commodities across borders.

**Enhance connectivity:**

The risk of power outages can be reduced by connecting the port to the national grid, which can offer a dependable source of electricity and lessen the need for backup generators. This can ensure that cargo handling and transportation can continue without interruption and port operations won't be interfered with.

**Expand port facilities:**

The building of more berths, jetties, and quays as well as the dredging of the port basin to increase the water depth and accommodate larger boats are all examples of ways that port facilities may be expanded. This might boost the port's ability to handle bigger ships and more cargo, resulting in more efficient and economical transportation (McCartney, 2021). The Pakistani government can invest in port-related technology and equipment in addition to physical infrastructure growth to increase the speed and efficiency of cargo handling operations. Cranes, equipment for loading and unloading, and software for cargo handling can all be installed to make the most use of port space and boost output.

**Improve human resource capacity:**

By investing in training programs, a pool of qualified people may be developed to support the port's efficient and successful operation. This can include courses that emphasize both the hard skills such as communication, teamwork, and leadership and the soft skills such as cargo handling, vessel management, and equipment maintenance that are crucial for port operations. Additionally, by giving employees and their families improved employment possibilities and potential for professional advancement, investment in training programs may contribute to raising the quality of life for both individuals and their families. This may aid in retaining talented staff and lowering turnover, both of which may improve the efficacy and efficiency of port operations (Polastro et al., 2011).

**Promote local industries:**

The Gwadar Port can act as a spur for the growth of regional industry by acting as a point of entry for imports and exports. This may encourage the expansion of sectors like manufacturing, processing, and logistics, opening up new jobs and revenue-generating opportunities.

Additionally, by providing a local clientele for port services and lowering dependency on imports and exports from abroad, the growth of local companies can aid in the port's long-term survival (Caimotto, 2022). As a result, the local economy may become more diverse and robust, and regional economic integration may be encouraged.

**Facilitate trade:**

To increase the effectiveness and speed of commerce flows via the port, the government can also make investments in infrastructure and technology. In order to speed up customs clearance, this may entail the establishment of a single window system that enables merchants to submit all required import and export papers in one location. It may also entail the installation of cutting-edge cargo scanning and inspection equipment.

**Improve access to finance:**

Establishing a specific financing mechanism for the expansion of the port and associated infrastructure is one strategy to encourage access to credit. In order to entice private sector participation, this might involve the formation of special purpose vehicles (SPV) or public-private partnerships (PPP), as well as the offering of government guarantees for loans and investments. By fostering a more favorable environment for investments and lowering administrative and regulatory barriers, the

government may help support access to financing. Streamlining investment processes, lowering the time and expense associated with getting licenses, and establishing an environment with stable and predictable policies can all be examples of this (Kamran, n.d.).

**Address legal issues:**

Another legal concern that may have an impact on the port's development is ownership issues. The government should collaborate with all relevant parties, such as local communities and landowners, to swiftly and transparently address any ownership issues. This can assist to guarantee that legal issues do not hamper or delay the port's growth. The timely completion of projects and increased investment in the area depend on the operation of Gwadar Port. The government must move proactively to solve these problems, collaborate with key parties to identify solutions, and make sure that all legal procedures are carried out in a fair and transparent way.

**Foster inter-provincial coordination:**

To guarantee that all parties are working towards a shared objective and that administrative red tape or inter-provincial conflicts do not hamper the port's development, it is important for different provinces and government agencies to effectively coordinate. This may entail coordinating land acquisition and infrastructure construction across several provinces, simplifying administrative and regulatory procedures, and ensuring that all parties are informed of the progress of the port's goals and timeframes (Mathematics, 2016). By offering incentives and assistance to various provinces and government organizations, the federal government may help encourage interprovincial collaboration. To ensure that all stakeholders have the resources and knowledge necessary to participate in the growth of the port, this might involve offering financial support, technical help, and capacity building programs.

**Promote environmental sustainability:**

The port's growth may have a substantial influence on the local ecosystem, particularly marine life, water quality, and air quality, as it is situated in an ecologically vulnerable location. Therefore, it is imperative that the government and other parties engaged in the development of the port take action to reduce these effects and guarantee the port's long-term sustainability. To do this, the government must perform a thorough environmental impact assessment (EIA) to determine the port's possible environmental effects and create a detailed strategy to lessen those effects (S. Khan, 2019) . This might involve taking steps to lessen pollution, safeguard ecosystems and marine life, and guarantee the wise use of natural resources.

### **Develop a long-term vision:**

The government has to create a long-term plan for the construction of the Gwadar Port and associated facilities. A clear and detailed plan can make sure that the port's growth is efficient, effective, and sustainable and that it complies with the nation's environmental, social, and economic objectives. The long-term vision should contain specific goals and deadlines for attaining them, such as building support infrastructure, expanding port capabilities, luring foreign investment, promoting regional industries, and building human resource capability (*Pakistan's Religious Extremists Are Holding the Government to Ransom | The Economist*, n.d.). Additionally, it must think about potential risks and obstacles that can appear throughout the development process and come up with solutions.

### **Findings and Conclusion:**

After examining the root reasons of the Gwadar Port's underutilization, it is clear that poor infrastructure, a lack of investment, political instability, and a lack of access to the national grid are the main culprits. The construction of supporting infrastructure, like as roads, rail connections, and logistical facilities, must be given top priority by the Pakistani government if it is to overcome these obstacles and fully realize the potential of the Gwadar Port. In order to fund the expansion of the port and associated infrastructure, the government should also bring in additional foreign investment. This may be achieved by establishing a supportive regulatory framework, guaranteeing regional security, and addressing legal concerns over the port's expansion.

The government must take action to guarantee a dependable and uninterrupted supply of power in order to strengthen connectivity to the national grid. For the port to operate effectively, it is also crucial to engage in training programs to increase the human resource capability. Finally, addressing the root reasons of under-exploitation and promoting sustainable economic growth and development in the area may be accomplished by encouraging inter-provincial collaboration and creating a long-term strategy for the development of the port. The underutilization of the Gwadar Port is a squandered opportunity for Pakistan and is essential to the country's economic growth and development plan. The port's success and the realization of its potential to encourage regional economic integration, generate employment opportunities, and raise the standard of living in the area depend on addressing the root reasons of under-exploitation.

Our research of the advantages the ocean has for Pakistan's economy led us to the conclusion that there are huge chances to use the ocean's potential to spur economic development in the nation. The government of Pakistan must place a high

priority on the growth of sustainable ocean-based sectors including fisheries, aquaculture, and marine tourism if it wants to fully reap the advantages of the ocean. This may be accomplished through funding R&D, encouraging PPPs, and offering financial incentives to investors and entrepreneurs in the industry. The construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) offers Pakistan the chance to take advantage of its coastline resources and geographic location to establish itself as a regional center for marine trade and commerce. This may be done by enhancing communication and logistical capabilities, building port infrastructure, and promoting regional economic integration.

As a result of our study, we believe that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will provide Pakistan with substantial chances for economic growth and development. One of the main advantages of the CPEC is that it has the potential to improve Pakistan's connection with the rest of the globe, especially with China, the second-largest economy in the world. This might result in the creation of new trade channels, an increase in investment, and better market access for Pakistani companies, all of which could promote economic growth and employment possibilities. By opening up access to new energy sources including hydropower, wind power, and solar energy, the CPEC can aid in resolving Pakistan's energy issue. This can increase energy security, lessen the nation's dependency on imported fossil fuels, and lessen the effects of climate change.

In conclusion, the CPEC presents Pakistan with a huge potential to overcome its economic obstacles and develop into a more affluent and sustainable nation. Pakistan can improve its economic connectedness with the rest of the world, draw foreign investment, and create new sectors by taking use of the corridor's potential. To fully realize the CPEC's potential, Pakistan must solve the issues of sustainability, governance, and security, as well as make sure that the advantages of the corridor are distributed fairly among all parties. Utilizing the ocean's advantages is crucial for Pakistan's long-term, sustainable economic growth and development. Pakistan can realize its potential as a regional maritime power and raise the standard of life for its people by giving priority to the growth of sustainable ocean-based sectors and utilizing the possibilities provided by the CPEC.

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