

Gaining and Maintaining Access by Diplomatic and Economic Means: The Implications of China's Belt and Road Initiative

A Monograph

by

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Abstract

Gaining and Maintaining Access by Diplomatic and Economic Means: The Implications of China's Belt and Road Initiative, by MAJ Todd J. Rossbach, 55 pages.

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is often portrayed as a grand design to displace US presence by diplomatic and economic means, but perhaps this interpretation is exaggerated. Indeed, China's vision for the twenty-first century entails national rejuvenation by 2049. Should China's vision succeed, Americans should be concerned, as China's authoritarian system directly conflicts with US interests and values. A critical aspect of China's strategic approach is using non-military means through its BRI to gain and maintain access to strategic regions. Yet, despite the seeming effectiveness in gaining influence through non-military means, diplomacy and economics alone have distinct limitations. This monograph evaluates the effectiveness of diplomatic and economic instruments in gaining and maintaining access to desired theaters via Pakistan in two case studies. The first assesses US use of diplomatic and economic means after September 11, 2001 to gain and maintain operational access for the conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom. The second seeks to understand how China's use of diplomatic and economic activity through the BRI allow it to gain and maintain operational access to South Asia and the Indian Ocean. Ultimately, this monograph argues that perceptions of national interests are more important in determining a nation's relationship with great powers than merely the diplomatic and economic instruments such powers can orchestrate. Where interests align, diplomacy and economics can help achieve operational access; but where interests diverge, these instruments are unlikely to have the desired effects and tend to produce resentment at perceived violations of national sovereignty.

Contents

Acknowledgements	v
Abbreviations	vi
Figures	vii
Introduction	1
Literature Review	3
Background: US and China Relations with Pakistan Before 9/11	9
Part I: Operational Access in OEF	13
___ Gaining Operational Access	13
___ Maintaining Operational Access	20
___ Analysis	24
Part II: China’s Belt and Road Initiative in Pakistan.....	27
___ Gaining Operational Access	27
___ Maintaining Operational Access	39
___ Analysis	46
Conclusion.....	48
Recommendations	50
Bibliography	51

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Abbreviations

ALOC	Air Line of Communication
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
DIME	Diplomatic, Informational, Military, Economic
GLOC	Ground Line of Communication
GWOT	Global War on Terrorism
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JP	Joint Publication
KBL	Kerry Berman Luger
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDN	Northern Distribution Network
NDS	National Defense Strategy
NSS	National Security Strategy
OBOR	One Belt One Road
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy
SEZ	Special Economic Zone
SLOC	Sea Line of Communication
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Figures

Figure 1. Visual Depiction of Variables Analyzed.....	2
Figure 2. OEF Lines of Communication	9
Figure 3. US Financial Assistance to Pakistan Since 1948	11
Figure 4. US Aid to Pakistan from Fiscal Year 2002-2016.....	17
Figure 5. China’s Belt and Road Initiative.....	29
Figure 6. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor	35

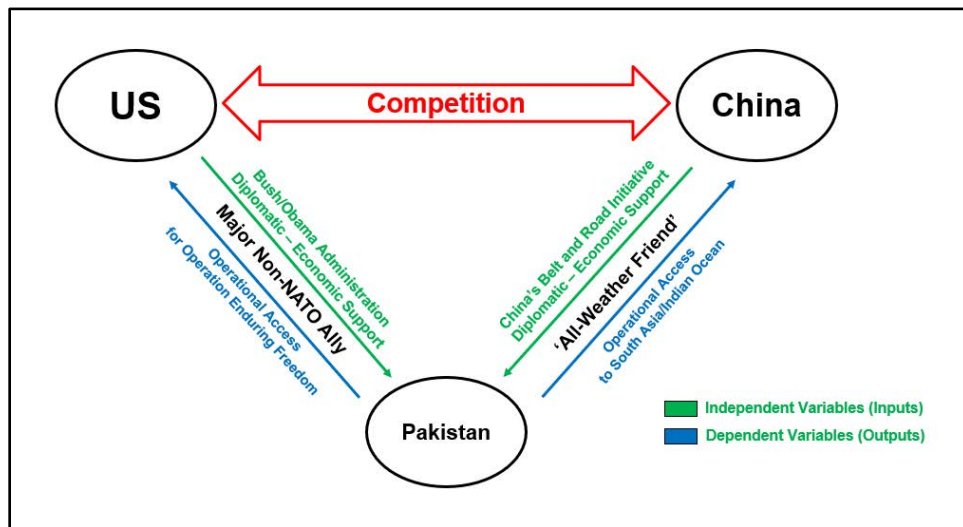
Introduction

This monograph is about great power competition between the United States and China. More specifically, it is about the use of diplomatic and economic instruments to gain and maintain access for military operations. Writing about the past requires a balance between the broad generalizations of abstract ideas like great power competition and the particulars of individual people, places, and events occurring within the larger web of history.¹ This monograph seeks to achieve this balance by considering the broad idea of great power competition between the United States and China in the context of one place. That place is Pakistan, trapped as it is like a fly entangled by two great powers' diplomatic, economic, and military webs of power and influence. To understand the silk strands of this competition, this monograph begins by assessing each nation's approach to great power competition before turning to Pakistan's role in enabling operational access for the fulfillment of each state's strategic designs.

Guided by a series of research questions, two case studies are used to evaluate the role of diplomatic and economic instruments in gaining and maintaining operational access. First, a literature review begins the inquiry by assessing US and Chinese strategic approaches combining diplomatic, economic, and military instruments of power in peace and war before establishing a working definition of operational access. Two case studies follow that explore the use of diplomatic and economic instruments (independent variables) by the United States and China to achieve operational access (dependent variable) to desired theaters via Pakistan (see Figure 1). The first case study evaluates the United States' ability to gain and maintain access in Afghanistan through Pakistan following the September 11, 2001 attacks. The second case study assesses how China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) provides it access to Pakistan and the Indian Ocean. Examining the evidence reveals that despite the general belief in the effectiveness of

¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 12-15.

using diplomatic and economic means to achieve desired ends, in reality, their use has distinct limitations. Ultimately, perceptions of vital national interests are more important in determining a nation's relationship with great powers than merely the diplomatic and economic instruments such nations can orchestrate. Where interests align, diplomacy and economics can incentivize and reward partners for granting operational access; but where interests diverge, these instruments are unlikely to have the desired effects and tend to produce resentment due to perceived sovereignty infringement.



The *United States National Security Strategy (NSS)*, published in 2017, identified China as a strategic rival and highlighted the importance of competition to maintain US interests and influence in the world.² China's vision of regional dominance and global parity by 2049, along with its authoritarian values, directly conflicts with US values and interests in the world. While the risk of direct military confrontation exists, China's most likely approach given its strategic tradition is to gain influence globally through indirect means to avoid provoking a direct US military challenge. One aspect of this approach is gaining influence through diplomatic and

² Donald J. Trump, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, DC: The White House, 2017), 2.

economic activity under the BRI. China's control of critical infrastructure, like ports and transportation networks, provides it significant strategic and operational advantages that may allow it to achieve its desired aims without resorting to war. In the event of conflict, China may fight from an initial position of relative advantage that denies the operational access upon which US expeditionary warfare depends.³ The purpose of this monograph is to explore the issue of operational access in relation to diplomatic and economic instruments to determine whether China's use of those instruments through the BRI will produce the negative outcomes elaborated above; if so, then all Americans should be concerned.

Literature Review

Given that this monograph is about competition between the United States and China, it is natural to begin by seeking to understand how each nation frames great power competition. The *NSS* introduces the concept of great power competition into US strategic discourse and provides direction to US national strategy. In framing the strategic environment, the *NSS* asserts that US efforts to create a neoliberal world of cooperation were exploited by great power rivals, like Russia and China, who “challenge American power, influence, and interests,” while seeking to “reassert their influence regionally and globally.”⁴ While the United States often confines thinking to a binary construct of ‘peace’ and ‘war,’ others are not so constrained, and so the United States must realize that it operates in “an arena of continuous competition.”⁵ Economic

³ Daniel R. Russel and Blake H. Berger, *Weaponizing the Belt and Road Initiative* (New York: The Asia Society Policy Institute, 2020), 41. “Since the end of World War II, the U.S. Navy has been able to operate largely unimpeded in international waters. The U.S. military has been able to deploy ships, planes, and troops to far-flung shores with minimal concern over the ability of these assets to obtain permissions and support. However, the development of Chinese strategic strongpoints and Beijing's greater overall leverage suggest that the United States is losing the level of unfettered access that it has long enjoyed.”

⁴ Trump, *National Security Strategy*, 2 and 27.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 28.

competition within the broader scope of geopolitics is central in that ‘arena,’ which the *NSS* prioritizes through the integration of all instruments of national power.⁶

Nested within the *NSS*, the *National Defense Strategy (NDS)* recognizes, “the central challenge to US prosperity and security is the reemergence of long-term, strategic competition by ... revisionist powers.”⁷ Specifically, it highlights China for its efforts to modernize its military, leverage influence operations, and use “predatory economics to coerce neighboring countries to reorder the Indo-Pacific region to their advantage.”⁸ To counter such actions, the *NDS* stresses establishing a strategy that integrates “multiple elements of national power—diplomacy, information, economics, finance, intelligence, law enforcement, and military.”⁹ Additionally, the *NDS* reinforces the importance of working with allies and partners to advance US interests and maintain favorable balances of power, recognizing their role in gaining “access to critical regions,” by providing “basing and logistics system that underpins global reach.”¹⁰

Understanding China’s strategic framework begins with Xi Jinping’s concept of the ‘China Dream’ of ‘national rejuvenation’ that provides a vision for China’s rise to global power. Xi most clearly articulated his two-stage vision for China at the 19th Party Congress in October 2017.¹¹ In the first stage, set at 2035, “China’s cultural soft power has grown much stronger; Chinese culture has greater appeal.”¹² Ending the second stage in 2049, China will achieve

⁶ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁷ US Department of Defense, *National Defense Strategy* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2018), 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 8.

¹¹ Andrew Scobell, Edmund J. Burke, Cortez A. Cooper III, Sale Lilly, Chad J. R. Ohlandt, Eric Warner, and J. D. Williams, *China’s Grand Strategy: Trends, Trajectories, and Long-Term Competition* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), 18. Xi became General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Central Military Commission (CMC) Chair in November 2012, and President of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) four months later.

¹² Xi Jinping, “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,”

national rejuvenation by becoming “a global leader in terms of composite national strength and international influence.”¹³ Therefore, China’s vision includes global parity in political, military, and cultural influence, essentially restoring the ancient Chinese empires as a modern version of the Middle Kingdom. Given that US strategy seeks to preserve a ‘free and open’ world order, China’s path to global power places it in direct competition with the United States.¹⁴ How China might use its elements of national power in competition with the US may be deduced by reviewing available literature on China’s approach to warfare.

To achieve its ends, China employs combinations of means that extend beyond the limits of traditional warfare. In *Un-restricted Warfare*, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui argue warfare has changed from a primarily military affair to ‘using *all means*, including military and non-military means to compel the enemy to accept one’s interests.”¹⁵ The concept of ‘non-military warfare’ includes the use of many forms of ‘war’ not traditionally associated with that term to achieve one’s aims, including trade, finances, terrorism, psychology, media, and economic aid.¹⁶ In *China: The Three Warfares*, Stefan Halper also shows how China’s approach relies on the integration of various means. He defines the three warfares as, “a dynamic three dimensional war-fighting process that constitutes war by other means,” which includes psychological, media, and legal warfare, with the aim of acquiring resources, territory, and influence from which to “project the national will.”¹⁷ Using combinations of means enables China to gain advantage by modifying

delivered at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, October 18, 2017, 25, accessed September 29, 2020, http://www.xinhuanet.com/english/download/Xi_Jinping's_report_at_19th_CPC_National_Congress.pdf.

¹³ Xi, “Secure a Decisive Victory,” 26.

¹⁴ Scobell, et al., *China’s Grand Strategy*, xiii.

¹⁵ Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Un-restricted Warfare* (Brattleboro, VT: Echo Point Books & Media, 1999), xxi-xxii.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹⁷ Stefan Halper, *China: The Three Warfares*, prepared by Stefan Halper for Andy Marshall, Director, Office of Net Assessment, Office of Secretary of Defense (Washington DC, May 2013), 11-13.

“regional expectations and preferences while raising doubts about the legitimacy of US presence.”¹⁸ Coercive mechanisms are an integral tool for China to grow its regional presence while conditioning local actors to deny the United States use of infrastructure on which its power projection depends.¹⁹ By creating a favorable strategic environment, China seeks to win during competition by modifying the framework within which conflict may occur, causing US forces to operate from a position of relative disadvantage and denying its legitimacy.²⁰

Though China’s view suggests the United States and China are in conflict now but using non-military means to achieve their strategic aims, this monograph adopts the constructs established in US military doctrine.²¹ Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the United States*, introduces the ‘conflict continuum’ depicting competition from peace to war. Furthermore, JP 1 discusses the integration of the instruments of national power using the DIME (diplomatic, informational, military, and economic) framework.²² Though the military plays the primary role the closer the continuum approaches war, other instruments dominate closer to peacetime with the military in a supporting role.²³ Therefore, US joint doctrine recognizes the contributions of diplomatic and economic instruments during competition in conjunction with military shaping activities.

The linkage between the instruments of national power and operational access is made explicit in JP 3-0, *Joint Operations*. JP 3-0 defines *operational access* as, “the ability to project military force into an operational area with sufficient freedom of action to accomplish the

¹⁸ Ibid., 15.

¹⁹ Halper, *China: The Three Warfares*, 26.

²⁰ Ibid., 16, 104.

²¹ Timothy L. Faulkner, “Contemporary China: In Conflict, Not Competition,” *Military Review* 99, no. 5 (September–October 2019): 42–54.

²² US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Doctrine of the Armed Forces of the United States* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2017), I-12 to I-14.

²³ Ibid., I-14 to I-16.

mission.”²⁴ Gaining operational access may be achieved through agreements with a partner nation or by forcible entry.²⁵ Primarily undertaken to set conditions for military operations, gaining access is largely dependent on other US government departments.²⁶ Activities critical to gaining operational access include building diplomatic relationships; establishing treaties allowing forward force posture; negotiating agreements for basing, transit, and overflight rights; and formalizing support agreements.²⁷ Thus, the ability to gain access for military operations is inherently linked to the activities the United States pursues across the instruments of national power. Maintaining operational access extends across global air, sea, and ground lines of communications (ALOCs, SLOCs, and GLOCs).²⁸ JP 3-0 asserts, “the relative combat power military forces can generate against an enemy is constrained by a nation’s capability to gain access to and deliver forces and materiel to points of application.”²⁹ The importance of maintaining operational access against disruption is especially pertinent today, as adversaries like China strive to deny US use of partner nation ports, airports, staging areas, and infrastructure to project power.³⁰ The dependence of the US on other nations for access into theater was especially imperative in Afghanistan, given its landlocked nature.

The United States relied on several nations and methods to conduct Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). The initial offensive in October 2001 to depose the Taliban and destroy Al Qaeda depended primarily on aerial means. The literature on aerial resupply in OEF is well

²⁴ US Department of Defense, Joint Publication (JP) 3-0, *Joint Operations* (Washington, DC: Government Publishing Office, 2017), GL-13.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, VIII-12.

²⁶ US Joint Staff, JP 3-0 (2017), V-9.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, V-9, VI-1, VIII-5.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, II-7 to II-8, III-47 to III-48.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ US Joint Staff, JP 3-0 (2017), I-4. See also, David Barno and Nora Bensahel, “The U.S. Military’s Dangerous Embedded Assumptions,” *War on the Rocks*, April 17, 2018, accessed November 25, 2020, <https://warontherocks.com/2018/04/the-u-s-militarys-dangerous-embedded-assumptions/>.

established, Benjamin Lambeth's *Air Power Against Terror* being the most comprehensive.³¹

Due to the initial success by a small footprint supplied via ALOCs, it is not surprising the role of GLOCs to support military operations in Afghanistan has largely been overlooked.³² Since 2001, several GLOCs have facilitated operational access for OEF (see Figure 2). Pakistan played a pivotal role as the primary GLOC for rising troop levels after initial combat operations did not win the war, a matter explored in the first case study.³³ The Northern Distribution Network (NDN) developed in 2004-05 as an alternate route into Afghanistan, went dormant, and was restored in 2009, becoming the primary route after Pakistan's 2011 GLOC closure.³⁴

Surprisingly, though developed later as an alternative, far more literature discusses this route compared to Pakistan.³⁵ Thus, besides answering the research questions posed, this monograph

³¹ For example, see David Kolenda, "Developing the Theater Level Aerial Port of Debarkation, Organization and Structure," Masters Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 1996; Christopher J. Ireland, "Why Not Airdrop? The Utility of Preplanned Airdrop to Resupply Land Forces in the Contemporary Operating Environment," Masters Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2006; Benjamin S. Lambeth, *Air Power Against Terror: America's Conduct of Operation Enduring Freedom* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005).

³² The Army's primary histories of OEF scarcely mention GLOCs into theater. See Donald P. Wright, ed., *Different Kind of War: The United States Army in Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), October 2001-September 2005* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2010); Walt L. Perry and David Kassing, *Toppling the Taliban: Air-Ground Operations in Afghanistan, October 2001-June 2002* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2015); US Department of the Army, *Operation Enduring Freedom March 2002-April 2005: United States Army in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2013); US Department of the Army, *Operation Enduring Freedom October 2001-March 2002: United States Army in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: US Army Center of Military History, 2004).

³³ Perry and Kassing, *Toppling the Taliban*, 85-87. See also Kurt J. Ryan, "Exploring Alternatives for Strategic Access to Afghanistan," Strategic Research Project, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2009, 10.

³⁴ Ryan, "Exploring Alternatives," 14-22. See also Monish Gulati, "Unblocking of NATO Supply Routes by Pakistan: Logistics or Plain Politics?" Occasional Paper (Chanakyapuri, New Delhi: Vivekananda International Foundation, 2012), 7-9.

³⁵ Literature regarding the NDN includes the following: Andrew C. Kuchins, Thomas M. Sanderson, and David A. Gordon, "The Northern Distribution Network and the Modern Silk Road Planning for Afghanistan's Future" (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2009); Andrew C. Kuchins and Thomas M. Sanderson, "The Northern Distribution Network and Afghanistan: Geopolitical Challenges and Opportunities" (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2010); Stephen Benson, "The MAGAI™ Construct and the Northern Distribution Network: A Report of the CSIS Project on the Northern Distribution Network for Afghanistan" (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and

also redresses an imbalance by examining an overlooked aspect of OEF. Before that, a brief history will establish relevant context for the case studies.

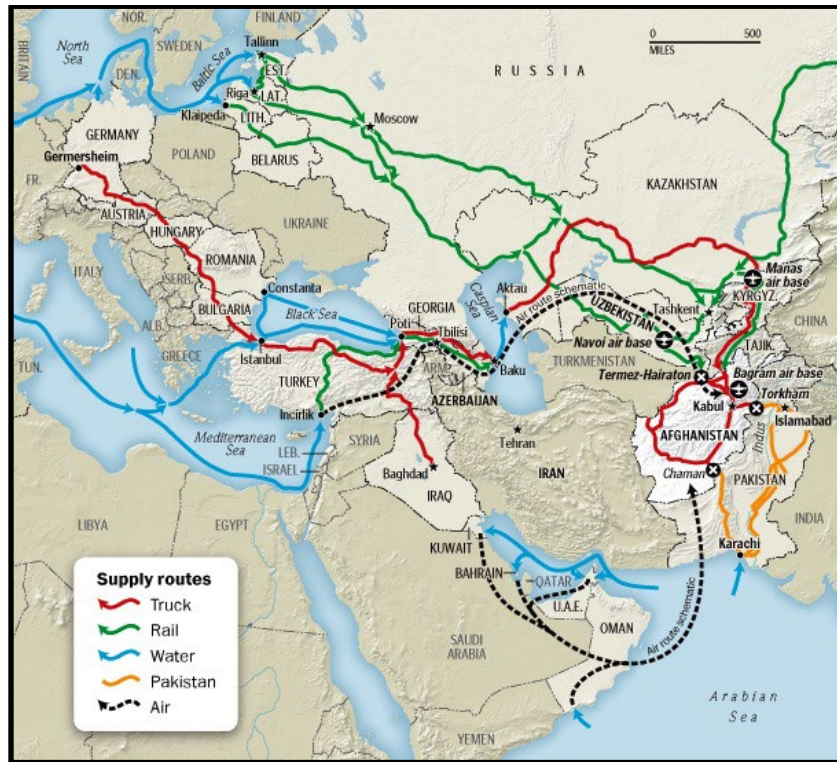


Figure 2. OEF Lines of Communication. Anwar Zahid, “Pakistan and the Geopolitics of Supply Routes to Afghanistan,” *Journal of Political Studies* 20, no. 2 (2013): 105-123, 110.

Background: US and China Relations with Pakistan Before 9/11

Pakistan’s relationship with the United States and China has deep roots in the Cold War, pivoting with major geopolitical events. Figure 3 shows how US aid to Pakistan has fluctuated according to perceived interests at stake in the region. Beginning in 1955, the United States provided significant aid to Pakistan as its “most allied ally in Asia” in return for bases in Peshawar for U-2 flights over the Soviet Union.³⁶ After a decade of partnership, Pakistan

International Studies, 2009); Gregory Gleason, “Political Dimensions of the Northern Afghanistan Resupply Routes,” *Connections* 8, no. 4 (Fall 2009): 39-62; Kelly J. Lawler, “Learning from Northern Distribution Network Operations,” *Army Sustainment* (July–August 2014): 17-19.

³⁶ Shahid Latif Bajwa, “U.S. Security Cooperation with India and Pakistan: A Comparative Study,” Naval Postgraduate School Thesis, Monterey, CA, June 2013, 35. See also, K. Alan Kronstadt and

perceived US neutrality in the 1965 and 1971 wars between India and Pakistan as abandonment. Relations continued to decline in the 1970s due to Pakistan's initiation of an illicit nuclear program. The primary instrument used to confront Pakistan's pursuit of nuclear weapons was the threat of economic sanctions, in particular the 1985 Pressler Amendment.³⁷ However, two major events in 1979 revived the US-Pakistan relationship. First, the Iranian Revolution upended US regional policy. Second, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, introducing the possibility of a Soviet drive for a warm water port in the Indian Ocean that would upset the regional balance of power and disrupt the flow of oil.³⁸ The opportunity to support insurgents in Afghanistan against the Soviets led to a second convergence of US and Pakistan interests, with a corresponding infusion of military and economic assistance. This alignment ended with Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989, followed by a second perceived abandonment of Pakistan by the United States.³⁹ The collapse of the Soviet Union negated Pakistan's relevance as a conduit for great power competition. As a result, US policy shifted from partnership to pressure, as President George H.W. Bush allowed Pressler Amendment sanctions to take effect against Pakistan's nuclear program.⁴⁰ This was the state of US-Pakistan relations on the morning of September 11, 2001 when another major geopolitical event created the conditions for a revitalized US and Pakistan relationship (see Figure 3).

Susan Epstein, "Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013), 8, accessed August 25, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov>.

³⁷ Kronstadt, "Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance," 9. The Pressler Amendment mandated annual Presidential certification that Pakistan was not pursuing nuclear weapons unless exempted for national security reasons, which it was until 1991 when President George H.W. Bush allowed the sanctions to go into effect.

³⁸ Fazal ur Rehman Khan, Khaldon Haya Al-Rawashdeh, Jose R. Reyes Irizarry, and Raja Shahzad Akram Minhas, "The Pak-U.S. Alliance in the Fight Against Terrorism: A Cost-Benefit Analysis," Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, December 2011, 13.

³⁹ Daniel S. Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan: America's Tortured Relationship with Islamabad* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 91.

⁴⁰ Kronstadt, "Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance," 9.

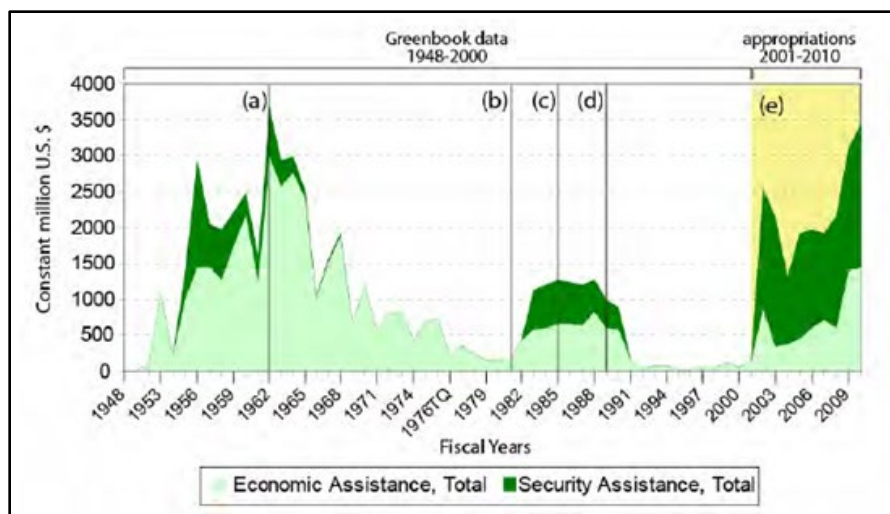


Figure 3. US Financial Assistance to Pakistan Since 1948. Fazal ur Rehman Khan, Khaldon Haya Al-Rawashdeh, Jose R. Reyes Irizarry, and Raja Shahzad Akram Minhas, “The Pak-U.S. Alliance in the Fight Against Terrorism: A Cost-Benefit Analysis,” Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, CA, December 2011, 19.

In contrast, China and Pakistan’s relationship is described as an ‘all-weather friendship’ given its enduring strength through changing geopolitical circumstances. Beginning in the 1960s, both China and Pakistan fought major wars against their regional rival India that created opportunities for greater mutual cooperation.⁴¹ The 1962 Sino-Indian War provided the context for China and Pakistan to settle their border disputes and begin a partnership.⁴² In the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, though it did not directly intervene, China provided diplomatic pressure that likely precluded other powers from interfering and helped bring about the war’s conclusion.⁴³ Furthermore, in 1971 given its mutual relations with both the United States and China, Pakistan served as a bridge for US-China rapprochement.⁴⁴ Finally, China’s steadfast support for Pakistan’s nuclear program through the secretive A. Q. Khan network helped it achieve nuclear

⁴¹ Andrew Small, *The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia’s New Geopolitics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 33-42.

⁴² Khan, et al., “Pak-U.S. Alliance,” 11.

⁴³ Small, *The China-Pakistan Axis*, 33-35.

⁴⁴ Henry Kissinger, *On China* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 225.

status in 1998.⁴⁵ Ironically, this relationship has provided China the influence through soft power, which Soviet hard power was incapable of achieving. Whereas the threat of a Soviet advance to secure access to the Indian Ocean elicited a US response, China's use of diplomatic and economic instruments through the BRI to secure that same access remains largely unchecked today.⁴⁶ As US relations periodically turned sour according to the flavor of the moment, China remained a willing alternative strategic partner for Pakistan. Which web Pakistan falls into at any particular moment largely pivots according to major changes in the geopolitical environment.

⁴⁵ Small, *The China-Pakistan Axis*, 45.

⁴⁶ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 172.

Part I: Operational Access in OEF

Gaining Operational Access

The September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States represented another significant turning point in US-Pakistan relations and begins the first case study. This section first seeks to answer the research question: What role did US diplomatic and economic engagement with Pakistan play in providing operational access to Afghanistan in 2001? After gaining insights into the use of diplomatic and economic instruments to gain access under the Bush Administration, the discussion transitions to the Obama Administration's efforts to maintain operational access during the 'surge' of US military troops in Afghanistan from 2009-2013.⁴⁷ Considering that from 2002-2013 the United States spent over \$28 billion in economic and security aid to Pakistan, perhaps it is natural to wonder what the United States hoped to and what it did achieve by the use of diplomatic and economic instruments of power.⁴⁸

Diplomatic negotiations with Pakistan for support in the emerging Global War on Terror (GWOT) began within days of 9/11 as the embers of the World Trade Center still burned. On September 13, 2001, US Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage gave Pakistani Intelligence Chief Mahmoud a list of seven demands focused on gaining Pakistan's "full" cooperation in the war to destroy the Taliban and Al Qaeda.⁴⁹ Two of those demands related to gaining access to

⁴⁷ David Scott Sentell, "On the Brink: Instability and the Prospect of State Failure in Pakistan," Masters Monograph, School of Advanced Military Studies, US Army Command and General Staff College, Ft. Leavenworth, KS, 2010, 47.

⁴⁸ K. Alan Kronstadt and Susan Epstein, "Direct Overt U.S. Aid Appropriations for and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2002-FY2020" (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2019), accessed August 25, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov>.

⁴⁹ National Security Archives, "U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage gives Pakistani Intelligence (ISI) Chief Mahmoud a list of seven demands," Diplomatic Cable, September 13, 2001, accessed August 11, 2020, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB325/index.htm>. The seven demands include: stop al-Qaeda at the border; provide the US with blanket landing rights to conduct operations; provide territorial and naval access; provide intelligence; publicly condemn terrorist attacks; cut off recruits and supplies to the Taliban; break diplomatic relations with the Taliban and help the US destroy Osama bin Laden.

Afghanistan. First, “provide the U.S. with blanket overflight and landing rights to conduct all necessary military and intelligence operations.”⁵⁰ Second, “provide as needed territorial access to U.S. and allied military intelligence, and other personnel to conduct all necessary operations against the perpetrators of terrorism or those that harbor them, including use of Pakistan’s naval ports, airbases and strategic locations on borders.”⁵¹ On September 14, 2001, Pakistan’s President Pervez Musharraf accepted US demands without conditions. Debate continues about the relative role of diplomatic persuasion versus the threat of military action against Pakistan if Musharraf failed to cooperate.⁵² Suffice it to say, Pakistan acceded to US diplomatic pressure based on negotiations rather than resort to military force. After all, coercive diplomacy is still diplomacy and one could argue all diplomacy is backed by the threat of military force, implicitly or explicitly. Yet, along with the potential stick that often corresponds with diplomatic negotiations, the United States also sought to leverage its economic might with financial carrots.

Given its long history using economic instruments, the United States again turned to what it believed would be an effective tool to shape Pakistani behavior in support of US interests. In a November 30, 2001 diplomatic cable from the US Embassy in Islamabad, local diplomats recognized, “the United States cannot pursue its counterterrorism agenda in Afghanistan without Pakistani support,” and therefore recommended, “Washington continue to supply extensive aid packages to help America secure its long-term regional interests.”⁵³ Highlighting that “suspicions about America are rampant in Pakistan” because of perceived abandonment after the Soviet-Afghan War, the cable argued that, “nevertheless, it is in our U.S. interest to demonstrate to the

⁵⁰ National Security Archives, “Seven Demands.”

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 111.

⁵³ National Security Archives, “New Think: Our Long-Term Interests in Pakistan,” Diplomatic Cable, November 30, 2001, accessed August 11, 2020, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB325/index.htm>.

Pakistani people that we are a long-term partner.”⁵⁴ To do so, the cable concluded the best means to achieve this aim is, “through judicious use of our most effective foreign policy tool: foreign aid.”⁵⁵

The Bush Administration began negotiations with Congress and President Musharraf for a massive aid package that would solidify Pakistani support in the GWOT for years to come. This culminated in June 2003 as President Bush presented Musharraf with a five-year, \$3 billion aid package, split between economic and military aid beginning in 2005.⁵⁶ Additionally, the United States cancelled \$1 billion in debts and deferred payment of billions more to provide a clean slate for US-Pakistan relations.⁵⁷ Furthermore, the United States established “coalition support funds” aimed to reimburse Pakistan for “military related expenditures related to the war in Afghanistan,” though the funds “were only loosely based on verifiable Pakistani costs” and therefore proved susceptible to abuse.⁵⁸ One of the express purposes of these funds was to, “compensate for use of Pakistan’s airfield and ports.”⁵⁹ Therefore, the Bush Administration provided a total of \$4 billion in economic incentives from the United States to Pakistan, along with a system for undetermined expenses, in return for its support to the GWOT.

In addition to this aid package, the Bush Administration made several other diplomatic and economic moves to pull Pakistan further into the US orbit. First, President Bush removed economic sanctions placed on Pakistan for its nuclear program.⁶⁰ Deputy Secretary of State

⁵⁴ National Security Archives, “New Think.”

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 112.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 113. See also (name redacted), “Pakistan-U.S. Relations: Issues for the 114th Congress” (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2015), 14, accessed August 25, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov>.

⁵⁹ Kronstadt, “Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance,” 10.

⁶⁰ Bajwa, “U.S. Security Cooperation with India and Pakistan,” 60.

Armitage captured the sense of renewal this action intended to create, stating that “history starts today.”⁶¹ Second, Bush used the symbolic diplomatic measure of granting “major non-NATO Ally status” to Pakistan in 2004 that allowed it to resume military hardware purchase and other significant benefits.⁶² In 2005, Pakistan began purchasing F-16s, with total foreign military sales to Pakistan amounting to \$5.2 billion from 2002-2011.⁶³ Furthermore, coalition support funds paid directly for Pakistan’s support to OEF ended up accounting for half of all US financial transfers to Pakistan, totaling over \$7 billion by 2008.⁶⁴ Figure 4 shows the various assistance programs discussed above, totaling \$15 billion in financial transfers from the United States to Pakistan during the Bush Administration.⁶⁵ With this collection of diplomatic and economic initiatives, one must consider what the results were and whether those instruments allowed the United States to achieved the operational access necessary to execute OEF.

⁶¹ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 112.

⁶² K. Alan Kronstadt, “Pakistan: Key Current Issues and Developments” (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2011), 75, accessed August 25, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov>. Some of the benefits include eligibility for loans of material, supplies, or equipment for cooperative research and testing; ability to furnish bilateral training agreements; eligibility for transfer of excess defense articles; and consideration to purchase depleted uranium ammunition. See US Department of State, “Major Non-NATO Ally Status: Fact Sheet” (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, January 30, 2020), accessed November 25, 2020, <https://www.state.gov/major-non-nato-ally-status/>.

⁶³ Kronstadt, “Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance,” 10.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ (name redacted), “Pakistan-U.S. Relations,” 16.

Figure 3. Direct Overt U.S. Aid Appropriations for and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2002-FY2016

Prepared by the Congressional Research Service for distribution to multiple congressional offices
Note: Final obligation and disbursement totals typically are lower than program account appropriations
 (rounded to the nearest millions of dollars)

Program or Account	FY 2002-FY2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015 (req.) ^a	Program or Account Total	FY 2016 (req.)
CN	182	43	39	1	8	1	1	273	1
FMF	1,866	294	295	296	280	280	280	3,591	265
IMET	13	5	4	5	5	5	5	42	5
INCLE	358	170	114	75	57	57	41	872	46
NADR	66	24	25	20	11	11	10	167	--
PCF/PCCF	400	700	800	452	--	--	--	2,352	--
Total Security-Related^d	3,197^d	1,236	1,277	849	361	353	336^e	7,609^f	316
CSH/GHCS	191	30	28	--	--	--	--	249	--
DA	286	--	--	--	--	--	--	286	--
ESF	3,494 ^g	1,292	919	905	724	477	546	8,357	478
Food Aid ^h	238	124	51	96	81	30	--	620	--
HRDF	17	--	--	<1	--	--	--	17	--
IDA	273	232	145	54	20	--	--	724	--
MRA	102	91	43	12	9	--	--	257	--
Total Economic-Related	4,601	1,769	1,186	1,067	834	507	546ⁱ	10,510	478
CSF Reimbursements^j	7,382	1,499	1,118	688^k	1,438^k	861^k	ε	12,986	--
Grand Total	15,180	4,504	3,581	2,604	2,633	1,721	882^l	31,055	794

Abbreviations:
 CN: Counternarcotics Funds (Pentagon budget)
 CSF: Coalition Support Funds (Pentagon budget)
 CSH: Child Survival and Health (Global Health and Child Survival, or GHCS, from FY2010)
 DA: Development Assistance
 ESF: Economic Support Funds
 FMF: Foreign Military Financing
 HRDF: Human Rights and Democracy Funds
 IDA: International Disaster Assistance (Pakistani earthquake, flood, and internally displaced persons relief)
 IMET: International Military Education and Training
 INCLE: International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement (includes border security)
 MRA: Migration and Refugee Assistance (also includes Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance or ERMA)
 NADR: Nonproliferation, Anti-Terrorism, Demining, and Related (the great majority allocated for Pakistan is for anti-terrorism assistance)
 PCF/PCCF: Pakistan Counterinsurgency Fund/Counterinsurgency Capability Fund (PCF overseen by the Pentagon, PCCF overseen by State)

Figure 4. US Aid to Pakistan from Fiscal Year 2002-2016. (name redacted), “Pakistan-U.S. Relations: Issues for the 114th Congress” (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, May 14, 2015), 16, accessed August 25, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov>.

The assessment of diplomatic and economic instruments in achieving operational access is mixed. Generally sufficient for the United States to gain operational access to Afghanistan, these instruments did not achieve access to areas in Pakistan where its vital interests ran counter to the United States. Of the seven demands President Musharraf agreed to following 9/11, Pakistan fulfilled those two related to gaining access to Afghanistan. When OEF began on October 7, 2001, not only did overflight prove crucial for carrying out airstrikes, but the use of Pakistani airfields provided access for Marine Task Force 58’s operational maneuver into Afghanistan on November 25, 2001.⁶⁶ After the Taliban’s fall, the establishment of GLOCs from

⁶⁶ Lambeth, *Air Power Against Terror*, 32, 139. “On September 14, Pakistan’s military leadership consented to open its airspace for the transit of any U.S. air and cruise missile attacks against the Taliban and al Qaeda ... In the meantime, in a deployment code-named Operation Swift Freedom, approximately 1,200 U.S. Marines entered southern Afghanistan on November 25, heralding the first involvement of conventional U.S. ground troops on a significant scale in the seven-week campaign. The Marines were flown into an airstrip 80 miles southwest of Kandahar to reinforce a foothold that had initially been secured

Karachi port to Afghanistan enabled larger scale logistics movements for growing troop levels than initial ALOCs.⁶⁷ Yet, as much as diplomatic and economic initiatives helped soften Pakistan's stance on transiting its territory and using ports, roads, and airfields to support operations in Afghanistan, these instruments proved less effective in areas where US and Pakistani interests diverged.

When considering areas of vital US interests, Pakistan failed to fulfill the majority of agreed demands despite the influx of billions of dollars, resumption of military sales, and recognition as a major US ally. Specifically, Pakistan proved less willing (or able) to support critical US objectives of pursuing Al Qaeda, "destroying Usama bin Laden," and cutting off support to the Taliban, often largely for domestic political reasons.⁶⁸ Beginning with the escape of Al Qaeda operatives following the battle of Tora Bora in December 2001, the use of Pakistan as a sanctuary for terrorist groups would become a major thorn in relation between the US and Pakistan.⁶⁹ Ironically, although Pakistan proved critical for the United States to gain access to Afghanistan for military operations that toppled the Taliban, Pakistan's resistance to US operational access to sanctuary areas in Pakistan prevented the United States from achieving its broader strategic objectives.

by an Army Special Forces A-Team and that soon came to be called Forward Operating Base (FOB) Rhino."

⁶⁷ Gulati, "Unblocking of NATO Supply Routes by Pakistan," 6. "Around 70 percent of NATO's surface supplies to Afghanistan move by PGLOCs from Pakistani ports. The quantum of transiting supplies had increased as Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) evolved into a NATO operation with a longer forecasted operational time frame and larger troop deployments." See also Lambeth, *Air Power Against Terror*, 157. "By mid-January 2002 ... In yet another sign of the campaign's growing transition from a largely air-centric operation to a more ground-dominated affair, the 101st Airborne Division arrived at Kandahar to relieve the 1,500 Marines who had initially established the first significant U.S. conventional ground presence at nearby FOB Rhino. That Army deployment showed a clear willingness on the part of the Bush administration to establish a longer-term U.S. military presence in Afghanistan."

⁶⁸ National Security Archives, "Seven Demands."

⁶⁹ US Army, *OEF October 2001-March 2002*, 29-30.

On both international and domestic levels, Pakistan retained a vital interest in not pursuing domestic terror groups to complete destruction or allowing US access to do the same.⁷⁰ Primarily, the use of terror proxies is a key component of Pakistan's strategic approach to India.⁷¹ The existence of terror groups capable of attacking targets in India provides Pakistan an asymmetric option to counter Indian conventional strength. Uncertain about US long-term presence in Afghanistan, retaining such options gave Pakistan a strategic hedge against its existential rival.⁷² Domestically, allowing US access to sanctuary areas constituted an unacceptable violation of Pakistani sovereignty. Likewise, aggressive actions by the Pakistani military against terror groups threatened to generate domestic instability capable of causing the regime to collapse. Thus, on those areas of US demands that threatened Pakistan's vital interests, Pakistan largely failed to deliver, in spite of the diplomatic and economic initiatives pursued by the Bush Administration. In 2009, US strategy in Afghanistan transitioned under the Obama Administration from neglect to surge, and with it came new uses of diplomatic and economic instruments to maintain operational access in Afghanistan amidst rising troop levels.

⁷⁰ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 836; and Robert D. Putnam, "Diplomacy and Domestic Politics: The Logic of Two-Level Games," *International Organization* 42, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 427-460, accessed August 8, 2020, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/2706785>. Two sources are particularly relevant to understanding a country's foreign policy across the two levels, as well as the integration of interests and values. First, Henry Kissinger synthesizes realist and liberal traditions by arguing that US foreign policy reflects a balance of interests and values. This tenuous balance is important to consider because sometimes the two aims can coincide or conflict, and often values infuse state actions despite the rhetoric of acting in the name of national interests. Second, Robert Putnam argues that states develop foreign policy on two levels. On the international level, geopolitical considerations and the interplay of national interests shape decision makers' options and choices in foreign policy development. Simultaneously, domestically public opinion and relevant actors (i.e., voters, lobbyists, military or religious authorities, or party officials) also influence the form and substance of foreign policy. Connecting the two concepts, one can see that while consideration of the international political environment may present certain interests for decision makers, the values and priorities of domestic actors will exert an equally powerful influence upon a nation's foreign policy.

⁷¹ Thomas F Lynch III, "The Decades-Long Double-Double Game: Pakistan, the United States, and the Taliban," *Military Review* 98, no. 4 (July-August 2018): 64-78, 66-70.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 75.

Maintaining Operational Access

With a new administration came a new strategy for Afghanistan and the broader South Asia region. This section seeks to answer the research question: how did the use of diplomatic and economic instruments help maintain operational access in Afghanistan from 2009-2013? Recognizing the governance problems, instability, and other issues plaguing Pakistan, Obama's strategy aimed to change conditions in Pakistan to affect the security situation in Afghanistan.⁷³ In support of this strategy, the Obama Administration and Congress passed a massive economic aid package; however, this aid came with a different focus and more conditions attached.⁷⁴ Ultimately, President Obama's use of diplomatic and economic instruments to maintain operational access in Afghanistan by improving conditions in Pakistan began with great expectations, but ended with diplomatic estrangement and severe logistical disruption.

The Obama Administration's signature aid package to Pakistan nearly tripled total economic assistance to \$7.5 billion.⁷⁵ Known as the Kerry-Berman-Luger bill, or KBL, this bill provided \$1.5 billion annually over five years and contained conditions reflecting Obama's broader strategic approach aimed at changing underlying conditions giving rise to terrorism.⁷⁶ As such, focus shifted from military to non-military areas, prioritizing improving governance, promoting economic growth, and investing in the population to achieve long-term changes to combat terrorism from the bottom up.⁷⁷ The focus on improving democratic governance and human rights signaled a distinct shift towards greater intervention and linkage of aid to the internal politics of Pakistan. A key provision dictated "all security-related assistance and arms

⁷³ Kronstadt, "Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance," 18.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 12.

⁷⁵ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 141.

⁷⁶ Kronstadt, "Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance," 12-13. KBL is formally called the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act of 2009 (EPPA), but generally gained the title 'KBL' due to its sponsorship by Senators John Kerry, Howard Berman, and Richard Luger.

⁷⁷ (name redacted), "Pakistan-U.S. Relations," 14.

transfers to Pakistan” required the Secretary of State to certify annually that, “security forces of Pakistan are not materially and substantially subverting the political or judicial processes of Pakistan.”⁷⁸ Though the importance of this inclusion was negligible from the US perspective, given the implicit norm of civilian control in US politics, this condition threatened a military elite accustomed to dominating Pakistan’s domestic politics.

Furthermore, focusing on economic growth and improving living conditions diluted the potential diplomatic effects of such a massive aid package. Compared to the early Cold War, when large infrastructure projects provided tangible evidence of US assistance, aid delivered during Obama’s presidency focused on important but less visible sectors, like health and services.⁷⁹ Additionally, problems in execution ranging from corruption, incompetence, overreliance on international over domestic companies, USAID humanitarian motivations, and an insecure environment that prevented the ‘branding’ of US aid, all undercut the aid package’s ability to fulfill its promise or link US assistance to the diplomatic objective of gaining the Pakistani people’s support.⁸⁰ In fact, in 2009 and 2010, only \$180 million of the promised \$1.5 billion annual aid had been disbursed, with full disbursement only beginning to take effect in 2011. By this time, growing Pakistani resentment over US military actions overshadowed the attempt to use diplomacy and economics as the primary instruments of power in the region.

Despite increased aid, hostility among Pakistanis toward the United States grew during Obama’s tenure and culminated in GLOC closures that threatened US operational access into Afghanistan. To Americans’ surprise, Pakistanis responded to additional economic aid with resentment rather than gratitude. Given its perceived infringement of their prerogatives, the

⁷⁸ Susan B. Epstein and K. A. Kronstadt, “Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Aid Conditions, Restrictions, and Reporting Requirements” (Washington, DC: Congressional Research Service, 2013), 8, accessed August 25, 2020, <https://crsreports.congress.gov>.

⁷⁹ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 147.

⁸⁰ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 147.

Pakistani military offered the fiercest criticism, “focusing especially on clauses related to civilian control over the military.”⁸¹ Besides seeing aid conditions as meddling in domestic affairs, US military actions exacerbated the tension between US desire for access to terrorist sanctuaries and Pakistani concerns over sovereignty.⁸² In September 2008, a US raid in Waziristan killed several militants in Pakistan. In response, Pakistan’s Army Chief expressed outrage declaring, “No external force is allowed to conduct operations inside Pakistan,” and such actions violated Pakistan’s sovereignty that could cause Pakistan to reconsider its alliance with the United States.⁸³ Incensed by the attack, the Pakistani parliament used its leverage by threatening to close GLOCs to Afghanistan, a harbinger of disruptions to come.⁸⁴ Despite the stated aim to elevate non-military instruments, President Obama accelerated the frequency of cross border raids and drone strikes to destroy terror groups in Pakistan, putting counterterrorism goals ahead of all others.⁸⁵ While these military operations greatly degraded Al Qaeda from 2009-2012, the diplomatic costs meant further deterioration of US-Pakistan relations.⁸⁶ To Pakistanis, drone strikes violated their sovereignty, offsetting any potential benefits of the KBL aid package.

⁸¹ Kronstadt, “Pakistan: Key Current Issues,” 73.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 14-15.

⁸³ Jane Perlez, “Pakistan’s Military Chief Criticizes U.S. Over a Raid,” *The New York Times*, September 10, 2008, accessed November 25, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/11/world/asia/11pstan.html>.

⁸⁴ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 156. As a result of the increased attacks on US supplies transiting through Pakistan, as well as Pakistan’s threat to close GLOCs through its country, the US began considering and testing alternatives GLOC routes to maintain. This exploration is well documented in Colonel Kurt Ryan’s, “Exploring Alternatives for Strategic Access to Afghanistan,” who reviewed the challenges facing US access in 2009 and offered viable alternatives like re-establishing the Northern Distribution Network. To a large extent, by preparing, testing, and gaining the diplomatic agreements necessary to open the NDN during the 2008-2010 timeframe, the US was able to significantly mitigate the level of disruption that later closures of Pakistani GLOCs would incur. For instance, when Pakistan closed its GLOCs for eight months in 2011-2012, the US was postured to shift capacity to the NDN, thereby maintaining operational access into Afghanistan that without NDN may have faced a significantly greater disruption. Thus, to a certain extent, the initial threats against US GLOCs may have created the unintended effect of mitigating eventual closure by triggering US actions that limited the very leverage Pakistan was threatening to use.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 160.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

Several events in 2011 further inflamed the tension between US counterterrorism goals and Pakistani concerns over sovereignty. Amidst regular anti-drone protests in Islamabad, another drone strike on March 17, 2011 led Obama to conduct a policy review; he ultimately concluded counterterrorism would remain the primary goal of US policy.⁸⁷ Then, on May 2, 2011, Seal Team 6 executed its infamous raid of the Abbottabad compound in Pakistan, killing Osama bin Laden.⁸⁸ This raid perhaps more than any other event marked a pivotal moment in US-Pakistan relations from hesitant cooperation toward open hostility. The tension culminated on November 26, 2011, when another US raid resulted in the death of 24 Pakistani soldiers at the Salala border station and led Pakistan to sever US GLOCs into Afghanistan.⁸⁹

Pakistan's closure of supply routes in November 2011 significantly disrupted US operational access to Afghanistan and left strategic planners scrambling for other options. Perhaps it is enough to say Pakistan's GLOC closure was disruptive, but this broad statement does not quite capture the experience. The confusion of dealing with the issue firsthand is captured by Colonel Walter Daniels who describes the impact at Transportation Command's headquarters.

Thanksgiving weekend Pakistan's [inaudible] lock shuts down because of the cross-border helicopter incident. So, now we don't have our land line of communication to Afghanistan anymore. We have to fly everything. We're also splitting our attention with, 'Okay, can we keep Afghanistan supplied without a GLOC? How are we going to do it?'

⁸⁷ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 159.

⁸⁸ Markey, *No Exit from Pakistan*, 139.

⁸⁹ Gulati, "Unblocking of NATO Supply Routes by Pakistan," 3. "The entire imbroglio has its beginning on 26 November, 2011, when two NATO Apache helicopters, an AC-130 gunship and two F-15E Eagle fighter jets fired upon Pakistani troops at two check posts in the Salala area of Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), Pakistan. This NATO air strike, better known in the media as the Salala incident or Salala attack, killed 24 Pakistani soldiers including two officers and wounded 13 others. There was immense public outcry all over Pakistan and the government reacted by ordering the evacuation of US personnel from its Shamsi Airfield and immediately closing all NATO Ground Lines of Communications through Pakistan (PGLOCs) to Afghanistan. The conditions laid down to open PGLOCs included an end to the drone strikes on Pakistani territory, an apology for the deaths of Pakistani soldiers in the Salala attack, an increased transit fee on NATO convoys and a ban on transporting weapons and ammunition through Pakistan."

If we lose the airspace, what are we going to do?' I had 21 days' worth of supply already at sea, that are all going to the port of Karachi. 'So, what do we do with those?'⁹⁰

Likewise, lack of asset visibility from sealift through Pakistan became abundantly clear when the system suddenly halted. Daniels states, "When the GLOCs closed, we were trying to figure out what was no kidding at the scene and what was about to get to the port of action, we had no idea."⁹¹

After nearly eight months, the further use of diplomatic and economic instruments restored operational access to Afghanistan. On July 3, 2012, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton apologized for the Salala incident and released \$1.18 billion in suspended aid in exchange for reopening Pakistani GLOCs.⁹² Though effective in achieving short-range goals, the subordination of diplomatic and economic instruments to military considerations, as well as their reactive use after negative incidents, limits their long-term effectiveness. In fact, despite the restoration of GLOCs in 2012, the divergence of US and Pakistan interests regarding terrorist sanctuaries versus Pakistani sovereignty would remain a fundamental roadblock to greater US-Pakistan relations.

Analysis

This case study reveals several implications regarding the United States' use of diplomatic and economic instruments. First, these tools were mostly successful in persuading Pakistan to allow US forces to gain operational access after September 11, 2001. This is largely reflective, however, of their use within a broader shift in US policy to gain the support of an erstwhile ally. While the Bush Administration's \$3 billion aid package represented a significant sum of money, it emerged within the context of specific geopolitical conditions that caused the United States to shift policy toward Pakistan from pressure and isolation to ally in the GWOT. When US interests require operational access in a particular region, diplomacy and economic aid

⁹⁰ Walter Daniels, "Interview with Col. Walter Daniels" (Fort Leavenworth, Combat Studies Institute, 2014), 12.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁹² Kronstadt, "Pakistan: U.S. Foreign Assistance," 8.

can sweeten the appeal of a broader strategic alignment with the United States but are unlikely to persuade a nation to abandon areas of vital interest due to diplomatic and economic inducements alone.

For issues of vital national interest or domestic survival, diplomatic and economic instruments proved less effective in changing behavior. Despite the Obama Administration's increased economic aid and emphasis on diplomacy to achieve a broader regional strategy, the divergence of the United States and Pakistan in areas of vital interest undermined the effectiveness of these instruments. US military operations in Pakistani territory violated Pakistan's sense of sovereignty, while aid conditions linked to US democratic values created their own form of resentment against US meddling in Pakistani domestic affairs, especially among the military elite. In 2011, the United States learned the cost of this lesson when the effects of military operations pushed Pakistan beyond its ability to accept further violations of its sovereignty, thereby causing a culmination of sorts in which Pakistan's policy shifted in a way that threatened US operational access into Afghanistan.

US policy toward Pakistan reflected a use of diplomatic and economic instruments in the shadow of military force. In the initial negotiations by the Bush Administration for transit rights through Pakistan, the threat of military force for noncompliance reflects the subordinate role of diplomacy and economic aid in gaining desired aims. Despite President Obama's new regional strategy aimed to enhance non-military instruments, his decisions in policy reviews and in response to military incidents demonstrated a clear priority for military considerations to diplomatic and economic. The dominance of military force in US strategic calculations toward Pakistan are understandable given the geopolitical context following 9/11, but also reveal how the long-term effectiveness of diplomatic and economic instruments are limited when overshadowed by urgent military actions. Despite the role of diplomatic and economic instruments in repairing damage done to US relations with Pakistan in 2011, the divergence of interests between the US and Pakistan since then has accelerated Pakistan's strategic pivot towards China, the direction

which this monograph now also turns. Perhaps, this use of diplomatic and economic instruments over the long-term to gain access during competition is more reflective of China's form of grand strategy.

Part II: China's Belt and Road Initiative in Pakistan

Gaining Operational Access

Pakistan's pivot toward China coincided with changes inside China. Its grand strategy shifted from Deng Xiaoping's notion of quietly building the economy while hiding capability to the rise of Xi Jinping's China Dream of 'national rejuvenation'. This case study seeks to answer the research question: what role do China's diplomatic and economic activities in Pakistan play in gaining operational access to desired theaters in competition? Answering this question begins with discussion of the BRI's origin and goals. Then, China's use of diplomatic and economic instruments through China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to gain access to the South Asia region is explored. Finally, China's ability to sustain its operational access to the Indian Ocean in competition and conflict is analyzed. Starting where the last case study ended, this section begins in 2013 with the rise of Xi Jinping.

The 2013 election of Xi Jinping's to lead the Peoples' Republic of China brought his vision of a more assertive and outward looking foreign policy to the forefront.⁹³ In September and October 2013, Xi visited Kazakhstan and Indonesia where he announced a new "Silk Road Economic Belt" and "21st Century Maritime Silk Road," collectively labeled "One Belt One Road" (later renamed Belt and Road Initiative).⁹⁴ An action plan followed in 2015 that identified China's aim to, "promote the connectivity of Asian, European and African continents and their

⁹³ Melissa Albert, "Xi Jinping," *Britannica*, accessed November 25, 2020, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Xi-Jinping>. Xi Jinping was selected as General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in November 2012 and President of the Peoples' Republic of China in March 2013.

⁹⁴ Daniel S. Markey, *China's Western Horizon: Beijing and the New Geopolitics of Eurasia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2020), 15. China's general design for the BRI encompasses a series of land-based economic belts and sea-ward ports. Following its ancient predecessor, the new Silk Road Economic Belt consists of six economic belts or corridors linking China to developing markets, raw materials, and trade. The 21st Century Maritime Silk Road consists of maritime routes connecting the South China Sea with the South Pacific, Indian Ocean, and Red Sea.

adjacent seas, establish and strengthen partnerships among the countries along the Belt and Road, and realize balanced and sustainable development.”⁹⁵ Since its inception, the number of countries signing BRI agreements has grown, with active projects in over 70 countries.⁹⁶ Estimates suggest the BRI will total somewhere between \$1 and \$8 trillion over the next decade, meeting a large portion of developing country infrastructure needs.⁹⁷ See Figure 5 for the extent of the BRI. The scope and scale of the BRI make it the largest development initiative in history, surpassing even the Marshall Plan’s \$130 billion in current dollars.⁹⁸ By making the BRI central to Chinese foreign policy, Xi not only made it integral to China’s drive for global influence, but also tied his domestic political legitimacy to its fate.

⁹⁵ National Development and Reform Commission, “Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road” (Issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, with State Council authorization March 2015), 2, accessed September 17, 2020, https://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease_8232/201503/t20150330_1193900.html.

⁹⁶ Rafiq Dossani, Jennifer Bouey, and Keren Zhu, "Demystifying the Belt and Road Initiative: A Clarification of its Key Features, Objectives and Impacts" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), ix, accessed August 25, 2020, https://www.rand.org/pubs/working_papers/WR1338.html.

⁹⁷ David De Cremer, Bruce McKern, and Jack McGuire, eds., *The Belt and Road Initiative: Opportunities and Challenges of a Chinese Economic Ambition* (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications, 2020), 320.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 27, 344.

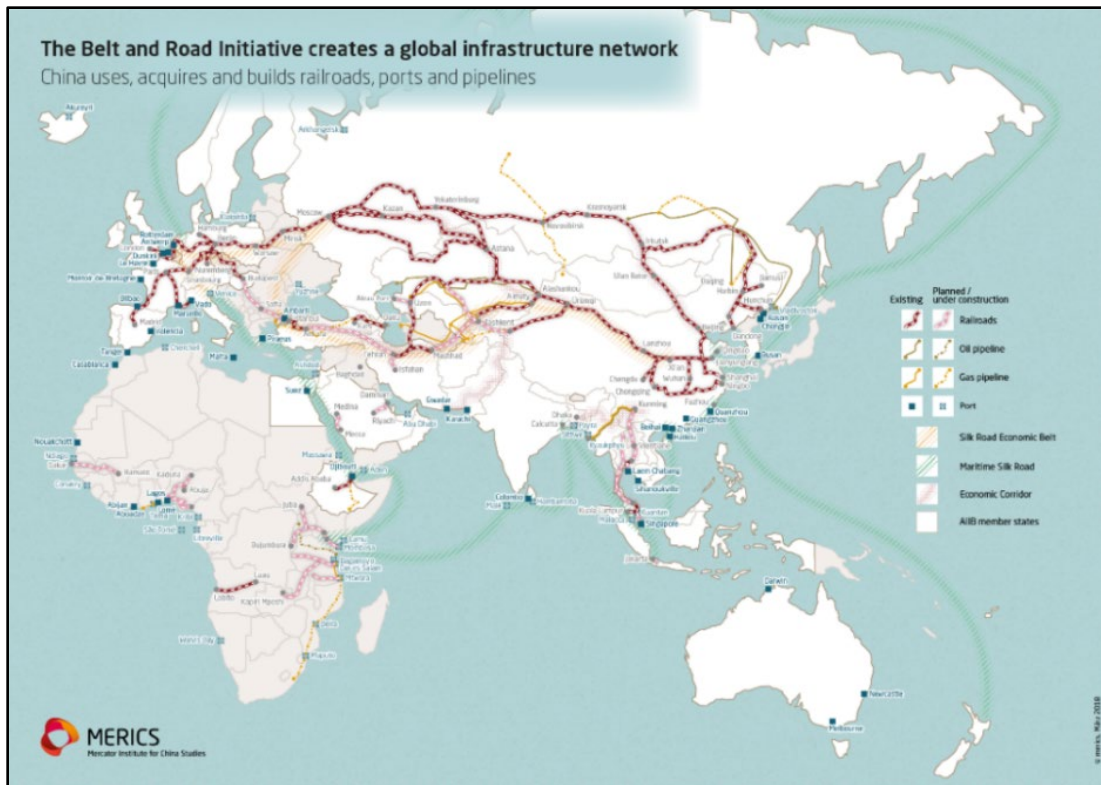


Figure 5. China’s Belt and Road Initiative. Merics, “Mapping the Belt and Road Initiative,” Mercator Institute for China Studies, June 07, 2018, accessed August 25, 2020, https://merics.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Silkroad-Projekt_EN_2020_150dpi.png.

Further analysis, however, reveals the origins of the BRI extend beyond Xi Jinping’s rise. In 1999, China’s “Go West” policy aimed to extend the development model used in eastern regions to the underdeveloped western province of Xinjiang.⁹⁹ With 25% of China’s oil and gas reserves and 40% of its coal and mineral deposits, Xinjiang province offered a “new frontier” for China’s economic development.¹⁰⁰ Yet, Xinjiang also posed a significant threat to Chinese unity

⁹⁹ Juan Pablo Carnden and Heriberto Araujo, *China’s Silent Army: The Pioneers, Traders, Fixers and Workers Who Are Remaking the World in Beijing’s Image* (New York: Random House, 2013), 43. See also Isaac B. Kardon, Conor M. Kennedy, and Peter A. Dutton, “China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar: China’s Potential Strategic Strongpoint in Pakistan,” *CMSI China Maritime Reports*, no. 7 (August 2020), 46, accessed October 15, 2020, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/cmsi-maritime-reports/7>. “Silk Road Economic Belt is in many respects the extension of these domestic stability and development policies. The ‘Great Western Development’ or ‘Go West’ strategy, initiated in 1999, is the domestic precursor to BRI, and the programs are now intertwined.”

¹⁰⁰ Carnden, *China’s Silent Army*, 41.

and domestic stability, an enduring vital interest. Xinjiang represents a collision point between Han Chinese and Uighur Muslim cultures, a tension exacerbated by developmental discrepancies between the rural Muslim population in the southwest and the urban Han Chinese in the northeast.¹⁰¹ Xinjiang is not just a geographic linchpin for China's BRI, but also an ideological vector for China's pursuit of stability. The driving logic for extending economic development beyond China's western borders is the desire to pacify Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang. Thus, China's peripheral strategy is integrally linked with its interest in domestic stability.¹⁰²

With consideration of its interconnected nature, the goals of China's BRI can be assessed using the DIME framework to understand the intentions hidden beneath its grand rhetoric. China portrays the BRI as a cooperative framework for global economic development with the goal of promoting "win/win cooperation" and creating a "community of common destiny."¹⁰³ However, analysis of China's interests reveals a more telling picture. Diplomatically, the BRI represents an indirect strategy to replace US-dominated economic and political institutions with new ones having "Chinese characteristics."¹⁰⁴ This highlights the informational purpose of BRI to project a narrative of China as a global rising power, in contrast to US decline. The ability to portray China as a global leader helping developing nations rise against a hegemonic Western order reflects Xi's notion of building an "Asia for Asians."¹⁰⁵ Economically, the BRI allows China to relieve pressure on its domestic economy by redirecting production overcapacity overseas and generating

¹⁰¹ Carndenal, *China's Silent Army*, 41.

¹⁰² Kardon, "China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar," 45.

¹⁰³ De Cremer, *The Belt and Road Initiative*, 76.

¹⁰⁴ De Cremer, *The Belt and Road Initiative*, 61.

¹⁰⁵ Russel and Berger, *Weaponizing the Belt and Road Initiative*, 43. "Movement toward a Sino-centric regional ecosystem represents a fundamental change in the regional balance of power between China and the United States; there have been echoes of a "sphere of influence" strategy in Xi Jinping's public statements calling for "Asia for Asians."

export markets for Chinese products.¹⁰⁶ A major component of this is the construction of port cities into Special Economic Zones (SEZ), following the Shekou development model used at Shenzhen.¹⁰⁷ Additionally, China is largely dependent on the import of critical resources, with 80% of imported oil transiting the Strait of Malacca.¹⁰⁸ Securing access to sources of energy resources that bypass the chokepoint at Malacca is one major economic driver of the BRI. Finally, militarily the BRI serves China's security interests in two ways. First, given linkages between instability along China's western periphery and terrorism in Xinjiang, China aims to secure Xinjiang by stabilizing nearby Muslim states through economic development.¹⁰⁹ Second, and more long-term, the influence China gains through its BRI offers to provide access and presence in critical regions under the pretense of protecting "overseas interests."¹¹⁰

As the land bridge between China's continental belt and maritime road, CPEC brings together all the strands of the BRI in one location and has symbolic value as the 'flagship' of China's BRI.¹¹¹ China's interests in Pakistan reflect its concern for maintaining domestic

¹⁰⁶ Jessica C. Liao, "China's Belt and Road Initiative and Its Infamous Debt: More of a Threat than a Trap," *Red Diamond* 10, no. 3 (Jul-Sep 2019): 8-10, 9. "Economic and social returns on infrastructure investment diminish sharply, if not go negative, when haphazard investment leads to overcapacity. This happened in China in the late 2000s when Beijing pushed through a \$590-billion stimulus package in response to the 2008 financial crisis. While creating a short-term boost, it caused severe overcapacity, particularly amongst Chinese SOEs."

¹⁰⁷ Kardon, "China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar," 18. "The port is designed to incorporate an adjacent free trade and export processing zone modeled on Shekou, the port complex at the heart of the PRC's Shenzhen Special Economic Zone. The basic "Shekou Model" is a port surrounded by a logistics and free trade zone and bolstered by a purpose-built commercial and residential city to support the workforce for the whole complex. This "port-park-city" is designed to reproduce a thriving, Chinese business ecosystem that can generate and process the trade required to make the port and its hinterlands prosper."

¹⁰⁸ Russel and Berger, *Weaponizing the Belt and Road Initiative*, 15.

¹⁰⁹ Kardon, "Gwadar," 57.

¹¹⁰ Russel and Berger, *Weaponizing the Belt and Road Initiative*, 13. In 2004, President Hu Jintao expanded the scope of China's security interests by tasking the military to defend China's overseas interests as one of their "New Historic Missions." See also Markey, *China's Western Horizon*, 32. In 2017, the PLA expanded its definition of "overseas interests" to include Chinese enterprises, investments, and personnel requiring protection.

¹¹¹ Madiha Afzal, "At All Costs: How Pakistan and China Control the Narrative on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor," *Global China: Regional Influence and Strategy*, Brookings Institution, June 2020, 1.

stability, geopolitical balancing against India, and defending “China’s burgeoning economic interests, including safeguarding trade and transportation routes, and protecting PRC citizens.”¹¹² Negotiated with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, CPEC introduced a promising boost to Pakistan’s economic development with the infusion of \$46 billion over 15 years.¹¹³ CPEC primarily focused on large infrastructure projects for power, industry, and transportation, all linked to ports with Gwadar as the centerpiece of the relationship and model for the broader BRI.¹¹⁴ With the extension of China’s economic model to Pakistan as a showcase for the capacity of China to lead developing nations in economic development, both the construction of major projects and the development of a SEZ around Gwadar would be essential to serve the broader narrative purposes of the BRI.

Yet, beyond the explicit narrative of economic development lie several other elements of China’s motivation, such as countering Islamic extremism.¹¹⁵ Pakistan has long been an unstable country that is unwilling (or unable) to eliminate Islamic militant organizations that promote terrorism throughout the region. The connection between Pakistani terror groups and China’s domestic threats in Xinjiang make security concerns a significant motivation. China’s aim in CPEC is partially driven by its desire to eliminate the ideological and logistical roots of terrorism that filter into Xinjiang by addressing them with economic development along China’s periphery.¹¹⁶ Stabilizing Pakistan through economic development, therefore, represents one of the

¹¹² Andrew Scobell, et al., “At the Dawn of Belt and Road: China in the Developing World” (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018), 124, accessed August 25, 2020, www.rand.org/t/RR2273. See also Markey, *China’s Western Horizon*, 78.

¹¹³ Afzal, “At All Costs,” 1.

¹¹⁴ Markey, *China’s Western Horizon*, 4.

¹¹⁵ Markey, *China’s Western Horizon*, 48.

¹¹⁶ Kardon, “China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar,” 10, 46. “The leading Chinese diplomat and former PRC Ambassador to Pakistan dismissed the American post-9/11 military approach to counterterrorism as “treating symptoms but not curing the disease” and prescribing instead “gradual implementation of the projects of CPEC so that economic and social conditions of the backward areas of both Pakistan and China will be improved, and the hotbed of terrorism—poverty—will be gradually reduced.” This is an interesting statement when compared to the change in US policy in 2009 with basically

major geostrategic drivers potentially surpassing its inherent economic motivations. Another is gaining access to the Indian Ocean.

A second motivation beyond purely economic is the geostrategic value of Gwadar port's strategic location. Despite its central role in the BRI narrative, the construction of Gwadar predated China's BRI by over a decade. In January 2000, President Musharraf requested Chinese help building Gwadar into a deep water port to serve Pakistan's strategic interests in demonstrating close ties to China as a balance against India; offsetting an Indian blockade of Karachi; and threatening Indian access to Persian Gulf oil.¹¹⁷ Gwadar's construction in 2002 raised suspicions in US and Indian defense communities and led to the 'String of Pearls' theory, whereby China's investment in ports around the Indian Ocean suggested a Chinese move to develop military ports to strategically encircle India.¹¹⁸

Finally, the lack of prospects for commercial viability also indicate Gwadar does not represent a purely economic motive. Gwadar is located in the remote southwest corner of Pakistan's Balochistan region, which introduces significant development challenges. First, Balochistan is disconnected from Pakistan's main economic corridors. In fact, despite occupying over half Pakistan's territory, Balochistan contains only 5% of the population and accounts for only 3% of GDP.¹¹⁹ A second issue limiting Gwadar's commercial prospects is competition for

the same premise: rather than just hunting down terrorists, you must also change the conditions from which terrorism grows. If America's inability to eliminate terrorism through economic development is any indicator, China will likely find it difficult to achieve this aim as well.

¹¹⁷ Markey, *China's Western Horizon*, vii. See also Kardon, "Gwadar," 5. "China's interest in Gwadar is dictated first by its strategic geography. Sited on Pakistan's southwestern Makran coastline, the port lies just 400 km east of the Strait of Hormuz, the narrow waterway connecting the Persian Gulf to global markets, and through which over 40% of China's imported oil transits."

¹¹⁸ Markey, *China's Western Horizon*, ix, 77. See also Carndenal, *China's Silent Army*, 233; Christopher J. Pehrson, "String of Pearls: Meeting the Challenge of China's Rising Power across the Asian Littoral" (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2006); James Schwemlein, "Strategic Implications of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor," *Special Report*, no. 459 (December 2019), Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, 10, accessed October 15, 2020, www.usip.org.

¹¹⁹ De Cremer, *The Belt and Road Initiative*, 65.

investment between Gwadar and major ports at Karachi and Qasim. Gwadar “has yet to see regular commercial service,” despite being in operation since 2008 and throughput pales in comparison with Pakistan’s other ports.¹²⁰ Moreover, Karachi itself is also the benefactor of Chinese CPEC investments.¹²¹ This suggests commercial prospects for China would be better met by reinforcing success in Karachi than sinking money into failure at Gwadar. Finally, efforts to connect Gwadar to Pakistan’s transportation infrastructure have met fierce resistance from militants in Balochistan, whose livelihood it disrupts and who have little stake in its benefits.¹²² Thus, Gwadar’s strategic location and limited commercial utility suggest the strategic motivation of gaining access to the Indian Ocean motivates China’s investment in CPEC and Gwadar over purely economic motives (see Figure 6).

¹²⁰ Kardon, “China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar,” 12, 16, 23. “Gwadar accounts for less than 1% of the roughly 100 million tons of annual throughput in Pakistani ports.”

¹²¹ Kardon, “China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar,” 23, 29. “Pakistan already has two large ports in a major urban area, relatively well-connected to their hinterland, that are also being actively expanded by Chinese firms: Karachi and Port Muhammad Bin Qasim (Port Qasim). Virtually all maritime trade in Pakistan goes through Karachi or Qasim, some 600 km to the east in relatively prosperous Punjab province ... Current CPEC plans prioritize improvements to Pakistan’s existing rail network—including at Port Qasim—and postpone plans for new rail lines to connect Gwadar to the “middle and long term.”

¹²² De Cremer, *The Belt and Road Initiative*, 206. See also Markey, *China’s Western Horizon*, 5. “In November 2017, Pakistan’s federal minister for ports and fisheries, Hasil Bizenjo, briefed the Senate that 91% of profits from Gwadar would flow to China over the next forty years. The other 9% would go to Pakistan’s federal government, leaving provincial and local authorities empty-handed.” Additionally, Balochistan provincial leaders worried increasing real estate markets would displace Balochs from their homes, new jobs would go to outsiders, and “traditional livelihoods, like fishing, could be lost forever.”



Figure 6. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. James Schwemlein, “Strategic Implications of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” *Special Report* no. 459 (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace, 2019), 4, accessed October 15, 2020, www.usip.org.

CPEC and Gwadar’s principal geostrategic value to China is its ability to provide an “exit to the ocean,” as a land alternative for operational access to Middle Eastern energy resources and strategic space in the Indian Ocean.¹²³ While Gwadar is not currently a PLA base, China is setting conditions that could allow its use for its military purposes at a later date. First, following Gwadar’s inability to gain commercial traction in 2007, a Chinese state-owned company secured

¹²³ Kardon, “China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar,” 2.

a 40-year lease for Gwadar in 2015.¹²⁴ Second, China's ability to dictate port construction to military specifications, provides dual use functions of infrastructure that is ostensibly for commercial purposes only.¹²⁵ Third, though not used by the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), Pakistan's Navy uses Gwadar regularly with its Chinese-made ships and submarines, meaning Gwadar's infrastructure is suitable to service a PLAN fleet if China desired it.¹²⁶ Finally, China's establishment of a military base in Djibouti in 2015 crossed a critical threshold as China's first overt overseas military base, despite Beijing's claim it had no intention of overseas bases.¹²⁷ China's assertion that it has no desire to turn Gwadar into a military base, therefore, does not mean it may not become one in the future, given the actions China has taken to set conditions for such an outcome, as well as the precedent of doing just that in Djibouti. Two aspects require further analysis to see just how China is using its diplomatic and economic means to achieve access to the Indian Ocean.

First, dual use ports constructed under the BRI (Gwadar in particular) show one way China's diplomatic and economic activities serve its strategic purposes. China's concept of civil-military fusion dictates that civil projects are constructed so they can also serve the needs of the

¹²⁴ Ibid., 13-14. "The Gwadar Port Authority tendered international bids in 2006, and the Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) won a 40-year build-operate-transfer (BOT) lease for Gwadar port in 2007 ... By February 2013, PSA had opted to sell all of its equity in the port to the Chinese state-owned firm China Overseas Port Holdings Company, Ltd. (COPHC). When COPHC took over the port from PSA in February 2013, the facilities were in disrepair. Still, shortly after Xi Jinping's landmark trip and announcement of the CPEC project, COPHC finalized a new 40-year lease on the Gwadar port in November 2015." See also Frédéric Grare, "Along the Road: Gwadar and China's Power Projection," *Union Institute for Security Studies* 7 (2018), 2, accessed October 15, 2020, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep21469>. Grare articulates not only China's interest in securing equity in the port, but also shows the side effects of US-Pakistan tension in 2011-2012 as "bitter tensions between Washington and Islamabad over the latter's policies in Afghanistan convinced Pakistan of the need to balance US influence in the country and to seek Beijing's more active support."

¹²⁵ Russel and Berger, *Weaponizing the Belt and Road Initiative*, 18.

¹²⁶ Kardon, "China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar," 2.

¹²⁷ Markey, *China's Western Horizon*, 33. "November 2015 China publicly acknowledged that it was building its first overseas military base ... in Djibouti ... Now that the taboo of base-building has been broken, Beijing presumably faces one fewer obstacle to building others."

military. Accordingly, a series of laws make military specifications mandatory for Chinese companies as they construct BRI projects and also gives the PLA the authority to seize civilian controlled assets for military use.¹²⁸ Therefore, even Chinese companies not directly state-owned must still comply with Beijing's strategically oriented construction standards or risk possible legal penalties. Reflecting China's preference for an indirect approach, this "*first civilian, later military* framework seeks to lay the groundwork for military utilization without raising red flags or inviting resistance."¹²⁹

The use of economic means to create advantageous conditions for military use is not without challenges, however. One of the challenges inherent in China's indirect approach is the reliance on companies not directly controlled by the PLA to build the infrastructure it will rely on to project or sustain its forces. Some Chinese contractors simply "evade or ignore the rules on building to military standards," leading to PLA concerns that "widespread failure to implement regulations on port construction impedes the ability of the PLA to utilize these infrastructure assets."¹³⁰ Nevertheless, given Beijing's nominal control over Chinese companies, China's ability to leverage civilian firms to provide military capable ports for PLAN overseas logistical requirements represents a more accurate picture of how China's dual use ports facilitate operational access without the overt buildup of military forces.¹³¹ Transitioning from a dual use

¹²⁸ Russel and Berger, *Weaponizing the Belt and Road Initiative*, 18. "The 2017 National Defense Transportation Law: Articles 2 and 3 of the law direct 'planning, construction, management, and use of resources in transportation fields such as railways, roads, waterways, aviation, pipelines, and posts for the purpose of satisfying the national defense requirements' and the National Defense Mobilization Law of 2010 emphasizes the importance of 'combining peacetime production with wartime production' and embedding the military within the civilian sector."

¹²⁹ Russel and Berger, *Weaponizing the Belt and Road Initiative*, 19.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹³¹ Kardon, "China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar," 48. "From the standpoint of physical capacity, Gwadar could readily be repurposed for use as a PLA military facility. If no commercial traffic is permitted, the draught (12.5m) and quay wall (602m) dimensions mean Gwadar's port facilities could support the PLAN's largest vessels, such as the Type-075 amphibious assault ship (LOA 235m, draft 7-8m), Type 071 landing platform dock (LOA 210m, draft 7m), and the Type-901 fleet replenishment ship (LOA 241m, draft 10.8m). PLAN aircraft carriers could also call on Gwadar."

potential to actuality, however, depends on acquiescence by a partner nation who owns the port or requires China to gain control over a port directly.

Second, perhaps the most significant diplomatic and economic instrument China has leveraged to gain control over strategically located ports is the concept of ‘debt trap’ diplomacy. With debt trap lending, a partner country is loaned money at an unsustainable level and when it is unable to repay its loan, the creditor (China) bails out the partner country based on its own terms, an example being exchanging debt for ownership or control of the indebted asset.¹³² Using such mechanisms offers China an indirect economic means to gain control over BRI projects constructed for dual civilian-military use. The most notorious example of ‘debt-trap’ diplomacy is the Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka, which failed to produce enough commercial revenues to satisfy its debt and resulted in China buying out the loan in exchange for a 99-year lease for the port.¹³³

Counterintuitively, some analysts suggest the threat of debt traps is overblown and actually constitutes more of a trap for China as lender than for its client states. Rafiq Dossani, et al. states, “China appears to have paid twice for the port, once as debt and once as equity. First, its lending arm extended loans and credits to build the port at an estimated cost of \$1 billion. This debt remains unpaid and due. China subsequently purchased the rights to operate the port for 99 years for \$1.12 billion.”¹³⁴ Thus, China pays twice for its unsustainable projects and attracts international condemnation for unfair economic coercion in the process; this is not a situation Beijing likely seeks given the importance of the BRI narrative.¹³⁵ Nonetheless, Pakistan is

¹³² Dossani, "Demystifying the Belt and Road Initiative," 3.

¹³³ Ibid., 23.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Russel and Berger, *Weaponizing the Belt and Road Initiative*, 43. “Many BRI states are unable to service their existing debts to China, presenting China with an unpalatable choice between the expensive options of debt forgiveness or restructuring at a time when China’s own economy is distressed versus

heavily indebted to China, with poor economic growth suggesting Pakistan will not be capable of repaying CPEC loans. This indicates a similar debt for equity buyout could occur for Gwadar port, thereby adding one more Chinese controlled port to the mythical ‘String of Pearls’.¹³⁶ From a purely economic perspective, the use of debt traps makes for poor financial practice and may overburden China’s capacity to carry out its vision of the BRI. Strategically, though, it is perhaps a cost worth paying to gain control over infrastructure necessary for China’s access to critical regions.

Indeed, China’s diplomatic and economic activities through the BRI have succeeded in gaining operational access to desired regions for its strategic purposes, at least in a peacetime environment.¹³⁷ This fact is well captured by the statement attributed to a PLA officer about Gwadar’s potential as a PLAN base, “The food is already on the plate; we’ll eat it whenever we want to.”¹³⁸ Whether China’s access can be maintained in the future amidst significant challenges is another question. The next section considers the strength of China’s BRI in Pakistan in execution and whether its access is durable in the future in competition or conflict.

Maintaining Operational Access

Given China’s success in setting conditions for access to Pakistan and the Indian Ocean, this section evaluates the execution of CPEC since its inception. In doing so, the question under consideration is: how do China’s diplomatic and economic activities under BRI support its ability

pressing for repayment or another form of compensation – risking criticism for “debt-trap diplomacy” and local backlash.”

¹³⁶ Daniel Kliman and Abigail Grace, “Chapter 2: How the Belt and Road is Reshaping the World,” *Power Play: Addressing China’s Belt and Road Strategy*, Asia-Pacific Security, Center for a New American Security (2018): 8-13, 11, accessed October 15, 2020, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/resrep20449.5>. See also Russel and Berger, *Weaponizing the Belt and Road Initiative*, 27, 30, 40.

¹³⁷ Schwemlein, “Strategic Implications of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 10. “The naval challenge presented by Gwadar grabs headlines, but the reality is that Pakistan and China have already taken important strides that alter the strategic situation in the Indian Ocean region. PLAN vessels, including submarines, have resupplied at Karachi and Bin Qasim ports, demonstrating that China is capable of substantial access.”

¹³⁸ Kardon, “China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar,” 51.

to maintain operational access into desired theaters during competition and conflict? This question is answered by first assessing the current status of CPEC; second, evaluating the feasibility of physically completing CPEC as China's 'exit to the ocean' that would provide China GLOCs to the Indian Ocean; and third, discussing the likelihood of China turning Gwadar into a military base from which it can project military power in the region.

Begun with much promise in 2015, China's multibillion-dollar CPEC investments in Pakistan's infrastructure have yet to fulfill their grand expectations. As of 2020, only one quarter of the 122 announced projects have been completed with another quarter under construction, leaving half of planned projects either delayed or canceled altogether.¹³⁹ In fact, despite the narrative of modernizing Pakistan by transplanting China's SEZ growth model, only the Gwadar SEZ has been completed out of eleven planned SEZs.¹⁴⁰ As CPEC's centerpiece, Gwadar port comprises the majority of projects; yet, it provides little contribution to Pakistan's economic development and elicits significant opposition from local militant groups.¹⁴¹ Nearly two-thirds of major CPEC projects are energy focused, which meets Pakistan's domestic political priorities, but does not bode well for China's intention of securing influence from its economic investments.¹⁴² The cancellation of many energy projects, and overall completion rate of only 34%, signifies the setbacks CPEC is encountering overall. Cancellations have deprived some provinces of significant funding, while unfulfilled projects leave the Pakistani people dissatisfied. Similar to the United States where promises of aid were followed by underwhelming execution, the inability to realize

¹³⁹ Jonathan E. Hillman, Maesea McCalpin, and Kendra Brock, "The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor at Five" (Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 2020), 2, accessed October 15, 2020, www.csis.org.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 1-2. "Pakistan currently faces an energy deficit of 3,000 MW during peak demand—an issue that successive governments have made a top priority for the CPEC since 2013."

the grand rhetoric of CPEC in achieving economic development and improving Pakistani lives is more likely to fuel opposition to China than gain favor.

Far from improving, Pakistan's economy remains burdened by unsustainable debt and low growth. One of the key priorities of newly elected Prime Minister Imran Khan in 2018 was solving Pakistan's debt crisis of \$96 billion in external debt.¹⁴³ Khan promised to unveil the corruption of the previous ruling party and renegotiate CPEC more favorably to Pakistan.¹⁴⁴ After much rhetoric and some initial reviews, Khan's government ultimately failed to make substantial changes to CPEC, possibly because he underestimated the commitment of Pakistan's military to CPEC or out of deference to China.¹⁴⁵ Ultimately, with debt crisis looming, in 2019 Pakistan received a second IMF bailout in a decade showing that rather than improving, Pakistan's economy was faltering. This caused significant dismay in the United States over the fear that bailout money would enable China by satisfying Pakistan's CPEC debts rather than improving its economy.¹⁴⁶ It appears Pakistan continues to be a black hole for great power economic aid and investment. Perhaps the best economic option for China would be to cut its losses in Pakistan and focus elsewhere, but it is politically unlikely China will reconsider due to Pakistan's strategic value and the symbolic importance of CPEC as the 'flagship' of a BRI-driven foreign policy linked to Xi Jinping's domestic legitimacy.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴³ Afzal, "At All Costs," 3.

¹⁴⁴ Afzal, "At All Costs."

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 3-4. See also Markey, *China's Western Horizon*, 53.

¹⁴⁶ Hillman, "The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor at Five," 1. See also Schwemlein, "Strategic Implications of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor," 6. "Khan's government returned to the IMF in April 2019 and quickly negotiated a three-year external finance facility valued at \$6 billion ... IMF brought additional scrutiny on CPEC. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said in August 2019 that "there's no rationale for IMF tax dollars—and associated with that, American dollars that are part of the IMF funding—for those to go to bail out Chinese bondholders or China itself."

¹⁴⁷ Hillman, "The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor at Five," 4.

Ostensibly, CPEC provides China an alternative route to maintain access to Middle Eastern energy resources and the Indian Ocean in the event of disruption to the Strait of Malacca.¹⁴⁸ The feasibility of completing the CPEC connection to China, let alone its ability to carry the capacity that currently transits by sea is judged by experts as highly unlikely, largely due to the risks of natural disasters and terrorism.¹⁴⁹ It took 27 years to build the current Karakorum Highway that connects China and Pakistan through a treacherous stretch of mountains. Despite China's attempts since 2008 to triple its capacity by expanding the road from 10 to 30 meters, progress has been limited due to the few months the terrain is passable and frequent natural disasters that include landslides, avalanches, and earthquakes.¹⁵⁰ Added to the physical limitations of terrain, security considerations threaten CPEC's full implementation.

The threat of terrorism has severely disrupted China's ability to complete and operate CPEC projects. Ironically, projects designed to eradicate Islamic militancy in Pakistan through economic development have created an insecure environment that threatens those very projects. This hostility is well captured by the proclamation of the Balochistan Liberation Army following its attack on the Chinese consulate in Karachi on November 23, 2018, "the objective of this attack is clear: we will not tolerate any Chinese military expansionist endeavors on Baloch soil."¹⁵¹ Another attack followed in May 2019 against Gwadar's Pearl Continental Hotel targeting Chinese and Pakistani investors.¹⁵² Much as the US efforts to use diplomatic and economic means to

¹⁴⁸ Kardon, "China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar," 57. "The second objective, largely external, is to ensure reliable access to the Persian Gulf to support energy flows and a strategic presence in the Middle East and across the Indian Ocean region. Gwadar has major geographic appeal as an "exit to the ocean" because Pakistan is contiguous to western China and can, in theory, provide a secure logistical corridor to the sea. Only Myanmar and India likewise share borders with China as well as the Indian Ocean. The key limitations on realization of this objective are the insecurity, instability, and underdevelopment of Gwadar and Balochistan."

¹⁴⁹ Kardon, "China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar," 57.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹⁵¹ Markey, *China's Western Horizon*, 5.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

eliminate Islamic militancy in Pakistan failed, the persistence of terror groups in Pakistan also promises to remain a significant obstacle to completing CPEC, thereby denying China its potential use of the Pakistan corridor to maintain operational access to the Indian Ocean.¹⁵³ Although the idea of CPEC as a strategic bypass to Malacca sounds enticing in theory, CPEC and Gwadar are likely to play a much more limited role in China's strategic ambitions than envisioned, though this is not insignificant.

Gwadar is likely to serve as a strategic outpost from which China can maintain its operational access during competition but is unlikely to guarantee operational access in conflict. The first priority Gwadar helps China address is its ongoing fight against Islamic terrorism.¹⁵⁴ By maintaining a presence in Pakistan, China can apply pressure on Pakistan to act against terror organizations, while also preventing criticism of its treatment of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang.¹⁵⁵ Among the advantages of Gwadar as a strategic outpost is the dual-purpose security forces can serve. On the surface security forces are intended to protect BRI projects but can also fulfill a counterterrorism role, a trend that is already unfolding in Central Asia.¹⁵⁶ Furthermore, China (like other great powers) is increasingly employing private security contractors. Since Xi Jinping approved their use in 2015, the private security industry has grown into a \$10 billion industry,

¹⁵³ Schwemlein, "Strategic Implications of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor," 11.

¹⁵⁴ Kardon, "China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar," 44, 57. "The first, internal objective is arguably the most urgent and proximate explanation for China's largesse in Pakistan. That is, Beijing hopes to stabilize Xinjiang province by providing security and development in neighboring Pakistan ... Chinese security analysts are fixated by the potential for Pakistan-based terrorism and social instability to spill over into China. The 'Chinese War on Terror' concentrates on Pakistan because its loosely governed border regions appear to be a major vector for radicalization and training of Chinese Muslims." See also Russel and Berger, *Weaponizing the Belt and Road Initiative*, 24.

¹⁵⁵ Afzal, "At All Costs," 4. "As international reporting has unveiled a disturbing picture of Chinese "re-education" and internment camps for Muslim Uighurs in China's southern province of Xinjiang, Pakistan has turned a blind eye to the issue. Pakistan's silence has been notable. It makes the government vulnerable to charges of hypocrisy, damaging its credibility. Khan said: "We do not talk about things with China in public right now because they're really sensitive. That's how they deal with issues." In this, he essentially acknowledged that remaining silent was a choice that Pakistan had made out of deference to China — which seems to have demanded that deference."

¹⁵⁶ Russel and Berger, *Weaponizing the Belt and Road Initiative*, 39.

with “demand for private security firms ‘with Chinese characteristics’ in places with high crime, terror, and instability” now being met by 20 Chinese companies.¹⁵⁷ Thus, whether by uniformed security forces or private security firms, China’s presence at Gwadar can provide it the operational access it desires to combat the threat posed by Islamic terrorism. It also serves broader competition purposes against regional and global rivals like India and the United States.

Gwadar’s ability to provide logistical support to China’s power projection provides the peacetime operational access necessary to maintain a presence in the Indian Ocean. Already potentially available for PLAN use should China desire it, Gwadar’s likely role supporting the Chinese military is as, “a key peacetime replenishment or transfer point for PLA equipment and personnel,” much like US prepositioned stocks.¹⁵⁸ By maintaining an ostensibly civilian controlled infrastructure with military use capabilities, Gwadar could support PLAN port calls while avoiding the potential repercussions of overtly militarizing it. One RAND report suggests,

The narrative about China establishing a “string of pearls” in the Indian Ocean is overhyped. Nevertheless, if conceived of as a network of ports of call for a range of PRC civilian and military vessels, from merchant ships to oil tankers to PLAN warships, then the “string” is more mundane but still significant.¹⁵⁹

Sustaining a PLAN presence in the Indian Ocean through civilian-operated ports is likely sufficient to achieve the geopolitical purpose of balancing against India. While a token presence would be unlikely to defeat the Indian Navy in conflict, it may be enough to deter conflict and provide Pakistan the reassurances it desires vis á vis India.¹⁶⁰ Simultaneously, a limited presence at Gwadar provides the PLAN an ideal strategic location for intelligence collection. In fact, by 2015 Gwadar “could already function as a ‘listening post’ to monitor U.S. naval activity in the

¹⁵⁷ Markey, *China’s Western Horizon*, 34.

¹⁵⁸ Kardon, “China Maritime Report No. 7: Gwadar,” 3.

¹⁵⁹ Scobell, et al., “At the Dawn of Belt and Road,” 146.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 146. “Even if China were to turn Gwadar into a naval base, it would likely not undermine American and Indian dominance of the Indian Ocean. India’s navy has seven bases and three listening posts along the shores of the Indian Ocean, and the U.S. Navy maintains a large presence at Diego Garcia.”

Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf.”¹⁶¹ Finally, persistent presence astride one of the world’s strategic chokepoints for global oil supplies would provide coercive leverage over energy flows and markets, complicating a potential adversary’s risk calculus.¹⁶² It would extend China’s ability to project power overseas, increasing its ability to perform contingency operations like those currently conducted from Djibouti.¹⁶³ But just as China’s presence may increase the risk calculus of rivals, China also faces the risk that too much presence provokes the very conflict it has sought to avoid with its *first civilian, later military* approach.

An overt Chinese military presence at the mouth of the Persian Gulf could serve as a catalyst for the United States, India, and others to coalesce against China, possibly leading to conflict. Three possible conflict scenarios seem plausible. First, though aiming to balance India, an increased Chinese naval presence could provoke the opposite. Seeing China increasing its naval capacity around its periphery, India would likely interpret this as strategic encirclement. This could provoke India into an arms race with China that raises the stakes and risks of miscalculation by either side. Second, China’s reassurances to Pakistan may embolden Pakistan to pursue its political objectives in Kashmir more aggressively, believing China would deter any potential Indian response. The flip side may also occur; India could respond aggressively to a terrorist attack emanating from Pakistan, thinking China’s nominal control over Pakistan will constrain its response as China would not want to risk nuclear war with India over Kashmir. Third, coercive actions that impinge on free and open access to the Persian Gulf could provoke a US response to maintain open access to the world’s commons and strategic transit routes.

Should conflict occur, it is unlikely China will maintain its operational access in the Indian Ocean region, at least for the foreseeable future. The challenges in opening viable GLOCs

¹⁶¹ Scobell, et al., “At the Dawn of Belt and Road,” 137.

¹⁶² Ben Simpfendorfer, *The New Silk Road: How a Rising Arab World is Turning Away from the West and Rediscovering China* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 29-30, 38-40.

¹⁶³ Markey, *China’s Western Horizon*, 33.

from Kashgar to Gwadar with the capacity to replace maritime SLOCs suggests China will remain beholden to its SLOCs in any conflict in the region. Dependence on SLOCs makes China especially vulnerable to interdiction from those nations which China is most likely to find itself in conflict with. If China entered conflict with India, SLOCs to Gwadar would be exposed to India's navy operating from seven bases along the entirety of its maritime coast. In conflict with the US, China's SLOCs would likely be severed at the Strait of Malacca. In either case, the vulnerability of China's SLOCs to Gwadar signify its limited ability to maintain operational access in a wartime scenario. Nonetheless, should China succeed in extending its presence well beyond the immediate periphery by 2049, then its ability to shield those vulnerable SLOCs may make Gwadar a critical pearl in a half-century long strategic design.¹⁶⁴

Analysis

This case study highlights several implications regarding China's use of diplomatic and economic instruments. These tools have largely been successful in gaining access to Pakistan to serve China's counterterrorism interests and the Indian Ocean via Gwadar port to potentially serve its military needs in competition. Although China's aim to stabilize Pakistan as a means of securing Xinjiang from the threat of terrorism has not borne fruit, it has provided China with a presence in the region from which it can escalate its security posture or gradually introduce military forces under the pretext of protecting BRI investments. At the same time, an increasingly

¹⁶⁴ Scobell, et al., "At the Dawn of Belt and Road," 24-26. "China conceives of its environment in terms -for four concentric circles. The first or inner ring encompasses China itself—any territory that Beijing currently controls or claims as Chinese territory ... China's second ring contains the countries, territories, and bodies of water directly adjacent to China's land and maritime borders. The third ring includes China's entire Asia-Pacific neighborhood, while the fourth ring include everything beyond Asia—the rest of the globe ... In the second ring around China's periphery are the most proximate portions of three Developing World regions: Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. In each of these regions Beijing has adopted a buffer strategy to keep countries and areas—both maritime and continental zones—friendly to China or at least neutral and pressed to expel outside powers and their armed forces, including the United States and its military. Next is the third ring, encompassing the more distant portions of Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia as well as Oceania, which is geographically well removed from China itself. In this ring, China's goal is to limit U.S. access to the Asia-Pacific and establish a Chinese sphere of influence."

militarized presence is more likely to exacerbate China's terrorism problem, much as US militarized responses tended to increase rather than diminish the threat of terrorism emanating from Pakistan. Thus, similar to the US experience, while diplomatic and economic instruments may be enough to gain operational access, they have failed to deliver on the most vital interests for which they were used.

The BRI has proven an effective means to construct ostensibly civilian commercial infrastructure that can serve military purposes of gaining and maintaining access in peacetime competition, although perhaps not so in armed conflict. By dictating dual-use capability built into critical infrastructure from the outset, China has leveraged the BRI as an indirect means for gaining incremental advantages during competition. The softer version of the 'String of Pearls', while not guaranteeing Chinese naval preeminence in war, does offer China useful logistical ports from which to project its maritime power overseas in peacetime. Displaying its global reach and conducting operations far from the Chinese mainland serves useful narrative purposes, convincing international audiences of China's rising power, as well as gaining operational experience projecting forces overseas. In a competition environment, the gradual displacement of US with Chinese presence may be sufficient for China to achieve its political aims of a multi-polar world of Chinese regional hegemony and global parity. Should this be the case, China may attain Xi's dream of national rejuvenation using solely the peacetime operational access established by its BRI, while avoiding escalation to armed conflict. This is an outcome China would surely welcome, in keeping with its strategic tradition of 'winning without fighting'.

Conclusion

This monograph examined the role of diplomatic and economic instruments of power in gaining and maintaining operational access to desired theaters during competition and conflict. Seeking an answer to the questions of what role US diplomatic and economic engagement with Pakistan played in gaining and maintaining operational access to Afghanistan after 2001, the results are mixed. While diplomatic and economic instruments helped persuade Pakistan to support the GWOT and provided operational access to Afghanistan, they were insufficient to gain access to areas Pakistan considered vital interests, thereby denying the United States its overall strategic objective of eliminating terrorist organizations who came to rely on a sanctuary in Pakistan. Furthermore, broader geopolitical trends that caused US and Pakistani interests to converge generally eclipsed the importance of diplomatic and economic instruments alone. Where interests have aligned, the United States has used diplomacy and economics to achieve favorable Pakistani behavior, but where interests diverged, diplomatic and economic instruments proved largely ineffective, most evident in the 2011-2012 GLOCs closures after the divergence of US and Pakistani vital interests of terror sanctuaries versus Pakistani sovereignty crossed a critical threshold.

The second set of questions that sought to understand how China's diplomatic and economic activities in Pakistan under the BRI allow it to gain and maintain operational access to desired theaters during competition and conflict also yields mixed outcomes. While the BRI provides China access in Pakistan to pursue its counterterrorism efforts and at Gwadar to potentially establish a semi-permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean, the durability of that access is likely not as strong as it appears both within Pakistan and in any potential conflicts against regional or global rivals like India or the United States. Although China and Pakistan's interests appear to align in the present, the burden of Pakistan's unsustainable debt, greater Chinese presence in Pakistan, and intrusions into Pakistani domestic affairs will likely increase

resentment that may cause a divergence of interests. Should this happen, no amount of diplomatic or economic incentive will prove powerful enough to override Pakistan's perceived vital interests. Although, answering these questions does not render simple yes or no conclusions, it does provide a greater appreciation of the capacity and limitations of diplomatic and economic instruments to support military operational access.

Ultimately, while diplomatic and economic instruments can help gain operational access for military operations, they generally rely on the underlying interests partner nations consider vital. Where interests align, diplomacy and economics can incentivize and reward partners for granting operational access. Where interests diverge, these instruments are unlikely to have the desired effects and will likely produce unanticipated opposition due to perceived sovereignty infringement. Considering the threat that China's use of diplomatic and economic instruments through the BRI poses to US interests today and in this century, it appears that China's BRI does not represent the strategic threat it is often portrayed as in the near-term but may represent a significant threat in the long-term if China is able to complete its vision. Despite the seeming grandeur of massive foreign aid or investments like Obama's KBL or China's BRI, great power interference or control over smaller states has the potential to generate resentment and resistance that limits the influence of great power actors, causing more liabilities than advantages, particularly when those state's perceptions of vital national interests do not align. Though China may be capable of gaining access to desired regions through the diplomatic and economic instrument of its BRI, the financial costs may prove too much to bear. Debt 'en-trapping' countries like Pakistan that require endless financial bailouts may threaten not only China's BRI vision, but also the financial solvency of the Chinese state upon which BRI depends, and with it the vital domestic stability which the BRI's outward reach intended to secure.

Recommendations

This monograph focused on great power competition, which involves the instruments of national power working in unison to achieve desired strategic aims. The purpose was not to offer better policymaking advice, but rather inform understanding of diplomatic and economic contributions to gaining and maintaining operational access. Therefore, these concluding recommendations offer a few thoughts about what a military planner might have learned from the preceding analysis. First, an important factor in gaining and maintaining operational access has been the agreement of allies and partners who provide the US access to desired theaters. The better military shaping activities contribute to the maintenance of partnerships in strategic regions, the better it will support the United States' ability to gain operational access by agreement rather than requiring forcible entry. Second, use of diplomatic and economic instruments can help achieve important national interests but are unlikely to achieve much in areas of conflicting vital interests. For military planners, this means synchronizing efforts to gain military access with diplomatic and economic efforts are likely to be fruitful where partners are amenable to US presence, but military forces must be prepared to act in vital areas that diplomacy and economics are unable to influence. Finally, the greater China asserts its influence under the BRI in the form of presence or control, the more likely Pakistan (and other smaller nations) will increase opposition against perceived Chinese domination. Paradoxically, although US use of diplomatic and economic instruments in Pakistan largely failed to deliver due to perceived violations sovereignty, the more China seeks to leverage influence gained through the BRI, the resentment generated by China's infringement of sovereignty presents the United States with opportunities to exploit using its own diplomatic and economic instruments.

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