



Siegfried O. Wolf

SADF FOCUS

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its impact on Gilgit-Baltistan

ABSTRACT

Gilgit-Baltistan is one of the least known parts of South Asia. However, recently there has been an increased international interest for this area. Unfortunately, it is not due to positive trends, like economic prosperity, social development or free and fair political participation of the local population as part of a stabilised process of democratic consolidation. Instead the area is receiving international attention because of the increasing level of human rights violations, economic exploitation, and environmental degradation. Furthermore, the region came into the spotlight because of the growing influence of Jihadists forces, which contributed heavily to the rise of sectarian violence, despite or because of the 'omnipresent' Pakistani security apparatus. This is gaining significance since the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan determines an essential part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multi-million dollar development project which is heralded as an 'game changer' for Pakistan and the whole region. In this paper it will be argued that: firstly, the CPEC project will rather entrench on-going negative trajectories rather than working towards social, political, and economic uplift of the local people; secondly, that the implementation of CPEC projects lacks legal cover and is against international agreements, as set by the United Nations. Furthermore, taken into account the geostrategic importance of Gilgit-Baltistan for Pakistan and China in general and for the CPEC in particular, one must expect that Islamabad and Beijing will maintain its full control over the area by all means and all costs. The latter aspect includes Pakistan's continuation of its colonial style of governance combined with extraordinary repressive measures. This trend will be accompanied with an increasing presence of Chinese security forces in Gilgit-Baltistan and growing leverage in the political decision-making in the area. This will most likely lead to an increase of local resistance against the CPEC project.

Keywords: Pakistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, China, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Centre-Region relations, China-Pakistan Relations, Terrorism

South Asia Democratic
Forum (SADF)

19 Avenue des Arts
1210 Brussels
Belgium

info@sadf.eu
www.sadf.eu

+12 026 834 180
+32 2 808 42 08

Reg. Num. BE
833606320

Background: initial conditions and historical trajectories

In order to understand the complexity of the current conflicts and challenges within Gilgit-Baltistan, a brief contextualization is inevitable. To this end, it is crucial to point out that the current and future political dynamics will be largely determined by two major historical trajectories.

Trajectory 1: The emergence of the Kashmir conflict and the subsequent unclear political status of Gilgit-Baltistan

Historically Gilgit-Baltistan (formerly known as Northern Areas), was an integral part of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir ruled by the Hindu Dogra dynasty (Bansal 2013: 4). Actually it's one of two areas -besides the so-called Azad (free) Jammu and Kashmir- of the former Dogra realm, which Pakistan took over in the late 1940s. After the partition of British India in 1947¹, a rebellion among the Muslim inhabitants broke out and the then commanding British officer Major William Brown of the Gilgit Scouts² decided to side with the rebels and hand over (declared accession) the territory to Pakistan on 4 November 1947 (Cloughley 1999: 19). In fact, this was a military coup against the Maharaja of Kashmir, who at the time was officially the supreme authority (Brown 2014: 136-196). As such the accession to Pakistan tremendously lacks legitimacy (Singh 2015, May 11). Nevertheless, large scale violent clashes between the opposing factions, either in favour of Pakistan, India or independence as well as a pre-empt invasion from pro-Pakistani forces from neighbouring areas (like Swat) were avoided at that time³. The 'accession' however created a historical legacy of a legal-constitutional limbo, which is continued by Pakistan's government until now (Singh Priyanka 2016, Mach 4). The fact that Gilgit-Baltistan got illegally acquired and since the territory was administered by Pakistan has far-reaching consequences for the region and its people (Bansal, Alok 2008: 81-101). Basically one can state that Gilgit-Baltistan has an undefined relationship with the state of Pakistan

¹ The term partition describes the territorial division of British Colonial India, which gave rise to the independent states of Pakistan and India on 14 and 15 August 1947 respectively (Mitra/Wolf/Schoettli 2006: 328).

² The Gilgit Scouts were a paramilitary force, which was raised by the British colonial ruler in 1889 and deployed in the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.

³ See for a detailed account and description at the respective circumstances and happenings (Schofield 2010; Brown 2014).

and an unclear legal status (Ramachandran, 2016 September 29). Additionally, the Pakistani constitution is not recognizing Gilgit-Baltistan as part of the country. In result, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan have no citizenship rights and no sufficient political representation (Hang 2012; Senge 2010: 354-358). Facing steadily growing anti-Pakistan sentiments, the national establishment has been finally convinced that they must undertake some 'political uplifting'. Islamabad reacted in 2009 by issuing the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self-Governance Order (GBESGO), which not only renamed the region from Northern Areas into Gilgit-Baltistan (Kreuzmann 2015: 9) but also made this region 'more looking like' a 'quasi-formal' Pakistani province (Puri 2009: 13-15). This legal framework provided for the establishment of a new Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA). However, it remains as an ineffective institution since the power is concentrated in the Gilgit-Baltistan Council, which is headed by the Prime Minister. As such, it will continue to control all executive and legislative functions (Bhasin 2009, September 11). Consequently, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are excluded from any crucial decision-making bodies, especially the ones regarding the CPEC project. Consequently, critics are claiming that the GBESGO was "designed to give the impression of liberal self-rule" (Singh 2015, May 11) and it is just an attempt to calm the opposition in GB as well as to please the international community.

However, due to new developments especially the implementation of CPEC, Pakistan might be forced -especially due to increasing pressure by China (Yasir 2016, January 13) demanding judicial clarity for its investments-, to search for a political solution for the status of Gilgit-Baltistan. Being constructed on a disputed territory, Beijing is searching for legal cover for its illegitimate implementation of CPEC related projects in the area. One potential option is to integrate constitutionally Gilgit-Baltistan as the fifth province of Pakistan (Chandran 2016). In order to gain legitimacy for 'officially' absorbing Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan government officials might come up with the argument that this region was never a part of the former princely state of Jammu & Kashmir (Sood 2016, August 24), therefore any legal commitments by the former Maharaja regarding India (especially the treaty of accession) does not include Gilgit-Baltistan ('Gilgit Agency Controversy'). (Ali

2015, August 9). Therefore, Islamabad might see the integration of Gilgit-Baltistan into Pakistan as justified and in line with the regulations set by the former British colonial rulers in order to implement the transfer of power as well as the partition of British India (Singh 2016, March 4). But this political manoeuvre also has a down side from a Pakistani perspective. If Islamabad officially annexes Gilgit-Baltistan, this means that Pakistan will indirectly lose its normative rationale against India's incorporation of Jammu & Kashmir (the Indian administered part of Kashmir) as well as give up its claim over the respective territories. Therefore, Islamabad has to walk a thin line between giving Gilgit-Baltistan a 'certain constitutional status' and subsequently political rights on one side, and avoid the impression of a consequent, constitutional integration of this area (Singh 2016, March 4). The former would lead to a violation of the pending UN resolutions of 13th August 1948 and 5th January 1949, which envisage that the future status of the state of Jammu and Kashmir will be determined in accordance with the will of the people through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite (Akram/Midhat 2015). These UN resolutions are of great significance for Islamabad, since at least in theory, they keep the option that the people of Kashmir might vote in favour of Pakistan. This is mainly why, unlike India, Pakistan has hesitated to annex Gilgit-Baltistan.

Trajectory 2: Pakistan's increasing involvement in state terrorism and repressive policies

Being anxious about anti-Islamabad tendencies in Gilgit-Baltistan (as well as in other provinces such as Balochistan), all Pakistani administrations – military as well as civilian – are trying very hard to keep that area under tight control. Pakistan considers this condition as sine qua non for its national interests, especially after the first war with India over Kashmir in 1947-48 (Ganguli 2001: 15ff). This armed confrontation resulted in an unsatisfying situation for Islamabad since India is administering the Kashmir valley (hosting the majority of the regional population) and it is described as 'unfinished business' of the partition (Varad Sharma quoted in Shams 2016, August 14). This strategic rationale gained more momentum over the last decades, as Indian conventional military superiority became obvious, and most visible in the disastrous experiences of the lost wars of 1965 and 1971 (Ganguly 2001: 31-78). Being aware that a military solution (meaning victory in a

full-scale war with India) is highly unlikely, they have turned to goal achievements through using limited coercive force (Suba 2005), either by regular army interventions⁴ (e.g. Kargil conflict 1999) or by proxies in the form of militant-non-state actors like several Jihadi and insurgency groups (Akbar 1999). In other words, state-sponsorship of cross-border terrorism got identified as a tool to ensure security and defence interests of Pakistan (Murphy 2013; Murphy/Tamana 2010). But due to the persistent failures, Pakistan had to retreat from Kargil, and its support for pro-Pakistani terrorist elements operating in Indian Jammu and Kashmir is increasingly leading to regional diplomatic and political isolation⁵. Therefore, Islamabad did not achieve any remarkable political goal with these measures. Nevertheless, it seems that Islamabad continues to believe in coercive force as an instrument in its foreign policy, especially towards India (and Afghanistan). (SADF 2016, August 30). The on going attacks in Afghanistan (f ex. Gurdaspur, Pathankot or Uri) carried out by terrorist groups that enjoy the sponsorship of Pakistan and its security agents (SADF 2016, August 30).

Having in mind that Pakistan must be clearly identified as a case of failed civilian control (Wolf 2013 April 1), especially in the areas of foreign policy, national defence and internal security, it is obvious that the decision-making in and about Gilgit-Baltistan is made by the military. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that Islamabad's policy in Gilgit-Baltistan is exclusively dominated by the security paradigm. Subsequently, one must state that Pakistan is just continuing the approach of the British colonial ruler that perceives securing its own borders and territory as top priority. However, this is not a phenomenon limited to Gilgit-Baltistan. It is a characteristic of Pakistani politics which can be found in all places and in all times, especially in the bloody war of independence and the genocide in former East Pakistan (today Bangladesh) by Pakistani troops and their allied radicalized Islamist proxies (Mascarenhas 1971). As such, Pakistan is not only relying on coercive force and

⁴ Actually Pakistan deployed regular as well as irregular, militant forces to infiltrate India (Akbar 1999).

⁵ See the postponement of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) meeting in Pakistan in 2016. India and three other SAARC countries Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Bhutan shared the concerns of Pakistan's involvement in cross-border terrorism after the Uri attack in Indian administered Kashmir by Pakistan-based Jihadists (Gul 2016, October 1).

state-sponsorship of terrorism in its foreign policy but it is also suppressing local and regional opposition.

In order to keep Gilgit-Baltistan in check, besides the direct use of violence, the Pakistani government has applied different strategies that bear remarkable negative effects for the indigenous population.

Firstly, the national leadership decided to support a Sunni Islamisation (Haqqani 2005). Historically, the natives of Gilgit-Baltistan were predominantly Shia and of other non-Sunni beliefs. But most importantly, besides some sectarianism, during the reign of the Maharaja of Kashmir, there were hardly conflicts between the different ethnic-religious communities in the region. However, this changed rapidly when Zia-ul-Haq in the 1970s and 1980s enforced a policy of Islamisation in the whole country, and especially in the area of Gilgit-Baltistan (Hunzai 2013, Singh 2015, May 11). Witnessing a Shia revolution in neighbouring Iran, the country's political elite was concerned about a Shia majority area within its own borders (Chaudhuri 2002, March 28). In reaction, Islamabad supported the Sunni Islamisation by granting Sunni's extraordinary privileges, benefits and preferential treatment in all spheres of public life.

Secondly, this Sunni Islamisation strategy was flanked by a 'guided and armoured migration' to change the social demography of the Gilgit-Baltistan (Hunzai 2013, Singh 2015, May 11). More precisely, in order to reduce the Shia to a minority, Islamabad encouraged Sunni people from other parts of Pakistan to settle down in the area, and this not only evoked tensions between natives and migrants but also brought the then still unknown Shia-Sunni divide into this isolated mountainous region (Chaudhuri 2002, March 28). Therefore, the most visible indication was the outbreak of the sectarian clashes⁶, which are persistently recurrent until today (Kreuzmann 2015: 8).

Thirdly, there were actions aimed at containing and/or eliminating anti-critical elements in

⁶One of the most dramatic ones was the clash of 1988 in which several hundreds of people lost their life (Hunzai 2013).

the political sphere (UNPO 2016, April 22). This was done in two ways: by introducing and siding with pro-Pakistani political organizations and by restricting political activities of the opposition, which was not acting in the interest of Islamabad. Hence, Islamabad was especially drawing on existing religious and ethnic diversities to control the locals and to weaken the pro-independence field. In this context, one should also mention that in order to undermine local opposition, the central government and Pakistani security agents supported religious extremist groups to target local politicians, movements and organizations.

The CPEC project and its impacts on Gilgit-Baltistan

Today it seems that Gilgit-Baltistan is not only getting a growing level of media coverage but also managed to be present in international platforms debates and academic discourses (Znews 2016, September 22). The major catalyst for this process is the implementation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This Chinese funded multi-dollar development project aims at establishing a network of highways, railways, oil pipelines, electrical power grids, fiber optic cables and special economic zones, linking the Chinese trading hub of Kashgar in Xinjiang province with the Pakistani port city of Gwadar in the Balochistan province, which is located near the strategic Straits of Hormuz.

As in other provinces, especially Balochistan, the architects of the CPEC are facing severe challenges in Gilgit-Baltistan (Znews 2016, September 22).

This is gaining momentum because Gilgit-Baltistan -like the Gwadar port in Balochistan- is fundamental for the successful implementation of the CPEC in the short run as well as a smooth functioning in the long run. More concretely, Gilgit-Baltistan is the only land connection between Pakistan and China and all the roads and pipelines and most of the communication networks must run through this mountainous area (Ramachandran, 2016 September 29). Furthermore, being located in the middle of Chinese western Xinjiang Province, Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor, Pakistan controlled Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan, and India's Jammu and Kashmir, the region possess an enormous geostrategic relevance. In brief, without Gilgit-Baltistan, the implementation of the CPEC project is impossible (Sood 2016, August 24). Therefore, it will be imperative for the

central government to ensure the total control over this increasingly restive area. The issue of control marks an extraordinary crucial trajectory since the CPEC has severe negative impacts on the region because it affects all spheres of governance, economy and life. Therefore, one should point at some of the challenges.

Firstly, there are major problems in Pakistan's centre-region relations in general and regarding Gilgit-Baltistan in particular. Besides the omnipresent menace of terrorist attacks and insurgencies, the development initiative must deal with increasing regional protest movements (Ramachandran, 2016 September 29). The major complains of the local people are the lack of communication between the Gilgit-Baltistan region and the central government in Islamabad and the subsequent information and transparency gap (Ebrahim 2016, January 6). This is leading to an atmosphere of secrecy and confusion regarding the whole CPEC project (The Nation 2016, July 28). Furthermore, there is an insufficient understanding and adaption in Islamabad to the needs of the local population. In consequence, the CPEC is adding significant challenges to the already existing above-mentioned unfortunate trajectories, and is strengthening the feeling of Gilt-Baltistan to be exploited and neglected by the central government (Chaudhuri 2002, March 28). The fact that there are remarkable regional asymmetries regarding the planning of CPEC, related to the projects and the budget allocations, which favour the Punjab province⁷, (Muhammad 2016, January 6), is enhancing the deprivation of the people in the region (Wolf 2016, June 28).

Secondly, as mentioned above it is important to stress that Gilgit-Baltistan is a disputed territory and due to the Kashmir conflict (Mir/Shah 2016, August 19), Pakistan is unwilling to grand any substantial political rights to the local people. Consequently, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are excluded from any crucial decision-making bodies, especially the ones regarding the CPEC project (UNPO 2016, August 24; April 22).

Thirdly, the CPEC will lead to a securitization and militarization of Gilgit-Baltistan. This

⁷ See for a detailed account regarding the debate of 'Punjabization of Pakistan', see Talbot 2004: 51-62.

will find its expression in the build-up of Pakistanis security personnel and facilities (Khan 2010). Chinese will also enhance their military engagement in the region (Creutzmann 2014, February 8; Harrison 2010, August 26). Subsequently the local people will experience an increasing presence of security forces in the public sphere. Besides the suppression of local resistance against CPEC, another reason for the above-mentioned step-up of the security sector in Gilgit-Baltistan is the high likelihood that militant Islamists will identify the CPEC as a potential target for their Jihad against China (Mehsud/Golovnina 2014, March 14). China moved into the focus of international terrorist organizations like the Islamic State and Al Qaeda because of how Beijing is treating their Muslim minority in its western Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (Wolf 2015, July 21). In order to tackle the double challenge of growing local protests and increasing activities of local and global acting Jihadists against CPEC (Naqvi 2016, November 20), the Pakistani military in cooperation with the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) will intensify their operations in the region. The fact that they initiated joint border patrols can be seen as an indication in this direction (ToI 2016, August 1). Taking into account former experiences with Pakistani security services in Gilgit-Baltistan as well other areas like Balochistan or FATA (Wolf 2016, October 11), the people will most likely be confronted with a deteriorating situation of political rights combined with an increase in human rights violations, like torture, enforced disappearances, and *'kill and dump' cases*. On top of that, Gilgit-Baltistan will witness on-going abuses committed by the federal government in order to maintain its grip in the area (Business Standard 2016, July 15).

Fourthly, it seems (at least in the initial phase) that the CPEC is further entrenching unfortunate economic developments in Gilgit-Baltistan (Ebrahim 2016, January 28). Besides the already on-going exploitation of the natural resources by the central government with no adequate royalties for Gilgit-Baltistan (Chaudhuri 2002, March 28), the CPEC introduces sweeping distortions of fair and free economic competition. Indications show that all (major) construction contracts go either to Chinese firms or to Pakistani military owned companies (MILBUS) at the expense of local entrepreneurs and work force. For example, Islamabad granted licenses, especially for mining, to Chinese

firms without consulting local authorities (TET 2011, June 30). There is also the severe threat that rich investors might take all the scarce valuable land (Ebrahim 2016, January 6). In this context, the so-called land grabbing -which means that land of the local people is getting forcibly acquired by the government and military without giving any clear notion about compensation and rehabilitation of the subsequent displaced persons- is further alienating the local population (ToI 2016, August 1). The above mentioned factors are significant since there are no concrete plans to make major investments in Gilgit-Baltistan, neither within CPEC nor from other development schemes in order to promote local economy (Hang 2012), like for example investing in the crucial (dry) fruit production sector. In contrast, the already existing local businesses are getting relocated and moved out of Gilgit-Baltistan, like f. ex. Sost dry port in G-B to Havelian in Hazara division of KP (Baqri 2016). This would diminish at least 10,000 jobs⁸ (Muhammad 2015, November 16). The tourist sector, beside the plan to develop the Lake Attabad area, is getting rather hampered than boosted by the CPEC due to negative environmental issue. Against this backdrop, one must also mention that the CPEC will cause large-scale environmental degradation through the destruction of scarce valuable land as well as air and water pollution (Baqri 2016; ToI 2016, August 1).

Fifthly, Gilgit-Baltistan will experience a fundamental demographic restructuring to such a high degree that the local population will turn into a minority in their own region (Ebrahim 2016, January 6). This phenomenon will be enforced thanks to the following developments: a Pakistan internal migration -meaning that people from other provinces like Punjab will be moved to Gilgit-Baltistan to take over businesses and administrative jobs; an external migration of Chinese workforce; and last but not least, an enforced displacement of local people. In this context, the expected rise of terrorist activities accompanied with intensified sectarian clashes will force local people, especially minorities, to flee from the area. Here it is important to note that during the last decades, Pakistan has witnessed a remarkable of intolerance and radicalization within its society (Bandow 2012, January 9). As such there is the imminent threat that minorities might be used as 'scapegoats' for potential CPEC

⁸ Some sources even claim 20,000 jobs.

failures, which could be organised by a ‘foreign hand’, namely India (Naqvi 2016, November 20). There are already several statements by Pakistani authority, which are blaming New Delhi for current and upcoming anti-CPEC protests and sabotage of this development project.

Besides the expected tectonic shifts within the social, religious and ethnic composition of Gilgit-Baltistan, the people of this area are also concerned about the increasing Chinese leverage (The Indian Express 2016, August 1) not only by the growing number of Chinese workers, companies, and security forces but also in greater Chinese ‘cultural footprints’ on the expense of local identities, customs, traditions, beliefs. Furthermore, there is the fear of a growing likelihood that Beijing will be engaged in counter-terrorist activities in Pakistani soil. In this context one should be aware that China enacted in December last year (enforced January this year) its first anti-terror law which allows the government to deploy troops in the context of counter-terrorism.

Final thoughts

In sum, having the perception of being treated like an “internal colony”, there is a significant increase of requests for greater autonomy and self-governance, or even independence. Additionally, the inhabitants of Gilgit-Baltistan that are suffering from dramatic economic underdevelopment and a poor social infrastructure despite rich natural resources, are getting further alienated by the Pakistani state. However, instead of addressing the issues that have been raised, Islamabad has responded in its usual way, that is to say, by promising reforms as well as economic development and to a certain degree agreeing on the reforms but not implementing them, due to endemic corruption, shortage of resources or lack of political will. Most likely it is a combination of all these factors which leads subsequently to the use of all kinds of political instruments to maintain control over the region, ranking from threatening and harassing the opposition, to physically attacking protesters and carrying out targeted killings of political activists. Subsequently, Gilgit-Baltistan will witness in the future even more political protests and even armed resistance (Chaudhuri 2002, March 28), because it is not only confronted with socio-cultural and

religious deprivation through the Sunni Islamisation policy, but also with politically-economic marginalization and coercive suppression. The traditional disproportionate reaction of Pakistan's Security Forces is causing further discontent and creating an unending vicious circle of violence. Consequently, the alienated people of Gilgit-Baltistan are increasingly constructing their own national identity. This finds its expression in the rise of political organisations demanding some form of autonomy or outright independence. Until now, Islamabad was able to suppress the oppositional forces but the locals are starting to perceive the Pakistani state as ambiguous when it comes to introducing the so-called 'reform packages' (even more, they evaluate Islamabad's security agencies to some extent as an occupying force). This is gaining significance, taking the negative impacts of the CPEC on Gilgit-Baltistan into account. Against this backdrop, the CPEC is not helping to reduce the tensions in Gilgit-Baltistan by improving the living conditions of the people. In contrast, the development initiative is further entrenching the existing unfortunate trajectories. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the local people of Gilgit-Baltistan perceive the CPEC as a mechanism to continue the exploitation of their resource rich land and wonder if they can benefit from CPEC at all.

In sum, the CPEC will most likely lead to an increasing sense of deprivation and create further unrest in the region. Subsequently, the opposition is growing and the central civilian and military authorities will put in place more repressive measures, therefore creating a deterioration in the human and fundamental rights situation. However, the increase of costs to maintain the grip over Gilgit-Baltistan has severe ramifications for the national political arena too.

Firstly, to ensure a safe environment for the CPEC implementation, the country's security forces got entrusted with remarkable new special powers (Wolf 2015, May 14). In other words, the military is gaining a formal role in Pakistan's political system and in day-to-day-politics. This is due to partly the CPEC project, and partly because of the weakening of civilian institutions (Wolf 2016, September 9). In result, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan will most likely be confronted with more repressive policies and actions by central authorities

and their security forces. The fact that later one can act with absolute impunity is turning the situation in the region from ‘bad to worse’.

Secondly, the CPEC could lead to a power shift in certain policy fields from Islamabad and Rawalpindi (where the army top echelon is located) towards Beijing. There is no doubt that the CPEC project will lead to major Chinese investments in Pakistan. This is needed since the country tries to diversify its aid portfolio to be more independent from US financial support, which might be even more at stake in the light of the upcoming presidency of Mr Donald Trump. Against this backdrop, one must note that Pakistan is basically not able to finance or to manage such major projects. Suffering from a declining economy, these new Chinese investments could indeed function as a ‘game changer’ for Pakistan’s economic development but also they could create dependency. As such, the CPEC project comes with a price. Besides infrastructural and economic connectivity, China is aiming for security and political connectivity too. In other words, based on the new financial independence China expects that Pakistan’s political decision making to be in line with Beijing’s approach towards South Asia and beyond (like Taiwan/’One China Policy’ and South China Sea). By having said this, one should expect a stronger influence of China on Pakistan’s political arena. More concrete, in areas of specific concerns of CPEC like the on-going insurgency in Balochistan or rising political protests in Gilgit-Baltistan and Pakistan’s tensed relations with India, there will be a more visible Chinese interference. In all these cases, Pakistan seems to lack the political will and/or capabilities to find adequate political solutions. Therefore, we will most likely observe Chinese interventions in Pakistan’s political decision-making in the areas of internal security and foreign policy. Chinese influence in Pakistani politics will be especially visible in the context of the political status of Gilgit-Baltistan. In order to solve the legal and constitutional limbo, Beijing might pressure Islamabad to find a solution for its undefined relationship with Gilgit-Baltistan in order to have a legal cover for CPEC and its related projects. As such, there is not only the threat that Pakistan could turn into a ‘Client State’ of China (Shams 2016, August 29) but also that the future of Gilgit-Baltistan will be not be decided autonomously, nor in Islamabad but most likely it will be defined in Beijing (Shams 2016, November 14).

Last but not least, there is the concrete threat that radicalized elements could identify the CPEC as a mechanism to strengthen Pakistan in order to destabilize the Indian administered part of Kashmir. As such, the successful implementation and functioning of the CPEC promote an atmosphere that favours the continuation and the increase of cross-border terrorism.

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